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LIFE STRATEGIST**

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CATALONIA, SPAIN**

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COSMOPOLITAN CATALONIA, SPAIN

By Carolyn Worthington*



**Carolyn Worthington, editor-in-chief of Healthy Aging® Magazine, had the opportunity to visit Catalonia, Spain to learn about the wine and food offerings there and to report for the active traveler. Her experiences, recommendations and insider tips for what not to miss in Catalonia, Spain appear as a four-part Healthy Aging® website series and in Healthy Aging® Magazine.*

Lleida, Spain scenic.

Tourism of Lleida, David del Va



Map Spain Tourism Board

Four distinct provinces make up Catalonia, Spain: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.

How Does A Wine and Food Tour Sound?

Imagine riding your bike leisurely from vineyard to vineyard, stopping to taste a full-bodied cabernet, a fruity, or a sparkling white wine. Picture ending your day with enjoying a dinner made from local ingredients and prepared by a world-class chef.

This could be you ... in a place called **Catalonia**.

Where in the World Is Catalonia?

If you've been to Barcelona, then you have been to Catalonia. But Barcelona is just one part of this romantic and gastronomic region, etched with wine trails to discover.

Catalonia is the northern most region of Spain, touching France and the tiny country Andorra. More accurately, Catalonia is one of the 17 "autonomous communities" that make up Spain. These "communities" are in a way like the states in the U.S. Each "autonomous community" has its own flag and capital.

The autonomous community of Catalonia lies at the base of the French Pyrenees Mountains to the north. Contrasting in climate and topography, it is graced by over-360 miles of Costa Brava beaches on the Mediterranean Sea to the east, flanked by the community of Aragon to the west and Valencia to the south.

Four Provinces of Catalonia

Four distinct provinces make up Catalonia: **Barcelona**, **Girona**, **Lleida**, and **Tarragona**. Catalonia has a population of over 7.5 million people. Barcelona, the city, is the capital of the region.

Now that you have reviewed your geography knowledge, you might want to check out this beautiful area beyond a visit to the city of Barcelona.



Enoturisme Penedès

Vineyard in Penedes, one of the wine regions of Catalonia.



