



Media Kit

Great Wine Capitals Global Network

The Great Wine Capitals is an alliance of eight cities located in internationally renowned wine-producing areas throughout the world.

The member cities are: Bordeaux (France), Bilbao-Rioja (Spain), Cape Town (South Africa), Florence (Italy), Mainz (Germany), Mendoza (Argentina), Porto (Portugal), San Francisco-Napa Valley (USA).

Network Cities, individually and as a group, are important wine tourism destinations in the world. The cities also work together on education and research, including academic exchanges, business development and investment, and wine tourism development.

The Network was established in 1999. Its Charter or Partnership Agreement was signed by each of the cities and sets out the aims and responsibilities of the member cities as well as the operational aspects of the Network.

Structure and management

The Network has a permanent secretariat located in Bordeaux. Each city has a Network coordinator, whose task it is to liaise with the other cities and to be the point of contact in each city for media enquiries, business development opportunities, etc.

Network members meet once a year at a General Assembly that is hosted by each member city in turn.

The Best Of International Wine Tourism Awards

The Network has established an annual wine tourism awards program that recognizes and

rewards excellence in wine tourism in a range of categories: including Accommodation, Wine Tourism Restaurants, Art and Culture, Architecture, Parks and Gardens, Innovative Wine Tourism Experiences, Wine Tourism Services and Sustainable Wine Tourism Practices.

Each city organizes its own awards contest to acknowledge and promote the Best Of within its area. An international jury then selects a global winner for each city. The international winners represent the best of the best.

Website

The Network's website www.greatwinecapitals.com provides information on each city, including travel and tourism, education, and business development. It also provides details on the winners of the Best Of wine tourism awards for each city and links to their respective sites.

The website also has an image gallery which can be accessed for high quality images for each city for media and publicity purposes.

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Bilbao-Rioja Media Information

Bilbao-Rioja

Bilbao is the largest city in the Basque Country, or Euskadi, as this autonomous region of Spain is known locally. Its population is around 350,000, although when the surrounding urban areas are included, it rises to about a million people. Art lovers know about Bilbao, as do those with an interest in modern architecture. Conference-goers know the city, so does anyone with a knowledge of the steel and shipping industries. Food lovers have a very high regard for it; wine connoisseurs know its relationship to Rioja.

Bilbao, one of the major ports in Spain, was founded in 1300 by Don Diego López de Haro as a port. It was established on the site of an existing small commercial port - far enough upstream on the Nervión River to be safe from pirates. The city celebrates its founding day every year; in fact, it's a great city for celebrations and public events throughout the year.

Its exports were wool and wine, to begin. Its wealth has come from fishing, shipping and from the iron industry, and through the 19th century, a particularly strong trading relationship with Britain.

The city's modern strength lies in the ways in which it has outstripped its traditional industries without forgetting them. The award-winning conference centre and concert hall, for example, is called Euskalduna, after the shipyard that was there until 1992. Frank Gehry's famed building for the sinuous Guggenheim Museum appears to have references to ships in its shape, and to fish in the distinctive scaly surface of the exterior.

The Guggenheim marks its 10th birthday in 2007, and is part of an ongoing commitment to art, technology and architecture that has long been inseparable from the life of the city and its wine country. This is a city of remarkable buildings and bridges, of docklands that have had to meet the challenges of bigger shipping over the centuries, of whole city areas that have been built and rebuilt over time. The latest to be rebuilt will be the old waterfront, which is to be redeveloped by the noted architect Zaha Hadid.

This is a city for architects, as a whole series of modern buildings and structures show. The architect who in 1893 designed the Puente Bizkaia, (named Patrimony of Humanity by Unesco in 2006) one of only eight transporter bridges left in the world, had worked with Gustav Eiffel. The wonderful Arriaga Theatre, reputedly modelled on the Paris Opera, was restored to its original 1890 glory after the disastrous floods of the early 1980s. There are other notable art museums in Bilbao; just as there are great modern buildings in the wine country of Rioja. Frank Gehry was commissioned to design a hotel and winery; the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, whose bridge across the Nervión near the Guggenheim is such a feature of Bilbao, has also designed a winery. The commitment to the best of art and technology is apparent in such developments as the Dinastia Vivanco winery and its remarkable privately owned Wine Museum.

This is a city to explore, as it stretches downstream towards to the sea, from the Casco Viejo (old city) to the green hills like guardians over the city, to downstream Portugalete, the old port, with its mixture of clustered houses and open spaces, its sculptures and restaurants. An excellent modern transport system makes the exploration easy.

It is a city in which to find enjoyment: a city of song and sport, of companionship, fiestas and saints' days, food and wine.

Basque country is generally regarded as the best region to eat in all of Spain, which is high praise indeed. Seafood of all kinds is notable here: look out in particular for bacalao (fresh, or dried, or dried and salted), hake, tuna, anchovies and sardines, clams, prawns, as well as a range of vegetables, lamb dishes, and Idiazabal, a Basque sheep's milk cheese, not to mention a stunning range of desserts and pastries. All accompanied, of course, by the wines of Rioja. Weekends are the best time for pintxos, as tapas are called here. There's an enthusiastic habit of enjoying small bites and shared plates before and perhaps instead of a meal.

