

Austria's winding wine trail

European cultural capital enjoys a new reputation for the fruit of its vines

BY LANA BORTOLOTT
Special to amNewYork

Blessed with architectural riches, an iconic art movement and a strong musical pedigree, Austria has long been Europe's cultural powerhouse. But lately, there's another reason the hills are alive there — wine country. Wine-centric spas and tasting rooms have risen alongside Gothic castles and palaces.



Schloss Esterházy palace

Niederösterreich (Wachau/Lower Austria)

A slow-moving cruise on the Danube River lets you drink in the scenery — acres of vineyards where Rieslings and Grüner Veltliners are produced. You can hop on and off to sample wines and the other pride of the valley, apricots. (Brandner Schifffahrt cruise: adults, \$28 for two hours; \$17 one hour, and \$9 for kids.)

Begin in the historic town of Langenlois, where you can taste the region's wine offerings at the Ursin Haus Vinothek. For about \$12.50, sample the portfolios offered that day, or ask for specific tastes for about \$1.50 per glass. The shop sells bottles from more than 75 producers.

At the Loisium Hotel spa, renowned architect Steven Holl created a glass-cube complex over 900-year-old wine vaults. Aboveground, you can visit the vinotherapy spa (get a merlot facial or grape body wrap) and multimedia Wine Experi-



An Austrian heuriger, or wine tavern

ence, get a five-flight tasting at the vinothek, and order nouveau Austrian cuisine at the hotel's restaurant, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking vineyards. Daily room rates start at \$120, and wine and spa packages start at \$215 per person for a two-night stay.

+Getting there

Fly to Vienna International Airport and drive to Langenlois, about 45 miles northeast. Eisenstadt is about 85 miles southeast of Langenlois.



Burgenland

Burgenland, the far-east region bordering Hungary, is the traditional home of sweet wines, and it's where young winemakers



The charming village of Weissenkirchen on the Danube river in Austria

(PHOTOS: LANA BORTOLOTT)

create new wines from old vines. If you want to learn about wines firsthand, visit the Austrian Wine Academy

in the charming town of Rust. Comprehensive tasting seminars range from \$85 to \$110.

Satiate your food cravings at the gourmet Henrici Restaurant across from the Esterházy palace, or head to

Sipping notes for the season

Lacey Rozinsky, wine director of the Four Seasons' Garden Wine Bar in NYC, recommends Austria's native Grüner Veltliner for the summer season.



Rozinsky

Why drink Austrian wines? They're really popular, especially in the summer, because they're not overpowering and they're really refreshing.

Q&A

Describe the wines? Austrian wines are clean and crisp and have subtle flavors ranging from herbal to fruit-forward. They're a relaxed kind of wine.

Do they pair well with particular foods? They're perfect picnic wines. You really don't need a lot of food — a salad Niçoise, sushi or a young, vibrant cheese.

Rust and check out at a wine tavern — known as a heuriger — where a traditional cold-platter meal costs about \$18-\$22 with wine.

In Eisenstadt, the four-star Hotel Burgenland is an oversize chalet with modest comforts and rates ranging from \$110 to \$190. Closer to Lake Neusiedlersee, the Seehotel Rust offers three-night packages that cost about \$700 for a double.

TRAVEL DEALS

• **Cash back for your travels:** Book a hotel stay through

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• **Cancun getaway:** This package includes airfare and



three nights at the Krystal Hotel, starting at \$209. The beachfront resort is 10 minutes from downtown Cancun, where nightclubs and shopping centers abound.

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