

Exploring Spain & Portugal, from the Duero to the Douro JUNE 25 ~ JULY 7, 2019

Spain is home to some of the greatest wines on earth, as well as the greatest bargains in wine – a fabulous combination. The arid high plains of northern Spain offer stark beauty and great bounty. Broad, dusty vistas backed by mountain ridges, dotted with a patchwork quilt of vineyards – it’s a wine landscape like no other. And the history is fascinating – a Catholic country under Muslim domination for seven hundred years.

Portugal offers two spectacles that are impressive even for those who aren’t yet lovers of Port wine. First, along the romantic Douro River snake hundreds of steep and craggy vineyards, hugging the terraced hillsides. It’s a dramatic and beautiful vista to enjoy as you float quietly along the historic waterway that has been Portugal’s economic lifeblood through the centuries. And then there is the cork industry, where workers hand-strip large sections of the spongy bark for eventual conversion into cork stoppers, flooring, or even furniture. A unique renewable resource.



Our small group of no more than 14 adventurers will launch our journey from Spain's most vibrant city, Barcelona. The nearby region of Penedès hosts most of Spain's sparkling Cava production, so we'll toast the start of the trip at one of the top boutique sparkling wine producers in the country.



From the Cava area we wend our way into the remote and craggy mountains of Priorat, where a growing collection of Spain's best wines are made. We travel down a rutted dirt track to visit one of the first five great wineries in Priorat and talk to the family. We'll also visit the ruin of the ancient priory for which Priorat is named.

We make our way northwest through Campo de Borja, where we visit the impressive winery Bodegas Borsao and taste old-vine Grenache wines that have scored up to 100 points, then we head for the culinary mecca of San Sebastián on the wind-swept Atlantic coast where we'll enjoy a spectacular meal at one of the trio of Michelin three-star restaurants.



Then it's west to Bilbao, where we'll stop at Frank Gehry's famed Guggenheim Museum, before we reach Spain's most famous wine area, Rioja.





We'll spend our two nights in Rioja at another Frank Gehry-designed building, the luxurious Marqués de Riscal Hotel with its Michelin one-star restaurant. We will visit three top-rated wineries, and then at the UNESCO World Heritage caves of Atapuerca, we'll have an exceptional look at the site where the richest collection of pre-human fossils in Europe is still being actively excavated. This amazing site has been shaking up scientists' view of human evolution.



Our final wine exploration in Spain will be in Ribera del Duero, a hotter, drier neighbor to Rioja producing often richer wines. We'll dine and stay in a spectacular Relais et Chateaux hotel created in a medieval abbey and take a jeep tour through the vineyards. Then it's on to Madrid, where we'll have front row seats at a lively Flamenco performance to conclude the first part of our Exploring Wine journey.



After a free day to explore Madrid, we will fly to historic Porto, longtime capital of the Port wine trade in the north of Portugal. Here on the cool, damp coast are the Port houses of legend: Graham's, Taylor's, Cockburn, and many more.



We'll check into our luxurious hotel on a hill overlooking the city, then walk across the street for a tasting and dinner at renowned Taylor-Fladgate.



The following day we'll visit a major cork factory, watching the workers (and robots) grade, punch, and trim the stoppers that keep wines around the globe safe and quiet while they mature. Then we'll explore the historic old city of Porto on a walking tour.



The next day we are embraced by dramatic mountain and river scenery along the Douro River on the way to the village of Pinhão. Here among terraced vineyards, we'll take a boat trip along the Douro and taste at a famous wine estate wedged onto the steep slopes before returning to Porto.



On our final day, we pay a visit to the famed Graham's Port Lodge, including a Port tasting and a farewell lunch overlooking the city.

Our hotels offer four- and five-star comfort, mostly in historical settings. We'll experience the best in local cuisine, plus a Michelin 3-star, a 2-star, and a 1-star dinner. Our transport will be in a comfortable mini-bus with a local driver. We'll walk every day, exploring vineyards, villages, and historic sites, but the pace will be relaxed, and there will be some free time every afternoon.





Your guide for this exceptional experience is Charles Bennett, CWP, CSW, founder of *Exploring Wine*. A wine lover and collector for more than 20 years who honeymooned in Burgundy and once lived on a vineyard in Germany, he speaks French and German and has traveled extensively around the world. Charlie is certified as a wine professional by the Culinary Institute of America and the Society of Wine Educators. He was the national Grand Echanson and a board member of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs, the world's largest wine and food society. He oversaw the Chaîne's national young sommeliers competition and led the society's wine programs. He holds degrees from Stanford and Tufts. In years past he won three Emmy awards on public television, was a business strategy consultant to CEOs of several Fortune 500 companies, and was VP of Internet Services for a major computer company. Wine is now his primary passion.



*This trip is for members of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs
A donation will be made to the Chaîne Foundation by Exploring Wine*

To enroll in the trip or ask questions, click [here](#) or send an email to cb@exploringwine.com



127 Little Mill Place
The Woodlands, TX 77382
+1 281-738-2281
cb@exploringwine.com
www.exploringwine.com