Rioja is about a 90 minute drive from Bilbao, and many of its small towns date from medieval times. Logrono is the capital. The pilgrimage route of Santiago de

Compostela was of great early importance to wine in the region, since monasteries provided wine - and sometimes accommodation - to pilgrims. Many of the former monasteries and convents have been turned into award-winning hotels that combine historic buildings with all modern facilities.

The wines

The province of La Rioja is one thing. The wine region of Rioja has different boundaries. It is divided into Rioja Alta, Rioja Alavesa (in the Alava region, part of the Basque country), and Rioja Baja. Wines have been produced here for centuries, but Rioja became a recognised brand in 1925, when a Designation of Origin was granted. In recognition of their quality, in 1991, Rioja wines were granted the first Denominacion de Origen Calificada in Spain. Regulations limit the production area, the permitted grape varieties, yields, production, and ageing.

There are now nearly 60,000 hectares of vines, in which the predominant grape variety is tempranillo, thought to be indigenous to the area. Three other red grapes are grown - red garnacha, mazuelo, and graciano. White varieties make up less than 10 per cent: viura, malvasia de Rioja, and white garnacha.

The Cantabrian mountain range shelters Rioja from the worst weather the Atlantic might bring, and the Ebro river creates a series of microclimates. The vineyards are generally planted between 300 metres and 600 metres above sea level. The Rio Oja (Oja river) gives the region its name.

There are four colours of numbered back labels for Rioja wines, denoting categories and minimum ageing periods. Cosecha are those in their first or second years; crianza wines have spent a minimum of one year in cask, and some months in bottle. Reserva are selected from the best vintages, and are at least three years old, with a minimum period of a year in cask. Gran Reserva wines are from exceptional vintages, and have spent at least two years in oak, and three years in the bottle. (The ageing periods are slightly less for white wines.)

The red wines are rich but balanced, made in ways that recognise the long historical traditions of winemaking while utilising modern knowledge and technology to produce the best from the region and its grapes.

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Bordeaux Media Information

Bordeaux

Bordeaux, the city that gives its name to a whole region, is located near the confluence of two great rivers, the Dordogne and the Garonne, protected from the Atlantic by a kind of flat land shield. The ocean is the sea route to the rest of the world to the north, south and west of France, and thereby lies much of Bordeaux's long-running success. Its geographic position means that Bordeaux is and has always been a city for trade and commerce, for innovation and agriculture.

The city of Bordeaux has a population of around 230,000, although its bigger urban area is more than three times as populous. It is the administrative capital of the Aquitaine region, one of the most dynamic in France. It's a region of agriculture, history, and a modern centre for aeronautics, space, and optics, with the most powerful laser in the world being installed, ready to be fully operational by 2010.

It's a great city to walk in, since it reveals its history through its buildings and squares. Pedestrian malls make it easy. On foot, visitors weave in and out of centuries of city life, through laneways and little squares into broad spaces and monumental fountains. From inside the old walls, the view through the 15th century gate takes in the five later centuries of life in Bordeaux, with glimpses of the broad sweep of classical 18th buildings and squares, 19th century fountains and essential bridges, 20th century cars and roadways, 21st century innovative tramway. The 18th century was good to Bordeaux, as its great classic architecture shows: the handsome buildings and broad avenues are a testimony to the power and wealth of trade. The early 19th revival included the wonderful Place de Quinconces, restored to glory a few years ago. The old city has three UNESCO-classified

World Heritage sites. The 21st century has brought urban renewal, and a sense of modern energy.

A growing and prosperous city, this is a centre of universities (there are four of them) and learning, of philosophers and writers – Montaigne, Montesquieu and Mauriac. It's a city of parks and gardens, classical and contemporary art and theatre, sport, and wonderful food markets.

Modern Bordeaux is still energised by the wine trade, with major international wine fairs and festivals. There's the very popular biannual Fete du Vin, the professional biennial Vinitech and Vinexpo exhibitions, and all the festivals marking the flowering of the vines, the start of vintage, and the new wine.

Like other European wine capitals, Bordeaux was established by the Romans, who planted the vineyards that have been an essential part of its fortunes over the millennia. The English acquired the area when Eleonor of Aquitaine married Henry II of England in the middle of the 12th century, and kept it – on and off – until the end of the Hundred Years War in 1453, when the French took it back permanently. But the lucrative wine trade with the English continued, followed by enthusiastic trade with the Dutch. Then came the riches of the French West Indies.

These days the city blends history with modern style – with technology, lively restaurants and bars, revived riverbanks, and a brilliant public transport system.

