
Seven UNESCO world heritage wine regions to visit

Chris Mercer, Decanter.com

Wine is one of mankind's greatest traditions and Champagne and Burgundy recently joined the club of vineyard regions on the UNESCO world heritage list. See below to find out which other regions have made the grade. Have you visited any of them? If so, are there restaurants or specific wineries that you would recommend to others?



Pantelleria island bush vines, off the coast of Sicily Credit:Italian Ministry of Agriculture

- [Quick Link: Champagne and Burgundy recognised by UNESCO](#)

Tokaj, Hungary



Tokaj vineyards in autumn

Hungary's Tokaj appellation, characterised by its rolling and verdant hills, has the distinction of being Europe's first classified wine region. The thousand-year-old winemaking traditions that still remain in place today make it an obvious choice for UNESCO world heritage designation. Home to the famous Tokaji-Aszú dessert wine (characterised by French King Louis

XIV as ‘the wine of kings, the king of wines’), it is also noteworthy for its labyrinthine cellars where these historic sweet wines are stored.

The Ungvári cellar in Sátoraljaújhely, near the Slovakian border, comprises four floors which connect 27 different cellars, accessed from different, above-ground gates. Covered in extraordinary mould, the cellar labyrinth is one ingredient that contributes to the magic of these dessert wines. *Words: Katie Kelly Bell*

- See also: [Decanter travel guide to Tokaj](#)

Loire Valley, France



Loire Valley is on the UNESCO list

With its swathes of rolling vineyards and wheat fields surrounding palaces built or modified during the Renaissance, the Loire is a vivid testament to mankind’s golden age.

The UNESCO area of the Loire comprises 164 towns and villages – including Chinon, Samur and Angers – between the two hillsides that border the river from Sully-sur-Loire (Loiret) and Chalonnessur- Loire (Maine-et-Loire).

Many of the region’s charming villages and roadways are vestiges of the enormous Roman

influence, as the Loire was a vital waterway between Rome and ancient Gaul. *Words: Katie Kelly Bell*

- See also: [Decanter travel guide to Loire Valley](#)

Douro Valley, Portugal



Quinta de Roriz in the Douro Valley

Demarcated in 1756, the Douro is one of the world’s oldest wine regions and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of the human influence on its development. More than 2,000 years of winemaking have shaped it into a terraced, vine-covered, wine-producing destination.

The highly acidic terroir is unforgiving schist, which winemakers have physically cracked and crushed to accommodate vines. Steep mountain contours require heavy terracing and water management; some vines have roots that run to 20m deep. Growing grapes here requires rare fortitude. *Words: Katie Kelly Bell*

- See also: [Margaret Rand on the discovery of Douro terroir](#)

Piedmont, Italy



Barolo the view towards Serralunga

The **World Heritage Committee** added the ‘vineyard landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato’ in 2014.

The listing includes the towns of **Barolo**, Castiglione Falletto Grinzane Cavour, La Morra, Monforte d’Alba, Novello and Serralunga d’Alba in the Barolo DOCG, as well as **Barbaresco** and Neive in the Barbaresco DOCG. In its submission for **Piedmont**, Italy’s government said, ‘Vine

pollen has been found in the area dating from the 5th Century BC’. [See how Decanter.com reported the story.](#)

- See also: [Decanter travel guide to Piedmont](#)

Middle Rhine, Germany



The Middle Rhine’s beauty is well-chronicled, but it gained UNESCO status for its role as a major trade artery in the evolution of history and human development.

Numerous hiking trails surround the villages, offering visitors magnificent vistas of vineyards and forested countryside. Riesling flourishes on the region’s precipitous hillsides but requires great care and skill during harvest (some slopes angle nearly

45°).

The ideal way to explore the region, and certainly the most bucolic, is by boat. Consider making the village of Boppard your home base, a 2,000-year-old town that hosts an annual walk through the vineyards on the last Sunday in April. *Words: Katie Kelly Bell*

- See also: [Why not visit more of the Rhine? Decanter travel guide to Baden](#)

Bordeaux, France



The Bordeaux skyline

[Bordeaux](#) hardly needs introduction to wine lovers. According to UNESCO, the city's 2,000-year-old role as the capital of a world-famous wineproducing region make it a shining example of cultural heritage. And in many ways, the city is as lovely and intriguing as the region's châteaux.

In the past decade most of the buildings (previously covered in layers of grime and soot) have undergone a massive façade-cleansing, lending added lustre to the city's grand structures. *Words: Katie Kelly Bell*

- See also: [Insider's guide to Bordeaux city by Jane Anson](#)

Pantelleria, Italy



Pantelleria island bush vines. Credit: Italian ministry of agriculture

Looking for somewhere more remote to explore? The wild card entry in this selection is Pantelleria, 85km off Italy's southern coast.

Its terraced bush vine growing technique handed down through centuries of generations was [placed on the UNESCO](#)

[world heritage list in late 2014.](#)

Passito di Pantelleria, a sweet wine made from dried ‘**Zibibbo**’ grapes, also known as Muscat of Alexandria, has **DOC** status in Italy. Moscato di Pantelleria is also a DOC.