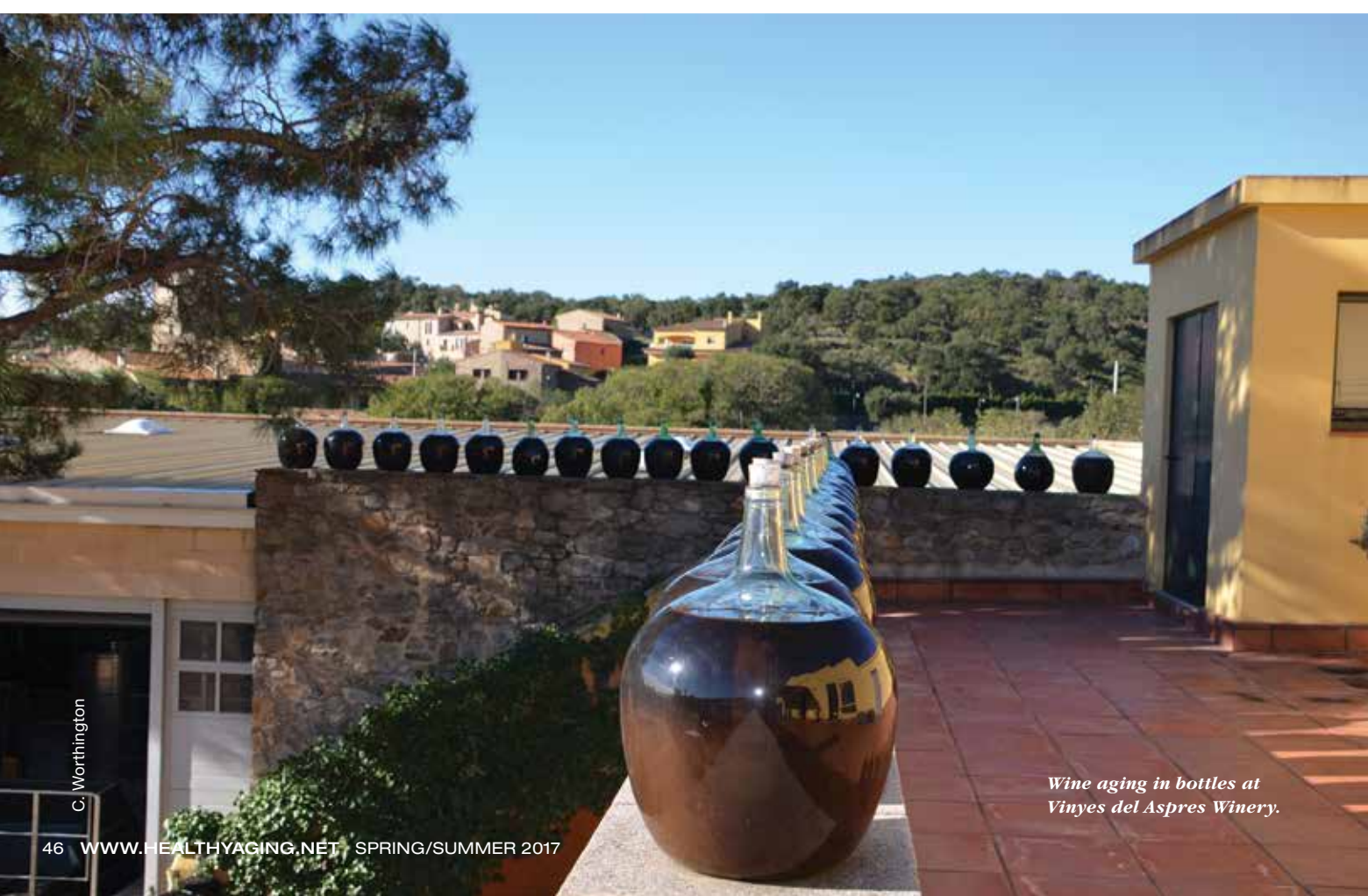
G. Worthington

One of many cafes in Barcelona, Spain.



A seafood sampling from Xalet Suis Restaurant, Lleida, Catalonia, Spain.

C. Worthington



Wine aging in bottles at Vinyes del Aspres Winery.

C. Worthington

Wine and Food Heaven for Foodies

Catalonia, or Cataluña in Spanish, is renowned for its wine-making, which began as early as when the Phoenicians brought their skills to the land. The cuisine can compete with any country that takes pride in their own gastronomy.

There are 10 important wine regions of Catalonia waiting for your exploration and wine tasting.

1. **Alella** is a small wine region known for its low acid Maresme wines and higher acid Valles wines.

2. **Conca de Barberà** is located in the region of Tarragona and produces mostly whites such as parellada. Trepat, a rosé, is also produced here.

3. **Costers del Segre**, located in the provinces of Lleida and Tarragona, has a semi-arid climate with primarily limestone soil that provides for the unique tastes of the wines such as the whites—sauvignon blanc, macabeo, and gewürztraminer—and the reds—garnatxa negra, cabernet sauvignon, and trepat.

4. **Empordà** stretches from the town of Figueres to France and near the sea in the south. Most of the wine produced here are reds, particularly rosé wines. Whites and dessert wines like grenache and moscatell are here, as well.

5. **Montsant** is located in Tarragona and produces powerful red wines along with whites like chardonnay and white grenache.

6. **Pla de Bages**, in the province of Barcelona, wins the award for being the smallest wine region at about 2.3 square miles. It is also one of the newest, coming on board as a region in 1995. Pla de Bages took time off from winemaking for almost 100 years when the phylloxera “plague” destroyed most wine vineyards there and all over Europe. It’s said the phylloxera insect was brought to Europe inadvertently by botanists who had gathered American vines.

7. **Tarragona** is blessed with two types of topography, resulting in a variety of wine styles. The region is located in part on the Mediterranean, sweeping up to the base of the Serra del Montalt mountain range. Wine styles vary from sweet fortified wines to cabernet sauvignon and from merlot to cava.

8. **Terra Alta** means “high land,” so the wine region is ... in the mountains. Summers are hot here and the winters very cold. The region is small and remote, which may be why Pablo Picasso spent vacations here when he was young. The wine cellars of

THE 10 IMPORTANT WINE REGIONS OF CATALONIA

1. Alella
2. Conca de Barberà
3. Costers del Segre
4. Empordà
5. Montsant
6. Pla de Bages
7. Tarragona
8. Terra Alta
9. Penedès
10. Priorat



Snails are a local delicacy. Served here at Xalet Suis.

