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WILLAMETTE VALLEY WINE

The Place

The Willamette Valley, Oregon's leading wine region, has over two-thirds of the state's wineries and vineyards and is home to more than 530 wineries. It is recognized as one of the premier Pinot noir producing areas in the world. Other cool-climate varieties such as Pinot gris, Pinot blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling and Gewürztraminer are equally at home in the valley.

Nestled between Oregon's Cascade Mountains and the Coastal Range, Willamette Valley's terrain is varied and huge: more than 100 miles long and spanning 60 miles at its widest point. The climate boasts a long and gentle growing season—warm summer days with cool evenings, mild winters and long, often rainy springs—the perfect conditions for growing the cool-climate grape varieties for which Oregon is best known. In fact, the finicky Willamette Valley climate and its soils make it the promised land for Pinot noir in America. So, it's no surprise that more than 80% of Oregon's Pinot noir is produced in the Willamette Valley.

Because of these prime growing conditions, the pastoral, rolling hills and valleys of the Willamette Valley are striped with vineyards and dotted with wineries. The number of wineries in the region is growing, yet the valley remains small in its personal, handcrafted approach. The majority of wineries are family-owned establishments dedicated to a hands-on, artisanal winemaking style. These small producers, along with larger, established wineries together contribute to the world-class reputation of the region's wine.

Even with all the notoriety and the growing number of wineries, the Willamette Valley continues to be a place where wine enthusiasts and neophytes alike can personally meet winemakers and taste directly from the barrel.

It's a place where winemakers and owners have worked together since the early pioneers arrived in the '60s and '70s, sharing everything from secrets to equipment. This unique combination of pioneering spirit and camaraderie has created a tight-knit community along with top-quality wines.

The Willamette Valley is also a place where wineries are dedicated to sustainable winegrowing and winemaking practices based on their respect for the land and desire to see future generations continue the winemaking tradition. Approximately 48% of Oregon's vineyards are certified sustainable by independent third party certification programs.

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Willamette Valley wineries are a popular tourist destination, with the area boasting a luxury destination resort, several high-end inns and many delightful bed & breakfasts. The valley also offers a long list of fine dining restaurants. An additional advantage for the wine tourist is the proximity of the wineries to Portland, Salem, and Eugene, Oregon's three largest cities.