Bordeaux – the wine region – is the largest producer of AOC wine area in the world, with more than 115,000 hectares. The area produces about 900 million bottles of wine annually, of which most is red. The great winemaking areas surround the city: the Médoc to the north, St Emilion and Pomerol to the east, Graves and Sauternes to the south.

The great names here are as legendary as old Greek gods: Château Latour, Château Lafite, Château Margaux, Petrus, Château d'Yquem. Only 40kms away is St Emilion, a medieval walled town that has World Heritage Listing.

The great names represent only a fraction of what happens here: the diversity of appellations, vineyards, classifications and growers is rich and rewarding.

The wines

The wine region has 57 AOC (appellations d'origine contrôlée), with around 5000 châteaux and 60 cooperatives. Wine is a major employer in the area: about one in six people is

employed in the industry.

The range of grape varieties used in comparatively small, but with considerable variation of terroir. The characteristics of the great wines is their structure and their extraordinary ability to age. In optimum conditions, the great vintages can age for decades, improving year by year, and then holding their condition for some time. A great vintage is a declaration of optimism, of faith in the future.

Broadly, the Médoc, a kind of peninsula to the north of the city between the Gironde and the Atlantic, contains the appellations of St-Julien, St-Estèphe, Margaux, and Pauillac. On its low gravelly hills are grown a small range of red grapes – cabernet sauvignon mainly, with cabernet franc, merlot and a little petit verdot.

The area of Entre-deux-Mers (between the waters of the Gironde and Dordogne) is the largest vineyard area. Its reds are made from cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot – which also make rosé – and in white wines, sauvignon blanc is the dominant variety.

Graves, to the south of the city, stretches along the left bank of the Garonne, where the pebbly soils produce red wines mainly from cabernet sauvignon. The whites are made of sauvignon blanc and Semillon. The great sweet wines of Bordeaux are grown on the banks of the Garonne, around the village of Sauternes, where the microclimate favours the growth of the benevolent rot that turns semillon (with a little sauvignon blanc and muscadelle) into fabulous golden wine.

To the west, the Libournais includes St-Emilion, Pomerol and Fronsac. Merlot is the predominant variety here, with some cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc.

The five Côtes are the vineyards spread across the region, mainly on the right banks of the Dordogne and Garonne rivers. The red grapes include two not grown elsewhere: malbec and carmenère.

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Cape Town Media Information

Cape Town

Cape Town, South Africa's second-largest city and the most southerly major city in Africa, has a population of about 3,25 million. It is the seat of the National Parliament, a major port and one of the most popular tourist destinations in South Africa. The city is landmarked by Table Mountain, a majestic flat-topped rock formation which seems to stand sentinel over the city. Situated on a coastal peninsula, it is blessed with a wealth of natural attractions. Situated at the convergence of the Atlantic and Indian oceans, the climate is Mediterranean, with rainy winters and warm dry summers.

Cape Town is a vibrant and cosmopolitan city, with a rich cultural history and an energetic commitment to its future. It was in this city, from the balcony of the Town Hall, that Nelson Mandela made his famous speech in 1990, his first public one in decades, after being released from his incarceration as a political prisoner on Robben Island. It heralded the start of a new era of democracy for South Africa.

It's one of the most diverse of all the Great Wine Capitals, as can be heard in the mixture of languages which officially numbers 11 and includes English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. The city council's stated aim is to provide a city with dignity for all, and to ensure that economic and social development do not adversely affect the environment which sustains everyone.

The removal of political barriers and the redressing of historical injustices in South Africa now see people from previously disadvantaged communities emerge as wine farmers and winemakers in the Cape winelands for the first time. Historically, they provided the labour on which the industry is based. Currently, over 100 000 people from historically

disadvantaged groups are employed directly in the industry, which supports a total of over 215 000 jobs in the wider economy.

The industry is in the process of developing a transformation Wine Charter, which has as a prime objective the development of a strategy combining transformation and growth in the wine industry.

The diversity of the population is part of the wider biodiversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom, one of only six such kingdoms in the world, where almost all South African wine is produced. In this small area, with its ancient soils, high mountain peaks and verdant valleys, more plant species than occur in the entire northern hemisphere can be found. The 9600 plant species are all adaptations to hugely varied soils and unique microclimates created by the different aspects, topography and climatic conditions. These same soils and microclimates represent a treasure trove of grape growing and winemaking possibilities.

South Africa is the world's ninth largest producer. The first vineyard was planted in 1655, three years after Jan van Riebeeck landed to establish a victualling station for the Dutch East India Company. The first wine was made in 1659; since then, vineyard areas have reached over 100 000 hectares.

The wines

Vines have been grown for more than three centuries in South Africa but in the last decade the industry has been going through a period of renewal, and there has been new investment. There has been considerable replanting in recent years, as the industry has redefined its global position and moved its production basis from volume to high quality. A new generation of enthusiastic and knowledgeable winemakers is producing wines which are winning international recognition.

