

INTRODUCTION

South Moravia is a rural region that enchants visitors with its natural beauty. A land full of plateaus, rolling hills, fields, forests, vineyards and villages. The prime wine region of the Czech Republic is hard to leave once you immerse yourself in the world of vineyards, mysterious mouldy wine cellars and one of the worlds' unique folk culture regions.

It is not just a picturesque wine region as it's also full of architectural and folk treasures. Apart for numerous Baroque churches' there are magical Gothic castles perched on top of cliffs, poetical chateaux surrounded by fairytale gardens and historical towns like Znojmo or Mikulov with overabundance of manor and merchant houses going as far back as the Romanesque period.

Part of the wine region is also known as the Moravian Slovacko, which has the best preserved traditions of original Slav customs that include songs, dances, festivals, dresses, food and tools. The best time to discover these is during one of their festivals.

The varied terrain unfolds from flat to rolling hills, makes it easy to explore by bicycle or on foot. This, mixed with wine, friendly and hospitable people, offers an ideal holiday destination.

All you need is a good bicycle or a pair of walking shoes, essential personal items that you can carry, this book, the trail maps, plenty of jovial spirits and thirst for wine to make it a trip of a life time.

Despite Moravia's large wine industry, the red wines are still being perfected and the quality is not as high as it used to be couple of hundred years ago, or as might be found in France, Australia or South Africa. While white and sparkling wines are of very good quality. Taste is, however, very personal and thus the taste buds should be followed. The basic rule applies here, as it does in other wine regions, most wines displaying a vintage on the label are likely to be of good quality and drinkable. Considering the low price of a bottle of wine, there are lot of good bargains to be found. The cooler climate is more suitable for growing white grapes, which is reflected in the statistics, as over 70% of the domestic wine production is white wine.

HOW TO USE THIS TEXT?

This text was written originally in 2002 and has only been published in Polish. It has been updated and rewritten in 2008 for this web site. The aim if this text is to be a practical guide to discover Moravia's wine region from the seat of a bicycle or on foot. It points travellers in the right direction, but it should not be used as a bible – followed every step of the way. It is up to each individual to see the region in any way and manner, as it suits their pocket, time schedule and tastes. The chapters are written, so they can be used as a single unit or followed as found in this guide, however, it is possible to custom make your own route using this information.

The text starts with the Practical Information chapter, which introduces the wine traveller to the practicalities they need to familiarise themselves with before leaving home, such as visas and money, etc. Next is the Transportation chapter, outlining all the travel options to the Czech Republic and around the Moravian Wine Region. The ten destination chapters describe all there is to do and see along all the Moravian Wine Trails. The final chapter, Background of the Moravian Wine Trails,

has all the background information about wine, history, culture, South Moravia and the Czech Republic.

Each destination chapter describes one of the ten wine regions. The Moravian Wine Trail passes only through the first seven wine regions of Znojmo, Mikulov, Velké Pavlovice, Mutěnice, Kyjov, Bzenec and Uherské Hradiště. The other three wine regions of Strážnice, Podluží and Brno only include the local wine trails. Each chapter is designed as an independent unit, so it is possible to travel along the Moravian Wine Trail from west to east, that is from Znojmo to Uherské Hradiště (see Appendix 2). If desired, there is also a possibility to explore each more closely via the regional wine trails, which can be covered in one or two side trips (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of all wine trails and towns and villages). The trail can also be toured in reverse direction to what we suggest. The regional maps of all the wine regions will greatly assist you in planning any trip.

Here are some more suggestions of possible trips. The whole Moravian Wine Trail (marked in red on all maps, Appendix 2) can be done as one trip. For those with even more time, cover the whole Moravian Wine Region by doing a loop around it. Start with the Moravian Wine Trail in Znojmo and follow it to Uherské Hradiště, and then swinging south through the Strážnice Wine Region and continue through the Podluží, Mikulov, Znojmo Wine Trails and then north up to Brno via the Znojmo/Brno Wine Trail (see appendix 3). For those with very little time and a vehicle it is possible to do the short 10-day guided tour, as Pálava Tours have organised (see appendix 4) – of course you can do this on a bicycle but it will take at least twice as long to cover the route. If you are adventurous, custom make your own trip, as there are many other possibilities of how to explore the wine country.