El Pinell de Brai and Celler Cooperatiu de Gandesa were designed by Cèsar Martinell, a student of famed architect Antoni Gaudí.

9. **Penedès** is the largest wine region and one with quite a diverse terrain. It is considered the home of cava, the white sparkling wine that makes Catalonia famous in the wine world.

10. **Priorat** wines, also well-known, are made from grapes grown on slanted hillsides, often picked by hand, and bearing tastes drawn from the volcanic tinges of the soil.

Foodie Heaven

Catalonia is heaven for any foodie traveler. Discover the classic Catalan dishes like snails that are often served in butter like the French escargot or in the local dish conill amb cargols, rabbit with snails. Be sure to try the locally produced olive oil or crema catalana, which is like crème brûlée—a creamy, custard-like flan.

Ferret out the chef-owned-and-operated restaurants, many of which now feature the new wave of creative chefs coming onto the scene.

Climate Control

The weather is somewhat like parts of California with the hot temperatures in the summer along the coast with cooler temperatures in the higher elevations near the Pyrenees. Two main languages are spoken here, Spanish and Catalan.



Cycling through the vineyards.



Exploring the vineyards on horseback.



Codorní

Codorní Exterior.

TOURING THE FOUR PROVINCES OF CATALONIA

To see, taste, and enjoy everything of this area takes a lifetime. But here, we will give you a suggested four-day tour to sample Catalonia and a chance to visit the four provinces of Catalonia: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona.

DAY 1: PENEDES WINE REGION

Begin your journey to romantic Catalonia by flying into Barcelona, Spain. For leisurely touring the wine country, we recommend renting a car.

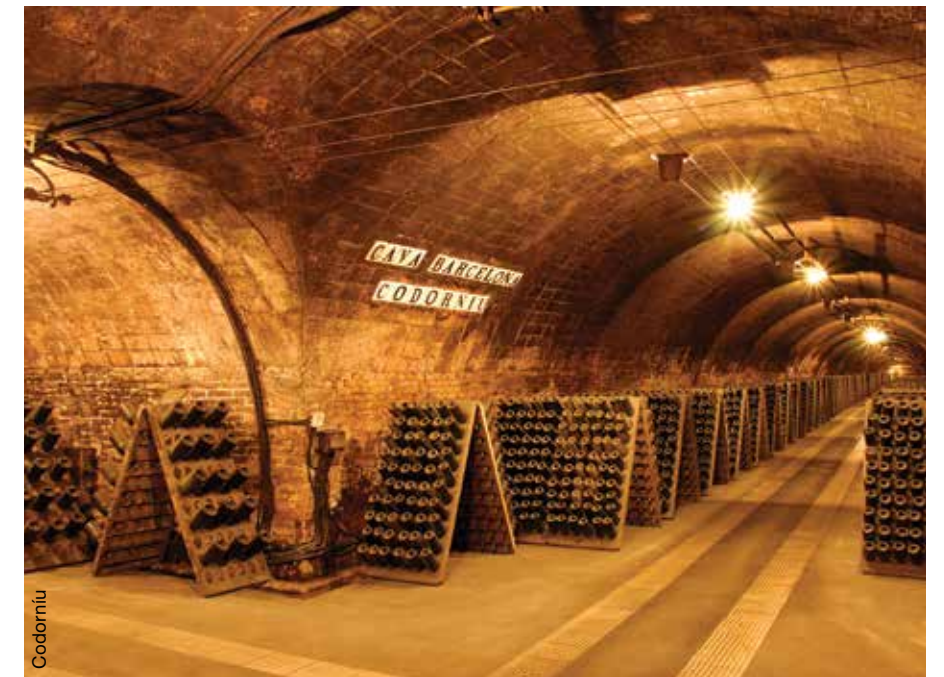
First stop is the 12th century town of Vilafranca del Penedès as it was called until 1982, known now as just Vilafranca. It is under an hour's drive or train ride due west of Barcelona.

Vilafranca is considered the wine capital and no wonder since the area has cultivated grapes for wine since the 7th century B.C. There are so many wine and cava wineries to visit.

A map with links to the wineries can be found at the following web address:

turismevilafranca.com/en/cellers-i-caves.

To get a terrific overview of the history, the making, and the spirit of cava, the sparkling wine of Catalonia, head over



Codorní

Codorní wine cellar.

to the Centre d'Interpretació del Cava, about nine miles northeast of Vilafranca. This is the perfect place to begin your immersion in the world of the sparkling Spanish wine called cava.