Over the past few years, South Africa's red wine plantings have increased dramatically, shifting the profile from predominantly white to red in line with international demands. Red wine plantings now constitute 45% of our national vineyards, with white wine varieties accounting for 55%.

A wide variety of grape cultivars are planted. The noble varieties are well represented, with cabernet sauvignon the most widely planted, followed by shiraz, merlot and pinotage – unique to South Africa, it's a cross between pinot noir and cinsaut (which used to be known as hermitage). Also to note are pinot noir, cinsaut, cabernet franc and ruby cabernet. More recent introductions include Mediterranean plantings like grenache, mourvèdre, malbec and petit verdot.

The most widely cultivated white variety is chenin blanc, noted for its versatility. Sauvignon blanc is grown across the regions and wines produced from this variety are being recognised internationally for their quality and complexity. Chardonnay is made in a number of styles, both wooded and unwooded, and is also used in our sparkling wine, Methode Cap Classique.

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Florence Media Information

Florence

Florence is the heart and capital of Tuscany, one of the most visited cities in the world. It is the cradle of Italian language, art and culture, and indeed, a landmark in European thought and achievement. Tuscany itself extends from the Ligurian coast to the Apennine mountains, and southwards to the Maremma, which borders the region of Lazio.

The city of Florence is one of the most ancient cities between the ones of the Great Wines Capitals network, and boasts of a thousands-year tradition, since it was settled even before the Romans, dating back to Etruscan times.

The city has a population of around 400,000 and attracts millions of visitors annually, who certainly need time to explore, to admire, to learn and to enjoy its intellectual, commercial, scientific and artistic legacy. In fact, the inheritance of the Renaissance period is everywhere, and even today the greatness of the Medici family can be felt.

In the Florentine landscape, it emerges the Duomo, the great dome that spans the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, completed in the 15th century by Brunelleschi, 200 years after the works started. Beside it is the large Cathedral belltower designed by Giotto.

The Ponte Vecchio, a bridge unique in the world for its particular architectural structure, is remarkable also for the famous Uffizi gallery that overtops it, and it is indeed another symbol of Florence, well known all over the world. In addition to these great monuments, many churches, museums and gardens throughout the whole city are evidence of the works of Italy's greatest artists.

Tuscany is a rich and fruitful region, its hills punctuated by olive trees, cypresses and vines. Agriturismo, agricultural tourism, is a feature: there are many traditional farmhouses and villas here available to tourists who love the peaceful and relaxing setting.

The region distinguishes itself, in Italy and in the world, for its historical and certified quality in the production of extra virgin olive oil and wine, favoured by the typical climate of the Mediterranean area, characterised by mild winters and hot summers.

Tuscan olive oil is full-flavoured and often peppery because of the olive varieties and also the rich soil.

Eating is straightforward and healthy, reliant on honest ingredients: legumes, vegetables, mushrooms, the famous beef from the Chiana Valley and the Maremma, pork, and the distinctive bread, baked without salt. This is food for wine, of which Tuscany has a glorious abundance.

The wines

Tuscany is known for Chianti, Italy's best known wine, and the one with the largest production. The dominant grape is Sangiovese, a native Italian grape whose tannins and acid balance provide the character of Chianti. It is well suited to the sunshine of the terraces, and to the extremes of temperatures. Traditionally, other varieties were permitted, even regarded as essential. A small percentage of Canaiolo Nero might be used, and small proportions of two white grape varieties, Trebbiano and Malvasia. The blend was defined by Baron Ricasoli, but there have been some important changes for Chianti. The wine may now be made nearly exclusively from Sangiovese.

Trebbiano and Malvasia are no longer permitted for Chianti Classico, which was recognised as an independent classification in 1996. Those wines are produced roughly in the area between Florence and Siena, and new regulations allow for some use of the "international" varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

In addition to Chianti Classico, there is also Chianti Rufina, and Chianti Montalbano, corresponding to geographic areas. Other zones include the Colli Aretini, Colli Fiorentini, Colli Senesi and Colline Pisane.

Sangiovese is also the dominant grape of the wines Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano.

Tuscan white wines include Vernaccia di San Gimignano, the first wine to be granted DOC status, and Pomino. Also belonging to the region is Vin Santo, a rich dessert wine that spends many years ageing in oak barrels.

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Mainz Media Info

Mainz, the State Capital of Rhineland-Palatinate

“Mainz – live it!” – the State Capital of Rhineland-Palatinate can best be understood under this motto. Because Mainz, the city at the confluence of the Rhine and the Main, and amid the largest German wine-growing area, combines a zest for life and a rich, age-old culture.

It was not only the ideal location in the middle of Europe that excited the Romans 2000 years ago, they also loved the beautiful landscape and the cheerfulness of the locals that reminded them of their Mediterranean home. This encouraged them to introduce wine to the city and its people.