This text does not try to be a comprehensive regional guide, but just to introduce the travellers to the wine region. That is why we don't cover ordinary restaurants and pubs but only the ones selling wine. We give information about wine sights, where to buy wines, wine bars and wine restaurants, where to find wine cellars and bicycle shops and repair services. Other information offered are culture and entertainment suggestions; lists of official accommodation options; and major transportations possibilities. Only in major or important towns we also cover practical information such as banks, post offices, internet cafes, train and bus stations.

We would also appreciate any feedback about the text, wine trails and establishments that you liked or did not like. Everything in the world is in a constant motion and things constantly change. It is obvious to us, that you are likely to find things different to our experiences. The older the guide, the more out of date, the information will be. Life is full of surprises and it is better to be surprised by a change, than find everything as described in the book.

How to get Inside a Wine Cellar?

We have not recommended any specific wine cellars, except for a few large and medium size wine producers for several reasons. Most family, small and medium sized wine producers do not have the resources to have regular operating hours of a wine cellar, like a shop or a restaurant. Many wine cellars can be contacted by telephone to pre-book wine tasting. The problem with them is that they only make bookings for groups of at least five or ten people (this depends on the wine cellar), and do not bother with one or two individuals. Another difficulty is finding a wine cellar owner who can speak English – this is rare. A handful can speak German. It is not as much of a problem tasting and buying wine from a non-English speaker, but it

makes communication over the telephone impossible. One other problem with telephone numbers is not only about communication, but that the phones are often left unanswered during the day as the owners are working in the vineyards or wine cellars.

In each destination, we describe the location of wine cellar locations and the probability of finding one or two wine cellars open. Many vintners are present in or around their wine cellars and vineyards from August to October. This rule roughly applies to large wine cellar locations, which might have 50 or more cellars, as smaller concentrations of wine cellars seemed to be lifeless, even during the grape harvest. Another point to remember is that many small wine cellar owners have other jobs or live as far away as Brno and further, so they will be in their cellar only on the weekends and in the evening during weekdays.

The bottom line is, if you do not speak Czech and you want to see inside specific historical wine cellar, you will require the services of an interpreter.

WHEN TO VISIT?

The best time to travel is between spring and autumn. The warmest temperatures tend to be during summer, but July and August gets crowded due to the school holidays. Most colourful festivals are during autumn, which is also at the time of the grape harvest. This varies from season to season, but generally late August to early October are the best months for travel in the wine regions.

THINGS TO BRING

It is difficult to suggest what to bring as it can depend on personal choice, however, there are some musts. First you need to decide what kind of a trip you will be on – cycling or walking?

Essential wine accessories for the intrepid wine discoverer are a solid corkscrew with a knife and a wine skin. As far as the rest of the items are concerned bring as little as possible. Other essentials are toiletries such as soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet paper, first aid kit, torch, pocket knife, spoon, sewing kit, compass, suntan lotion, mosquito repellent and sunglasses. You will also need to hand wash your clothing as there are no laundry facilities along the trail, so bring washing powder, international sink plug, rope and pegs. Clothing should be limited to a few summer garments and something warmer if it gets cold. It is, however, a good idea to have something formal, such as dress for women and trousers and a shirt for men. Women should have a supply of tampons. Waterproof clothing is essential. Money belt that fits under your clothing for passport, emergency money and other personal documents in a waterproof plastic bag. Considering the lack of accommodation in many parts it is a good idea to carry a tent and sleeping bag. Cooking utensils are not necessary, as there is enough food along the trail.

Cyclists will need tools and spare parts for the bike. Clothing is up to a personal preference whether you opt for the cycling race-type gear or casual shorts and t-shirt. Waterproofs are essential and some warm clothing is a good idea, as even during summer day temperatures can drop to 10°C for a few days. It is a good idea to have two large water bottles on the frame of the bike. You need to get front and rear panniers placed on carriers to carry all your gear, as to cycle with a large 20 kg pack on your back is bad for the spine.

Walkers will need special walking gear starting with boots, waterproof gear, light and easy to carry/wash clothing. A good backpack and a water bottle.

