

BOOK AND FILM REVIEWS

Lonely Planet: *Wine Trails: Plan 52 Perfect Weekends in Wine Country*

Lonely Planet Food, Fort Mill, SC, 2015, 320 pp., ISBN 978-1743607503, \$21.07.

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After two years of a global pandemic, who does not need a trip? And what better partner to act as a tour guide than Lonely Planet? As a leading travel media company and guidebook brand since 1973, Lonely Planet has served as a silent companion to a dedicated community of world travelers for some 50 years. The travel experts are now extending their recommendations to oenophiles everywhere with a tour book spotlighting the world's top wine regions. Spanning 20 countries, *Wine Trails: Plan 52 Perfect Weekends in Wine Country* offers 52 itineraries highlighting more than 300 wineries to “meet winemakers ... and experience some of the world's most beautiful places through the amazing wines made there” (back cover). The pairing of wine and wanderlust complements the reader and prospective adventurer nicely.

Filled with beautiful photographs and colorful maps of “52 of the world's greatest wine regions, with weekend-long itineraries in each” (p. 2), *Wine Trails* is brimming with information and reads more like a souvenir than a guidebook. The contents are separated by country and presented in alphabetical order, starting with Argentina and concluding with the United States. The book is broken into sections based upon each of the 20 represented countries, wherein one to seven wine regions are highlighted. Each wine region sub-section follows the same structure: (1) a half-page overview of the region accompanied by a local map; (2) a selection ranging from two (Meknès, Morocco) to nine (Burgundy, France) wineries, including an overview, image, and contact details for each winery; and (3) essential information describing where to stay, where to eat, what to do, and annual celebrations unique to the region to be considered when planning your visit.

Over the course of 320 pages, the book takes readers on virtual trips from the comfort of their armchairs, where they can start planning their actual travels. And, with hints like “remember that you're more likely to meet actual winemakers at the smaller cellar doors – and that's the joy of wine touring” (p. 47), there are some tidbits of guidance that differentiate these prospective travels from the more regular sort of pocket guide.

Despite that, some of the suggestions seem quite forced, which leads to an imbalance across the pages of the book. For example, 13 of the 20 countries (e.g., Argentina, Chile, and England) focus only on one wine region each, for a total of 70 wineries, whereas the seven remaining countries (including France, Spain, and South Africa) describe multiple wine regions and account for the other 257 wineries in the book. This could be because the latter-mentioned countries, whether New World (Australia) or Old World (Italy), boast more famous global wine regions and account for larger shares of the world's wine production; but, while many of the wine regions mentioned may be familiar, others of the more celebrated wine regions (such as Bordeaux) go unrepresented, which is a very curious editing decision.

Regardless, the presumed popularity of this book resulted in three sequels: *Wine Trails: United States & Canada* (2018), *Wine Trails: Australia & New Zealand* (2018), and *Wine Trails: Europe* (2020). Each of these editions plans for 40 “perfect weekends in wine country” (front cover) as opposed to the original version's 52, but with more than 250 pages each of recommendations and insights, this should prove to be enough adventure for even the most ambitious traveling oenophile.

Wine Trails: United States & Canada follows a similar theme and trajectory to its predecessor, and even has some repeat wineries throughout its pages. “This is a book for casual quaffers; there's no impenetrable language about malolactic fermentation or scoring systems. Instead, we meet some of the continent's most enthusiastic and knowledgeable winemakers and learn about each region's wines in their own words” (p. 2), and this is, indeed, part of the book's appeal. The guide is not ostentatious, but instead understated and simple for the novice wine taster to use as a reference. As in the original, we see a wide spectrum of state wine regions (ranging from only one in multiple states to 14 in California); and it may seem generous to include Canada, as only five regions are explored across the country, leaving 35 to be spread across the United States in places as up-and-coming as Arizona, Maryland, and Colorado. Still, this follow-up to the global version of *Wine Trails* could yield some fun weekend getaways.

In the introduction of *Wine Trails: Australia & New Zealand*, the authors write that “tasting wine in the place it was made can be a revelation” (p. 2). This edition replicates the previous two but is made unique by its regional focus. The book offers 30 itineraries for visiting wine regions across the continent of Australia, save for Northern Territory, with a generous emphasis on the states of South Australia and Victoria, leaving the remaining 10 itineraries covering both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. The guidebook offers urban itineraries for Auckland and Wellington, while also sending the traveler to more verdant and bucolic locations like Otago and Gisborne.

Finally, by the time the dedicated reader gets to *Wine Trails: Europe*, the manual is easy to anticipate as it is a replica of its predecessors. In fact, many of the wine regions visited in the first edition of the travel guide are replicated here. This time, though, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, and Romania are included; and because the focus is solely on Europe, some places can be covered more in depth, and there is an allowance for some new areas to be considered, such as France's Bordeaux!

Ultimately, *Wine Trails: Plan 52 Perfect Weekends in Wine Country* and its successors follow a formula that has allowed Lonely Planet to serve as a global guide to touring for half a century. These books should attract travelers looking to stay off the beaten path, while obtaining the inside scoop on an otherwise foreign place of travel.

This time, wine is both the companion and the destination, and who would complain about that?

References

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Anne Krebiehl: *The Wines of Germany*

Infinite Ideas Ltd., London, UK, 2019, 326 pp., ISBN: 978-1906821869, \$38.75.

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“The king is dead, long live the king,” or so it seems with much wine writing today. Despite the availability of excellent content on the Internet and the significant shift in consumer interests toward questions of sustainability, labor, and equity, a slew of publications appear each year that seem frozen in time, as if unwilling to recognize that the palates of readers, like wine drinkers, evolve over time. *The Wines of Germany* exists somewhere between the old and the new. While the book offers much to celebrate, including its geographic comprehensiveness, it also relapses into wine-book clichés, feeling at times like an address book (with brief descriptions) of German estates.

Anne Krebiehl MW (Master of Wine) is an accomplished writer whose credentials are nearly unmatched in the niche world of German wine. Her work has appeared in *Wine Enthusiast*, *Decanter*, *Falstaff*, and several other leading publications, including *Trink*, a forward-looking online publication. Krebiehl’s expertise and passion for German wine are evident on every page, though the timeworn structure of the book somewhat undermines her impressive credentials.

Following a series of detailed yet difficult-to-read (black and white) maps, the book begins with a brief and somewhat rote foray into the history of German wine, followed by a more compelling explanation of the evolution of German wine laws, which, like it or not, have had an outsized influence on the taste of German wine, past and present. The introduction also includes sections on Riesling, Spätburgunder, Sekt, and climate change, all of which can be useful both for novice and more learned German wine enthusiasts.