The zest for life can still be felt everywhere in Mainz today: whether on a stroll across the market square with its southern flair, a walk through the beautiful old part of the city with its cozy wine taverns, or celebrating any of the numerous festivals. The people of Mainz extend a heartfelt welcome to their guests and invite them to the traditional fare of “Weck, Worscht und Woi” (bread rolls, sausage, and wine), or to the numerous cultural events that the museums, cinemas, theater, music, and cabaret offer. Last, but not least, the capital of Rhineland-Palatinate is known far beyond Germany for its most famous son: Johannes Gutenberg, the “man of the millennium”. Thus, Mainz is synonymous with innovation based on tradition. The 2000-year-old city on the Rhine – livable for its citizens and lovable for its visitors from around the world.

Mainz looks back at an impressive history: Roman relics refer to the over 2000-year-old heritage. Splendid baroque buildings recall the age of the electors during a stroll round the city. The best architects, sculptors and painters shaped the cityscape in the seventeenth century with the nobility’s palaces and new churches. The imposing St. Martin’s Cathedral, which has dominated the famous Rhine panorama of the State Capital of Rhineland-Palatinate for over 1000 years, shows the link between urban and ecclesiastical history. The Protestant Christ Church with its magnificent dome sets a counterpoint to the cathedral’s towers.

Mainz knows how to celebrate – thus firing local residents and guests equally with enthusiasm. During the Shrovetide carnival, the city on the Rhine becomes the meeting point for jesters, guards and revelers. Hundreds of thousands of carnival fans follow the Shrove Monday carnival procession in the streets or on TV. But the Mainz St. John’s

Night, always near the end of June, also entices numerous visitors to the city. The mid-summer fair recalls the city's greatest son, Johannes Gutenberg, who made his revolutionary invention of printing with movable type in Mainz around 1450. Two exemplars of the precious Gutenberg Bibles are today kept in the Gutenberg Museum, one of the State Capital's main attractions.

Apart from the Gutenberg Museum, the old quarter of Mainz with its baroque and half-timbered houses, its picturesque wine taverns and its outstanding shopping facilities forms a climax for tourists from the whole world. Thousands of visitors make a pilgrimage to St. Stephen's church annually in order to marvel at the stained glass windows designed by Marc Chagall. The cycle of nine windows with scenes from the Old Testament is one of the artist's finest and greatest works, bathing the church interior in a magic blue.

Mainz is also a soccer city: When 1. FSV Mainz 05 plays, not just the people of Mainz are in a fever of excitement. No wonder, because the club has made a name for itself in the shortest time as one of the most popular teams Germany-wide.

As a communication and media centre, Mainz is home to the Second German Television channel, ZDF, the regional broadcasting HQ of Southwest Radio, SWR, and many publishing houses. In addition to this, the city enjoys an outstanding reputation as a scientific and research location: Some 35,000 people study at the Johannes Gutenberg University, the largest in Rhineland-Palatinate. In addition come the university clinics, research institutions and universities of applied science.

Many of the people educated here do not move away again, because Mainz is part of the Rhine-Main area, one of Germany's economically most dynamic regions. More and more congress and conference organizers also decide in favor of the modern Congress Centrum Mainz: Since its extension, the Rheingoldhalle shines in new splendor and presents itself technically at highest level.

Cultural stronghold, media and scientific centre, business capital and congress venue – Mainz is not just worth a visit. Mainz is a city for working, learning and living. That constitutes its charm. And therein lies its great potential for the future.

The wines

Wine land Rheinhessen

With vineyards covering an area of 26,500 ha, Rheinhessen is Germany's largest wine-growing region. More than 3,500 wine growers have their home in the great sweep of the Rhine between Bingen and Worms, with the metropolis Mainz at the centre. The dynamism and change in this wine-growing region with its over 2000-year tradition, are enormous. Particularly the young generation of winegrowers shows with commitment, know how and self-assurance that quality and greatness can produce outstanding wines.

Two thirds of the vineyards are planted with the white-wine grapes Riesling, Silvaner, Müller Thurgau, but also Scheurebe, the burgundy varieties, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. About one third of the rolling hills are cultivated with red-wine grapes.

Dornfelder, Spätburgunder and Portugieser predominate, but St. Laurent, Regent, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon also produce outstanding wines.

One special case is the Selection Rheinhessen – since 1992 a particularly ambitious class of fine, dry wines which are produced in accordance with strict rules. The highest objective: outstanding quality. Since 2000, there has been the group of the *Grosse Gewächse* (Great Wines), a further designation of quality of the association Verband der Prädikatsweingüter Rheinhessen (VDP). The *Grosse Gewächse* focus on Riesling and Spätburgunder from the top locations of the region. Both programmes stand for top wines and the quality philosophy of the winegrowers in Rheinhessen.

A tingling delight for the palate is the *Winzersekt* (Winegrowers' Sparkling Wine). It was invented in the 1980s. The base wines selected must come from the wine producer concerned and the sparkling wine is produced in accordance with the classic, but expensive champagne method with fermentation in the bottle.