The centre offers multi-media presentations of the origins of cava plus the processing, culture, lifestyle, and spirit of the bubbly beverage.

CIC Fassina

Interpretation Centre Cava
c. Hospital, 23
08770 Sant Sadurní
Barcelona
T: (34.93) 891.3188
F: (34.93) 891.4367

turisme@santsadurni.cat
turismesantsadurni.cat

Active Ways to Discover Vilafranca

You don't have to worry about your waistline while discovering the wineries here—there are numerous walking and cycling tours to take while enjoying the wines and scenery. You can even take a Segway ... one of those mobile scooters.

You can rent touring bikes that come complete with helmet, a map, or GPS and go for hours, sampling wines and enjoying local fare at the wineries.

Michener on the Spirit of Catalonia

"Cataluña is special. Because we are so mixed in our heritage, we are not narrow-minded little provincials. We have a bigness of spirit ... a singing of the heart."

So reported famed Pulitzer Prize winning writer James A. Michener in his book *Iberia* upon asking a native of Catalonia what made his homeland special.

Michener understood. He too felt the spirit of the area and all of Spain. So much so that he professed his love of Spain as a traveler and as a place he called his second home in his more-than-800-word book published in 1968.

Although written almost 50 years ago, the words still hold true. The "spirit and singing of the heart" are alive in Catalonia, one of Spain's best-kept secrets and a place not to miss.

You can explore Catalonia just as James Michener did while knowing that Catalonia still has the same charm but has grown up to have a very cosmopolitan flare.

Here you can find the culture, the history, and the shopping plus the opportunity to explore the many wineries and taste the cuisine of this region.



Codorníu

Codorníu winery.

If you are just lazy or can't physically ride easily for hours on end, you can also rent an electric bike.

The following link contains a list of hikes and cycling trails to enjoy, ranging from "not difficult" to "more challenging":

[Hikes and Cycling Trails.](#)

Next Stop: Cava Tour in Codorníu

Codorníu, with its wine-growing origins reaching back to 1551, is considered the oldest family businesses in Spain. The name is synonymous with cava, the white sparkling wine, that the winemaker started making in 1872. Today, Codorníu is the largest producer of sparkling wine fermented in

the bottle and made by the traditional method of Champagne.

Visit Codorníu's "nerve center" as they call it ... designed by the world-renowned architect Josep Puig i Cadafalch who was an acclaimed modernista, or art nouveau, architect who designed many buildings in Barcelona. The winery building was honored as by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute in 1976 and is a sight to see all in itself.

Today, Codorníu is the leading producer of Spanish cava and is run by a 18th-generation member of the Codorníu family. In addition to the cava business, Codorníu now owns 10 wineries around the world.

Anna de Codorníu is the

company's most popular cava and the leading sparkling wine in Spain. In the U.S., the Anna de Codorníu Brut Rosé is particularly popular. It is currently in the top-10 list of sparkling rosés in the \$11–\$15 range in the U.S., according to recent Nielsen numbers.

Plenty to Do At Codorníu

There are several fun ways to explore Codorníu and learn about cava. Here are some examples and many require an additional fee:

Cava Tasting Beginners Course

Take an intensive wine-tasting course in a winery. Learn the art of wine tasting and discover the secrets of cavas Codorníu.

Underground Cellars Tour Train

A beginner's cava-tasting course that will initiate you into the three key steps of wine tasting. The tasting includes six Codorníu cavas.

Bicycle Tour and Codorníu Visit

With the Montserrat Mountain as a backdrop, take a tour of the Codorníu vineyards by bicycle. They say they are "passionate about cycling, nature, and sparkling wine" and invite visitors to an unforgettable morning, pedaling through vineyards by bicycle. Electric bikes are available for those who prefer to take it easy and still enjoy the scenery.

Chocolate and Cava

Another option is to visit

the world-renowned chocolate maker Simon Coll, maker of fine chocolates since 1840.

Learn about the origins of chocolate, how it is processed and made into the delicious forms through an audio-visual presentation, a glimpse into the chocolate workshop, and, of course, chocolate tastings.

Pick up chocolate at their chocolate store, which is just as much of an experience as the tour with the more than 400 varieties of chocolate products and special holiday exhibits. There is a small fee for the tours.

