

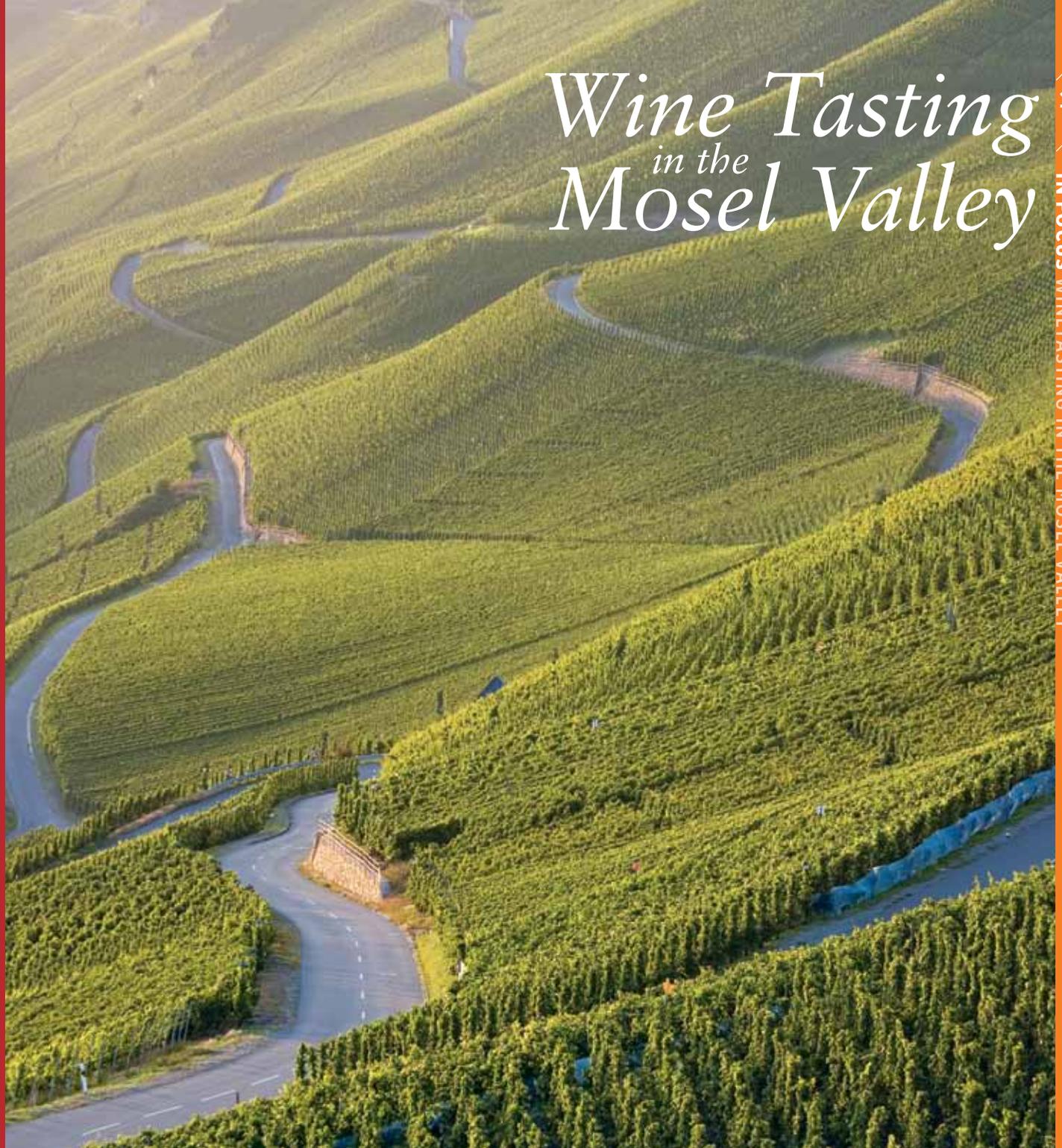


In the heart of the Mosel Valley lies the Mittelmosel (Middle Mosel), where vineyards tumble down steep slate slopes to riverside villages full of half-timbered, baroque, and belle époque architecture. Famed for its warm climate and 2,000-year-old wine-making tradition, it produces some of the best Rieslings in the world. The Middle Mosel's many wineries and tasting rooms are concentrated along a meandering 75-mile stretch of lush river valley, picturesque towns, and rural estates between the ancient town of Trier and the village of Zell, allowing for multiple sips in a short amount of time.

By Jeff Kavanagh

Above, Dr Pauly-Bergweiler bottle.
Left, Vineyards in the Mosel Valley.