With commitment and boldness, Rheinhessen is a major wine region in Germany. And the State Capital Mainz as its centre, located at the heart of the German winegrowing areas par excellence: Rhineland-Palatinate. Thus not only are wine producers with a rich tradition to be found within the city in the west of the Rhine-Main region, but also national institutions, such as the Deutsches Weininstitut (DWI). Wine culture and the enjoyment of wine are not only upheld as a tradition, but are also to be experienced in everyday life – whether when attending one of the wine-tasting events, such as Best of Mainz Wine, the Mainz Weinbörse or the Wine Forum Rheinhessen, or every week when sauntering across the market on Saturdays. A stroll around the old part of the city with a visit to a wine tavern also promises a special wine enjoyment.

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Mendoza Media Information

Mendoza

Mendoza is Argentina's third largest city, with a population of around 1.6 million. It is located in the Cuyo region in the west of the country, and its special geographic situation gives it great significance. It has strategic importance because it connects neighbouring Chile with the so-called Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay).

Its geographic location, with the Andes to the west and plains in the east, accounts for its climate – warm in summer, quite cold in winter, and little rainfall. It is temperate and near desert.

The region offers a wide range of activities for tourists, especially for those who enjoy outdoor activities. There are 10 protected natural reserves in the province, accounting for about 71,000 hectares. One of the regional parks includes Argentina's highest peak, Aconcagua (6962m above sea level), is in the province.

There are other mountains, as well, for climbing, hiking and trekking, and skiing. Where there are mountains, there are valleys and rivers. Uspallata is one of the most beautiful valleys. There are other activities in the reserves, lakes and rivers: horse riding, white water rafting, sailing, fishing, canoeing, birdwatching.

That dry weather makes it an ideal climate for growing vines, and Mendoza accounts for nearly three-quarters of Argentina's wine production. The area is also important for fruit and vegetable growing, producing apples, pears, tomatoes, onions, plums, cherries, quinces, and also olives.

Low rainfall and dry air mean that vineyards are mostly free of fungal diseases, virtually eliminating the need to spray preventive chemicals. Water is provided by irrigation from rivers originating in the Andes, fed by snowmelt. Irrigation is an old practice here – old irrigation channels date from the time of the Incas.

The city itself was established in 1561 by the Spanish. It's now a city of tree-lined streets, squares and parks. St Martin Park, designed in 1897, is said to contain 50,000 trees, and its man-made lake is popular for yachting. The Foundation Area Museum contains the relics of the colonial government building that was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1861.

Other museums include that of Cornelio Moyano, a natural history museum, and the Wine Museum in nearby Maipu at Bodega La Rural, where the vineyards were first planted by the Italian-born Felipe Rutini.

Wine is of major importance here. Mendoza is an important centre for wine education, including viticulture, enology and marketing. There are about 1200 wineries in the province, spread over four regions that show great diversity of soils and microclimates. Total production is around 10 million hectolitres, annually. There has been considerable international investment in the wine industry recently.

Festivals are important in the region, including the annual wine harvest festival in March.

The wines

Argentina is the fifth largest wine producing country in the world, and until recently, its production was accounted for by domestic consumption. Economic stability over the last decade has created significant opportunities for development and ambitious plans for export.

There are a number of vineyard areas: Luján de Cuyo (DOC since 1989) and Maipú (both sought after by international investors) to the north and east, the Valle de Uco in the centre, and San Rafael and surrounding areas in the south.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the vineyards of Mendoza is their altitude, far higher than other wine capitals. In the north, vines are planted at 600-700 metres above sea-level, and in the Valle de Uco has the highest altitude, at around 1400 metres above sea-level. The low night temperatures there ensure an acidity that enables good sparkling wine production.

The other notable feature is the diversity of grape varieties. Of the red wine varieties,

malbec is the most popular, and may even be considered a signature grape. It was introduced from France about a century ago, and has found great expression in the particular dry climate of Mendoza, and produces a rich and fruity wine with soft tannins. It is sometimes used to great effect in blends; and it suits the excellent beef found in restaurants and parilladas (open-grill steakhouses). Other varieties planted are cabernet sauvignon, syrah, merlot, and bonarda, which is very similar to northern Italy's barbera. Some tempranillo is also grown.

Torrontes is to white wine what malbec is to red - distinctively Argentinian. Other white wine varieties include riesling, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, ugni blanc, and semillon. Improved viticulture and recent investment have improved the quality and created a strong export market for Argentinian wines.

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Porto Media Information

Porto

Porto, designated a World Heritage City by UNESCO in 1996, and a European City of Culture in 2000, has an urban landscape as rich and diverse as its long and lively history. It is the second largest city in Portugal, occupies a unique position geographically, historically, and in the wine world.

Porto, which existed before it was settled by the Romans, really became established as a trading city in the Middle Ages. It is defined by the Atlantic Ocean and the Douro River. The Atlantic provided food (bacalhau), the cod that is dried and salted, was fished in the northern waters of the ocean), and trade. It brought the English and Dutch merchants and their trading goods – mainly cloth- and enabled them to return with Portuguese wine, oil and fruit. The Douro River provides the terraced slopes for vineyards, and in days past, provided the transport for the wine to its cellars downstream. In Porto itself, the red-roofed brightly coloured houses that cover the hills look across the water to the cellars of Nova de Gaia.