Codorníu

Av. Jaume Codorníu s/n—
Sant Sadurní d'Anoia
visitascodorniu.com

Simon Coll SA Chocolate Space Center visitor information and reservations

San Pedro, 37
08770 Sant Sadurní
Barcelona (Spain)
T: (34-93) 891-1095

simoncoll.com

Opening hours:

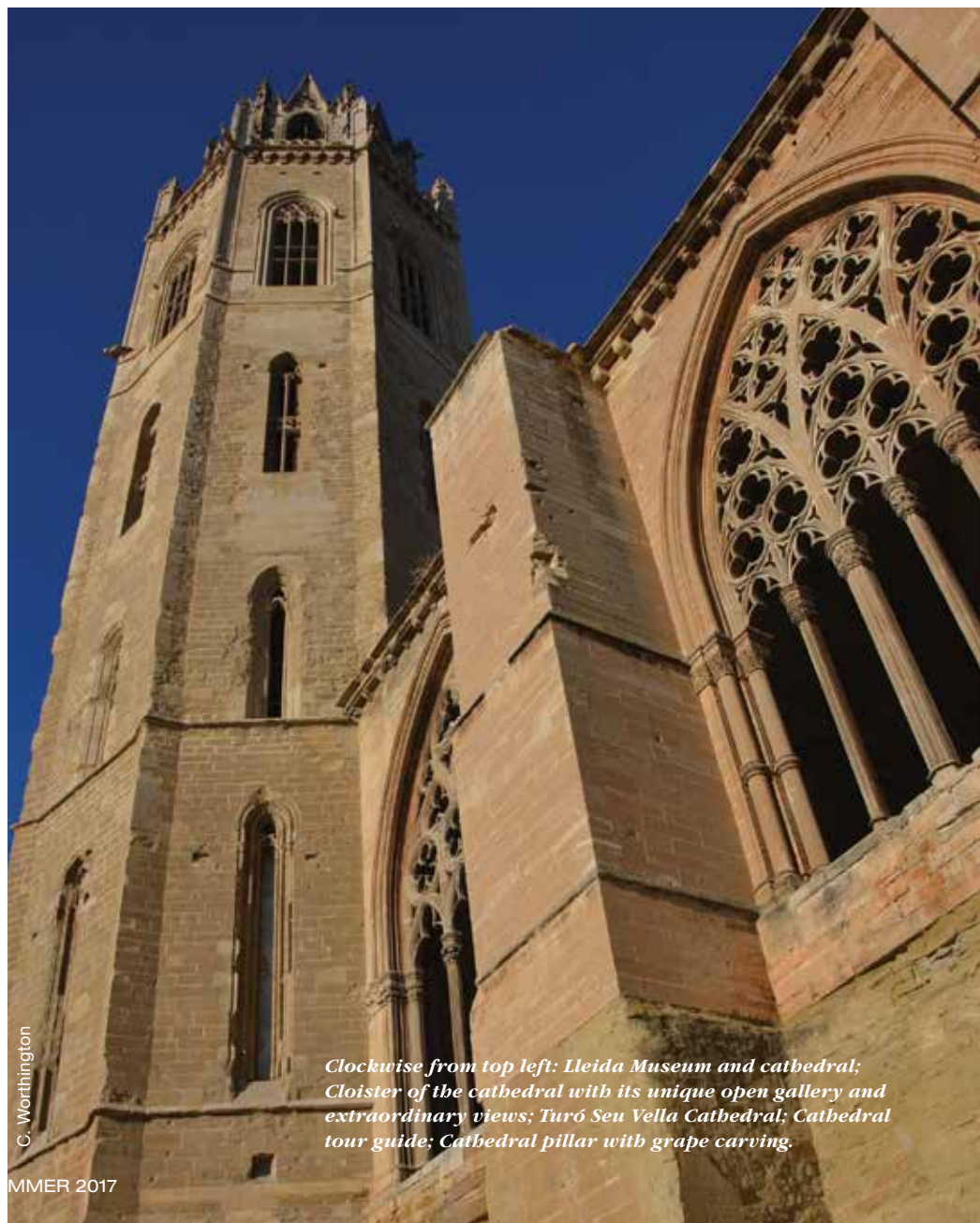
Monday to Friday from
9 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday from
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Next Stop: Organic Wine and Cava Tasting at Cavas Bolet

Bolet wines have been made by the same family for seven generations. A visit to the **Cavas Bolet** winery will entice your senses as you



Tourism of Lleida



C. Worthington

Clockwise from top left: Lleida Museum and cathedral; Cloister of the cathedral with its unique open gallery and extraordinary views; Turó Seu Vella Cathedral; Cathedral tour guide; Cathedral pillar with grape carving.

taste their wines, ranging from white, pinot noir, “black tempranillo,” and merlot. You shouldn’t miss their “100-percent natural fredolic,” their intense cherry-red cabernet sauvignon wine with its fruity taste and mineral twinges, reflecting the land where the grapes were grown.