Wine Tasting *in the* Mosel Valley





TWO DAYS IN THE MIDDLE MOSEL

DAY 1

Traben-Trarup

Small, family-run wineries that have been producing high-quality wines for generations dominate the Middle Mosel. Starting in Trier, just across the border from Luxembourg, the tour follows the B-53 and the Mosel River as it flows northwest through a succession of pretty wine villages and steep-sloped estates.



Episcopal Wine Estates

Drop down into a labyrinth of cellars beneath Trier's streets or visit the estate's elegant *vinothek* (wine store) to sample fine Rieslings built upon almost two millennia of priestly tradition. **Try:** fruity and elegant Scharzhofberger Riesling.

✉ Gervasiusstrasse 1, Trier
☎ 0651/145760
🌐 www.bwgtrier.de



Mosel grape harvest

Sektgut St. Laurentius

Whether in the spacious tasting room, on the outdoor terrace, or in the modern little wine bar near the river, there are plenty of places to taste this winery's *sekt* (sparkling wine), considered some of the best in the region. **Try:** fruity, creamy, and yeasty Cremant.

✉ Euchariusstrasse 15, Leiwien
☎ 06507/939055
🌐 www.st-laurentius-sekt.de

Weingut Lehnert-Veit

In addition to Riesling, visitors can sample Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay in this winery's Mediterranean-style garden on the banks of the Mosel. **Try:** delicately flinty, well-balanced Falkenberg Riesling Mineral Kabinett Feinherb.

✉ In der Dur 10, Piesport
☎ 06507/2123
🌐 www.weingut-lv.net

Weingut Karp-Schreiber

This welcoming winery's varietals include Riesling, Weissburgunder, and Regent; and it also produces a nice Rotling, a *cuvée* (blend) of all three. When the sun's shining, the best place to taste them is on the winery's little trellised veranda. **Try:** fresh, elegant "my karp" Riesling.

✉ Moselweinstrasse 186, Brauneberg
☎ 06534/236
🌐 www.karp-schreiber.de

Weingut Bauer

An extension of the family home, where four generations reside beneath the same roof, the Bauer's simple, modern tasting room is a good place to sample award-winning still and sparkling white wines presented with old-fashioned hospitality. **Try:** fruity, refreshing Winzersekt Riesling Brut.

✉ Moselstrasse 3, 54486 Mülheim
☎ 06534/571
🌐 www.weingut-bauer.de



Wine barrels at Kerpen



Weingut Karp-Schreiber



DAY 2

From the quiet village of Mülheim, the Mosel makes a couple of sweeping loops up the valley, passing through the towns of Bernkastel-Kues and Traben-Trarbach as it winds along.

Dr. Pauly-Bergweiler

This winery's presence in the Mosel includes vineyards in seven different villages and a grand villa in the center of Bernkastel, where its cozy *vinothek* finds space within the mansion's vaulted cellars. **Try:** racy, flinty Alte Badstube am Doktorberg Riesling.

✉ Gestade 15, Bernkastel
☎ 06531/3002
🌐 www.pauly-bergweiler.com

Kerpen

A friendly husband-and-wife-run winery, Kerpen has eight generations of winemaking tradition, a special collection of Rieslings with labels designed by visiting artists, and an unpretentious tasting room within a stone's throw of the river.

Try: dry Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett Feinherb.
✉ Werallee 6, Bernkastel-Wehlen
☎ 06531/6868
🌐 www.weingut-kerpen.de

Rebenhof

You'll find only Rieslings in Rebenhof's stylish, contemporary tasting room, which shares space with stainless-steel fermentation tanks. **Try:** flinty,

old-vine Ürziger Würtgarten Riesling Spätlese.

✉ Hüwel 2-3, Ürzig
☎ 06532/4546
🌐 www.rebenhof.de

Schmitges

Located on an unassuming village lane, Schmitges specializes in the production of high-quality dry whites that, along with the modern, wine-bar style of their *vinothek*, distinguishes them from many other local establishments.

Try: light, summery Rivaner.
✉ Im Unterdorf 12, Erden
☎ 06532/2743
🌐 www.schmitges-weine.de

Weingut Martin Müllen

Established in 1991, this winery is a mere infant compared to many others here, but its success has its roots in modern and traditional winemaking principles, and one of the best *Grand Cru* (great growth) vineyards in the region. **Try:** light but complex Trarbacher Hühnerberg Riesling Spätlese.

✉ Alte Marktstrasse 2, Traben-Trarbach
☎ 06541/9470
🌐 www.muellen.de

STOP FOR A BITE

✉ Weinstube Kesselstatt

Sitting beneath vines in the shadow of the Liebfrauenkirche and the Trier Dom you can sip Kesselstatt estate wines and snack on wild boar and locally produced cheese.