This is a city that reveals itself most clearly during a walking tour. Almost every street and building, and every street name, has a story to tell that links past, present and future. In the Ribeira district (the river bank), for example, there's the rua da Alfandega, the street of the customs house. The 1324 customs house is of great importance, because it represented the start of the division between Church and Crown (the Crown took control of the city's resources.) It is also thought to be where Henry the Navigator was born. From the end of the 14th century, Prince Henry and encouraged the exploration of the West African coast. It was the beginning of the voyages of discovery that took to Portuguese to

India, China, and Brazil and gave them great influence and wealth.

Those voyages were also the start of the nickname of those from Porto. They are known as tripeiros, tripe-eaters. Legend has it that the inhabitants gave the best meat to the sailors for their journeys, and kept the tripe and other offal. Tripe is still one of the specialities of the city's cooking, along with seafood, and delicious cakes that owe much to the past baking skills of the convents.

The legacy of the influence and wealth of the Discovery days is wonderfully expressed in a mixture of architectural styles that show the city's openness to new influences, even as it maintains its old traditions. See the azulejos, the distinctive blue painted tiles that decorate buildings from cathedrals (Igreja do Carmo in particular) to railway stations, and in the tiles that cover the exterior of buildings. Look out for Julio Resende's modern tiled gift to the Ribeira district.

The Palacio da Bolsa, the Stock Exchange Palace whose individually decorated rooms pay tribute to a range of architectural and decorative styles, is an indication of the power and wealth of the Stock Exchange in the 19th century, just as the Town Hall, presiding over the Praca da Liberdade, expresses Porto's pride in itself (and a rare moment of French influence).

The long commercial exchange with England is evident in the port cellars and the names on them – Taylor, Sandeman, Croft. There are Portuguese names, too, of course. The port cellars are reached by crossing the Luis I bridge, one of the six bridges that span the Douro at this point. One of the others was designed by Gustav Eiffel; still others are elegantly modern. The cellars, or lodges, are where wine from the Douro is brought to age in oak casks before being bottled. Most of the cellars are open for tours and tastings, some even have their own restaurants. Some have won Great Wine Capitals Tourism awards.

Modern Porto includes the Serralves Modern Art Museum, that combines contemporary art with public spaces, vast gardens, and an outstanding art deco house. There's the House of Music, a new Concert Hall on the edge of Boavista, the area that developed as old Porto outgrew its needs and that leads to the Foz, the Atlantic seaside, and its walks. Portugal's climate is as hospitable as the city.

Porto has changed, evolved, and developed into an exceptional modern city, one that its patron saint, S. Joao, would be proud of. The entire city joins in the celebrations for his festival on June 23.

The wines

Port begins its life on the steep slopes of the Douro river, starting 100 kms to the east of the city. The slopes are protected from the weather the Atlantic blows in, but these are difficult slopes in a harsh climate, producing small quantities.

Traditionally the wine that was made in the autumn was brought down river by boat (rabelos); now it comes by road to be aged in oak casks in the port cellars at Vila Nova de Gaia. The wine was fortified by adding brandy from the 18th century by the English, who wanted to protect it on its journey. It was shipped in wooden casks, known as pipes, and bottled in England. These days, all port is bottled in Porto.

There are about 60 grape varieties that might be used in the making of port, but in reality, it comes down to a handful. The red grape varieties are Touriga nacional Tinto Roriz, Tinto Franca, Tinto Barroca, and Tinto Cao. White grape varieties include Malvasia Fina, Viosinho, and gouveio.

There are three basic styles of port:

Ruby ports are those which maintain their deep red colour and the fruit and strength of a young wine. In ascending order of quality, the categories are Ruby, Reserve, Late Bottled Vintage (LBV) and Vintage. The finest category wines, especially Vintage, followed by LBV, are good for storing as they age well in bottle.

Tawny are blended of different wines that have aged for different lengths of time in casks or in vats. With age, the colour of the wines slowly develops into tawny, medium tawny or light tawny, with a bouquet of dried fruits and wood; the older the wine, the stronger these aromas. The present categories in this style are: Tawny, Tawny Reserve, Tawny with an indication of Age (10, 20, 30 and 40 years old) and Colheita. These are blends of wines from several years, except for Colheitas, which are wines of a single year that are similar to an aged Tawny of the same age. These wines are ready to drink when they are bottled.

White Port varies in style according to whether it has aged for a shorter or longer period of time, and different degrees of sweetness according to the manner by which it is made. In addition to the traditional White Ports, there now are other wines with a floral and complex aroma and a minimum alcohol content of 16.5% (Light Dry White Port) capable of meeting the demand for less alcoholic Ports.

