



Travel news > Take a sip of Romania's...

# Take a sip of Romania's burgeoning wine scene

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If you're looking to discover the next 'it' wine region, it may be time to book that ticket to Romania. Gault&Millau launched the first guide dedicated to Romanian wines, covering 152 wines from 63 wineries.



With some 180,000 hectares of vines and scenic backdrops blessed with auspicious land, Romania is fifth in terms of vineyard surface in the EU after Spain, France, Italy and Portugal, and sixth in terms of wine production. In fact, Romania ranks 13th in the world. “Romanian wine has a potential in which we strongly believe in and it is the reason for which we launched the local Gault&Millau Wine Guide,” said Raluca Hritcu and Ștefan Mortici, co-CEOs of Gault&Millau Romania in a ceremony that awarded the best Romanian wines.



The map of Romania's wine regions © Alina Iancu / ReVino

The highest score of a Romanian wine in the ranking received 94 points out of 100, for *Smerenie 2016* from Opreșor winery, which also received the prize for the Best Red Wine.

Romania may not have the renowned wine heritage of France or Italy – as it's marred by decades of communism when the wine-making industry took a hit, prioritising quantity over quality – but recent years have brought a new generation of winemakers dusting off the mayhem of the communist era. Alongside historic wines such as *Grasă de Cotnari* whose tradition dates back to Stephen the Great in the 15th century, smaller, craft producers have been shaking things up with new technology and innovation, and a higher-quality, more limited production.



A shop with Romanian wines in Braşov, Transylvania © Dziwul / Shutterstock

Aside from experimenting with new blends, there has also been a rising interest in learning about the local grape varieties. Whether it's *Fetească Neagră* or *Negru de Drăgăşani* for reds, and *Fetească Albă*, *Fetească Regală*, *Tămâioasă Românească* or *Crâmpoşie* for whites – to name but a few – there is a budding number of

winemakers harvesting the grapes only found in Romania. And luckily for them, the country has some of the best geographical conditions for grape growing, with the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains being its biggest natural asset.

Some wineries count on oenologists from France or Germany now living in Romania, to help develop the best of the terroir; some grow their own vineyard, as is the case with the award-winning Bauer winery in Drăgășani. However, as home to some 35 to 40 wineries, Dealu Mare – a 90-minute drive from Bucharest – is perhaps Romania's most popular vineyard. Tours are available (preferably booked in advance for more than two people), and some even include accommodation.

'The consumer culture is also growing very quickly,' says Alina Iancu, founder of CrameRomania.ro, the only bilingual online database of Romanian vineyards. And judging by the sheer number of chic wine bars popping up in Bucharest, the desire for premium local wine is evident.

Those interested in exploring Romania's wine trail can find tips on where and how to plan their visit to local vineyards on ReVino.Ro, also run by Iancu. The site includes access to wine maps in both Romanian and English, explaining the local grape varieties and pinpointing some 168 vineyards in nine wine regions.



ReVino is a guide to Romania's nine wine regions © Alina Iancu / ReVino

Connoisseurs can also learn more about Romanian wines at the yearly ReVino Bucharest Wine Fair, launched in 2016, as well as through initiatives such as the Wines of Romania – Pure Experiences travel documentary, which follows wine specialist Robert Marshall, an Englishman living in Romania, on his journey around wineries and the surrounding regions.

As part of the France-Romania Cultural Season taking place in the two countries over several months, the Gault&Millau Guide to Romanian Wines 2019 launched in Paris this December and will be presented in Bordeaux's La Cité du Vin in February 2019, at one of the most important wine fairs in the world.

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