✉ Liebfrauenstrasse 10, Trier
☎ 0651/41178

🌐 weinstube-kesselstatt.de
✉ Weinromantik Richtershof Hotel

An ideal place for lovers of the grape, this stately hotel has a bistro that serves seasonal dishes such as white asparagus and ham, a gourmet restaurant offering contemporary cuisine, and a wine list that runs to 350 bottles, 150 of which are from the Mosel.

✉ Hauptstrasse 81-83, Mülheim
☎ 06534/9480
🌐 www.weinromantikhotel.de

✉ Der Ratskeller

Just off Bernkastel's main square, Der Ratskeller's uncomplicated regional fare can be enjoyed at an outside table with a view of the action or inside cozily surrounded by dark wood and leadlight windows.

✉ Markt 30, Bernkastel-Kues
☎ 06531/7474

✉ Jugendstilhotel Bellevue

Traben-Trarbach's premier hotel has a first-class reputation that derives from its belle époque architecture, fine cuisine, professional, knowledgeable staff, and superb wine list.

✉ An der Mosel 11, Traben-Trarbach
☎ 06541/7030
🌐 www.bellevue-hotel.de

WINE TOURING AND TASTING



WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit the region is between May and September, when a lightly chilled glass or two of wine is the perfect complement to a sunny spring day or a warm summer evening. This coincides with high season in the valley, when roads and cycle paths swell with tourists, particularly in the warmer months, and in September during the wine harvest. Fortunately, the next wine village is never far along the Mosel River. If you arrive and find a tasting room that's too busy, there's invariably another just around the corner.

IN THE TASTING ROOM

While varietals such as Müller-Thurgau, Weissburgunder, and Pinot Noir are produced in the Middle Mosel, the staple of most estates is Riesling. Given that the wineries are predominantly small, family-owned operations, there tends to be an emphasis on the production of high-quality, low-quantity wines. Their tasting rooms, when not part of the winery itself, are frequently extensions of family homes, affording visitors intimate contact with the winemakers. Naturally, German is the dominant language spoken by local tourists and many of the Dutch, Belgians, and

Luxembourgers who pop across the border for a visit, but most winemakers speak English at least well enough to describe their wines. Opening hours vary, and although you can drop into most tasting rooms outside of these times, there may not always be someone around to serve you. To avoid disappointment it's worth checking websites for opening times first.

BOTTLE PRICES AND TASTING FEES

Once the most expensive wines in the world, Mosel Valley Rieslings have come down significantly in price since their heyday in the early 20th century, yet they remain world class. The average price for a quality bottle of Riesling is about €7–€10; each winery's price list is generally detailed in brochures found in its tasting room. Most wineries won't charge to taste a couple of their wines, but will expect you to purchase a bottle or two if you try more. Those that do have tasting fees, which are commonly between €5 and €15, will often waive them if you purchase a bottle.

Left, Romantic wine village on the Mosel River.
Right, Bottle display from Mosel-Weinmuseum in Bernkastel-Kues

WINE TASTING PRIMER



Ordering and tasting wine—whether at a winery, bar, or restaurant—is easy once you master a few simple steps.

LOOK AND NOTE

Hold your glass by the stem and look at the wine in the glass. Note its color, depth, and clarity.

For whites, is it greenish, yellow, or gold? For reds, is it purplish, ruby, or garnet? Is the wine's color pale or deep? Is the liquid clear or cloudy?

SWIRL AND SNIFF

Swirl the wine gently in the glass to intensify the scents, then sniff over the rim of the glass. What do you smell? Try to identify aromas like:

- **Fruits**—citrus, peaches, berries, figs, melon
- **Minerals**—earth, steely notes, wet stones
- **Flowers**—orange blossoms, honey, perfume
- **Dairy**—butter, cream, cheese, yogurt
- **Spices**—baking spices, pungent, herbal notes
- **Oak**—toast, vanilla, coconut, tobacco
- **Vegetables**—fresh or cooked, herbal notes
- **Animal**—leathery, meaty notes

Are there any unpleasant notes, like mildew or wet dog, that might indicate that the wine is “off?”

SIP AND SAVOR

Prime your palate with a sip, swishing the wine in your mouth. Then spit in a bucket or swallow.

Take another sip and think about the wine's attributes. Sweetness is detected on the tip of the tongue, acidity on the sides of the tongue, and tannins (a mouth-drying sensation) on the gums. Consider the body—does the wine feel light in the mouth, or is there a rich sensation? Are the flavors consistent with the aromas? If you like the wine, try to pinpoint what you like about it, and vice versa if you don't like it.

Take time to savor the wine as you're sipping it—the tasting experience may seem a bit scientific, but the end goal is your enjoyment.