Port has the distinction of having the oldest designation of any wine. The area was

demarcated in 1756 by the Prime Minister of Portugal, the Marques de Pombal. There are three sub-regions: the Lower Corgo in the west, the Upper Corgo in the centre (the heart of the demarcated region) and the Upper Douro to the east. These days, the regulators are the Port and Douro Wines Institute, an inter-professional council.

The wines of Porto are not only fortified. The red table wines of the Douro Valley are balanced and beautifully flavoured.

The vineyards closest to the city are those Porto is also the gateway to the region that produces Vinho Verde, the young fresh white wines of the Minho. The local grape varieties include Loureiro, Trajadura, and Alvarinho. The Minho is Portugal's greenest region, as rich in history as Porto itself, and as satisfying for visitors.

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San Francisco Media Information

San Francisco/ Napa Valley

San Francisco, the city in which singer Tony Bennett left his heart, is on the west coast of the United States, with a notably temperate climate, thanks to the Pacific Ocean. It has a population of about 750,000, and according to a US study, is rated as the most sustainable city in the county, judged on factors quality of life and healthy economic development factors such as air quality, tap water, zoning, knowledge base, and energy policy. Nationally and internationally, it is a favoured tourist destination..

It is the focal point of the San Francisco Bay area, which also includes the cities of Oakland and Berkeley. San Francisco itself is one of the most densely populated cities in the US, but was not part of the US until 1847, during the Mexican-American War, and was a small settlement until gold was discovered in California two years later. The wealth generated by the gold rushes turned San Francisco into the banking and financial centre of California.

The city was almost destroyed by an earthquake in 1906, and there was a major earthquake in 1989. The threat of earthquakes – the city lies near two fault lines – mean that buildings must meet high standards structurally.

Like Melbourne, which also grew because of goldrushes, it has a sizeable Chinatown district. There's a considerable demographic and population mix, and San Francisco is said to have the largest population of Asian Americans in the US.

It's a lively and vibrant city, and is known as a notably liberal city. From the 1950s, its reputation has grown as a centre of alternative lifestyles and culture, reinforced by the presence of the University of California at Berkeley. This was the city of the beatniks and

hippies, and now a gay city. It's a city of literature and performing arts, and of cafés – there are hundreds of them. The San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Ballet are some of the oldest continuous performing arts companies in the US, while the Asian Art Museum and the new MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) are more recent.

It's also a city of hills, and a considerable diversity of neighbourhoods and architectural styles – which is one reason it has been the backdrop of so many movies. The rises are recorded in the names of the areas: Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill, Russian Hill, Pacific Heights.

Since it is surrounded by water, it is also a city of bridges. The Golden Gate Bridge and the Oakland Bay Bridge were both built in the 1930s. The ocean keeps the city relatively cool, especially in hot US summers. The writer Mark Twain joked that the coldest winter he ever spent was summer in San Francisco.

As cities go, it's highly educated, and is growing as a centre for biotechnology and biomedical research as well as Information Technology.

It's a good city for eating and drinking, of course. Berkeley and San Francisco are two centres for California cuisine, which essentially combines French techniques and a lighter, more salad-driven style. Farmers' markets have been an important feature of Bay area eating since the 1970s, when Berkeley-based chefs such as Alice Waters focussed on sourcing the best locally and specially grown produce. In San Francisco itself, innovative cooking often draws on Chinese and Japanese traditions.

One of the features of the table is of course wine. California is by far the major wine-producing state of the US, and the fourth largest wine production area in the world. It is no accident that the American Centre for Food, Wine and the Arts is in the Napa Valley, California's largest vineyard area. It's a major tourist area, enjoyed for its many small towns, appreciated for its climate, and admired for its wines.

The wines

The Napa Valley is the best known of the extensive Californian vineyard area, although its total production represents a small percentage (about four per cent) of the total wine production of the state. The Napa is distinctive for its range of soils, formed as a result of volcanic activity and geological evolution dating back millions of years.

There are roughly 44,000 acres of vines, and close to 400 wineries. Napa appellations include Yountville (named for George Yount, who planted the first vines in around 1838), Stags Leap, Mount Veeder and Napa County.

The most important single grape variety in Napa is cabernet sauvignon, with more than 17,000 acres. That is followed by chardonnay, which is the most popular varietal wine in

the US. Other varieties are merlot (which is the top-selling red varietal in US supermarkets), sauvignon blanc, syrah, and pinot noir. A little zinfandel is also grown: although it is often regarded as a US grape, it was introduced to California during the gold rush. It is closely related to the Italian grape primitivo.

The Napa Valley's wineries vary considerably in size, from million case production to small family-owned companies that might produce only 200 cases a year.

Most producers share a strong commitment to sustainability and the environment, and to benefiting the community. For example, Auction Napa Valley is the world's largest charity auction and greatly benefits Napa County health, youth and housing. Robert Mondavi is a major benefactor of the American Centre for Food, Wine and the Arts.

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