You will also have the opportunity to sample their cavas from their brut classic and rosado pinot noir to their gran reserva.

Tapas are also available. All tastings have a small fee.

Cavas Bolet
Finca Mas Lluet s/n
Carretera St.Marçal Km 15 BV2117
08732 Barcelona – Catalunya – España

More Information
To learn more about Catalonia,
here are helpful links:

- Catalonia Tourism:
catalunya.com
- Spain Tourism Board:
Spain.info
- [Barcelona Tourism](#)
- [Girona Tourism](#)
- [Tarragona Tourism](#)
- [Penedes Region](#)
- [LLeida Tourism](#)
- [Costa Brava](#)

Where to stay in Barcelona:
K&K Hotel Picasso
Passeig de Picasso, 26-30
08003 Barcelona, Spain
Conveniently located in the chic El Born district of Barcelona on the “Passeig de Picasso.

DAY 2: LLEIDA

Cultural Tour of an Ancient Cathedral, Three Vineyards, and a Spa

Here you are in **Lleida** on day two of your four-day tour of Catalonia, Spain. You are about two hours by car and one hour by train due west of Barcelona.

The province of Lleida is a destination of contrasts from the lush vegetation, extraordinary vistas, and vineyards to the magnificent gorges created by rivers, the Montsec mountain range and Vall de Boí in the Pyrenees, to its historic—yet cosmopolitan—capital bearing the same name.

You can spend your time exploring vineyards, tasting local foods, and enjoying cultural experiences topped by shopping, shopping, shopping and a spa stay.

Lleida is a great destination for couples, parents traveling with adult children and even those who want to go solo! There are plenty of opportunities for active travel combined with luxuriating in all that the countryside has to offer.

360-Degree View of Lleida and Tip Toeing Through Time

Your visit to the city of Lleida must begin with a tour through the 13th century **Turó Seu Vella Cathedral** located in the center of the city where you will see a spectacular 360-degree view of Lleida.

The cathedral still stands, majestically overlooking the city in spite of a high turnover of often unruly tenants.

If only the cathedral could talk about those who honored it and those who trashed it.

The site was originally an early Christian cathedral, rebuilt as a mosque in A.D. 832, reborn as a Christian cathedral in 1149. A later decree by clerics called for it to be rebuilt in the “Romanesque” or Medieval European style.

The first stone was laid in 1203, but it took some-300 years to complete the structures, including the church, cloister, bell tower, and canonical house.

In its glory days, it was used as a church, of course. Later, it became a hospital and armory during the “Catalan Revolt” in 1640 and military barracks in 1707 when it was carved up into spaces for the troops and pretty much desecrated or burned. It became a concentration camp during the Spanish Civil War of 1936 and again a barracks through 1948. Even if you are not a history buff, the tour offered at the cathedral will have you riveted. The guides are passionate about their history and take you through the centuries and architectural details of the building and grounds.

Without the guided tour, you might miss the statues on top of the columns and the sculptural details of grapes, leaves, and baskets, reflecting the importance of wine or



Mas Blanch i Jove entrance.

the trivia note that two of the original bells are still rung just as they were in the 15th century. The bells even have names. “Monica” plays at the quarter hour. “Sylvestra” plays on the hour. No light weights, each bell weighs some 5 tons.

The tour costs 12 euros or about \$12.80.

Turó Seu Vella Cathedral

Shop Till You Drop in Lleida

While you are in the city, you might want to check out the shops. After all, Lleida is a shopper’s paradise. The main shopping area is 1.5 miles long with more than 450 shops. And then there are the specialty markets. You can catch “Rambla de Ferran” for antiques on Sundays, farmer’s markets on Thursdays and Saturdays, and special crafts markets at Christmas time.

Mercat del Pla is a fashion outlet, located in a 1920s vintage building. Open every day, the outlet is a combination of

pop-up stores.

For foodies, **Aplec del Caragol** is a snail festival that takes place every May. Tons of snails are consumed, and there might even be a snail race or two.

For more information: **Lleida Tourism**

Vineyards

Now that you have had your city experience, it is time to head to the country to visit several vineyards and to have wine tastings.

Vineyard 1: Mas Blanch i Jové Cellar and the Artist’s Vineyard

Located in Les Garrigues, a mountainous area, **Mas Blanch i Jove Cellar** is a small winery on the western border of the Priorat region. The winery opened in 2006 by winemakers who grew up in the business but wanted to add an artistic touch to the wines, the buildings, the packaging, and to the community.

Their artistry is immediately evident when you arrive and see the winery built into the mountain, the roof covered with plants, and the building painted an earthy tone. Power is generated in part from the solar panels on the roof. They wanted the winery to “be in harmony with the surrounding landscape and to become part of nature itself.” They succeeded.

Red grenache, cabernet sauvignon, tempranillo, merlot, white grenache, and macabeo grapes are grown and all are picked by hand. The wines are all bottled under the name “Sao,” created from the word “sonorous,” which they say in Catalan means “maturity, perfection, and fertile earth.” The elegant label always bears leaves, evoking the vineyard’s passion for the land.

The winery regularly holds art exhibitions and music performances. They are open on Saturdays and most Sundays, but it is always best to call first.

Vineyard 2: Clos Pons Cellar

Clos Pons is a boutique winery that has been family-owned and operated since 1945. They specialize in premium wines and olive oil. All of the wines are grown, produced, and bottled on the property.

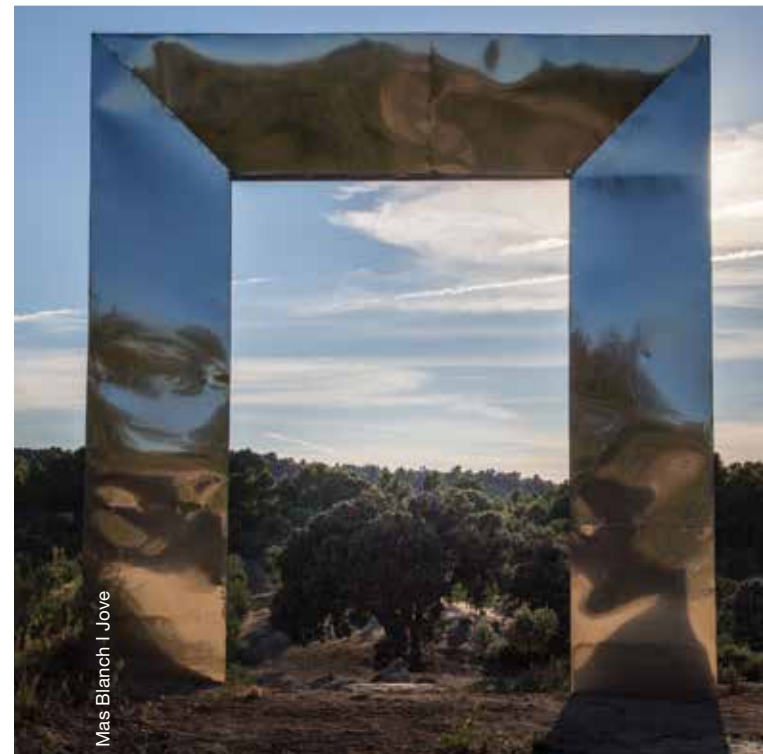
As you drive up to Clos Pons, you immediately sense the family’s respect for the land and feeling of tradition from the rolling vineyards to



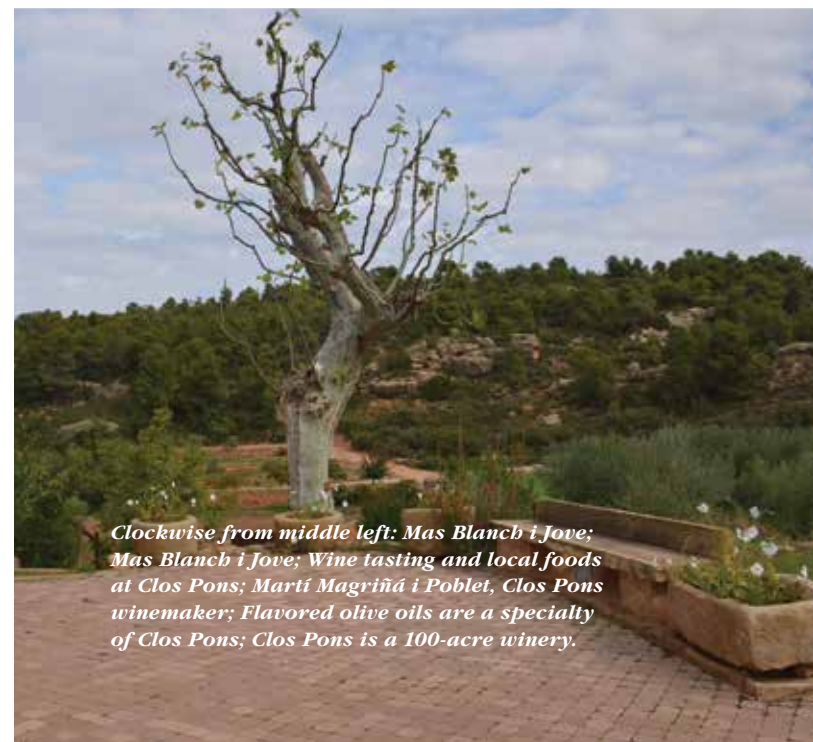
Mas Blanch i Jove, Gregorio Iglesias



C. Worthington



Mas Blanch i Jove



Clockwise from middle left: Mas Blanch i Jove; Mas Blanch i Jove; Wine tasting and local foods at Clos Pons; Martí Magriñà i Poblet, Clos Pons winemaker; Flavored olive oils are a specialty of Clos Pons; Clos Pons is a 100-acre winery.



CLOS PONS VEAL SCALLOPINE WITH MUSHROOMS

Makes 6 servings



- 1 pound veal scallopine
- 1 tablespoon Pons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Salt
- ½ cup mushrooms, washed, sliced
- 3 onions
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 small bunch parsley
- 1 cup brandy
- Flour
- 1 cup water
- Black pepper
- Pons Infused Extra Virgin Olive Oil with Mushroom or Rosemary

Saute the mushrooms with about a tablespoon of Pons Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Remove and set aside.

Season veal with salt and pepper. Saute the veal quickly in the same pan as for mushrooms until brown. Remove the veal and set aside. Add the brandy and reduce by half while scraping up brown bits from pan. Return the veal to the skillet, add water and simmer about 3 or 4 minutes or until the veal is tender. Return mushrooms to the pan. Add the mushrooms. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Transfer to a serving plate. Trickle over Pons Infused Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

Recipe shared by Clos Pons Winery

the buildings made of stone and wood. The 100-acre winery is located on the top of a hill, overlooking the vineyards set against the backdrop of the Pyrenees.

Thanks to the hot, dry Mediterranean climate with low rainfall in the summer combined with cold winters and cold nights, the vineyards produce healthy grapes that are perfect for winemaking.

Martí Magriñá i Poblet is the vineyard's winemaker who grew up in a winemaking family from the area.

"My youth passion was much more mathematics and physics than viticulture or winemaking," he said. "That's why I first tried for a physics degree at the University of Barcelona. Not being entirely successful with that, I went back to my roots and finally got an enology degree from the University of Tarragona."

After stints working in a winery in the Bordeaux region of France, Mirrasou vineyards in California, Chile, and for Codorníu—the cava maker in Catalonia—he became the winemaker for Clos Pons in 2008.

"Any winemaker's dream is to put a small piece of land in the wine universe," he said. "Many spots around are able to make good wines, but our area is especially singular to appear prominently in that universe."

It's clear that people have fun at Clos Pons. They have a wine club, allowing members to have lockers for their wines when they come to visit. They even stage a running race

through the vineyards every year. And, they make olive oil ... extra virgin and all sorts of flavored oils like orange-flavored, tangerine-flavored, including Tabasco-flavored.

A small boutique hotel of eight rooms is planned for the property, opening in 2018.

Clos Pons specializes in both red and white wines. They offer grenache, tempranillo, cabernet sauvignon, syrah, marselan, mourvedre, and carignan reds. For whites, they make white grenache, albariño, macabeo, Muscat of Alexandria, and Pedro Ximénez.

If you are fortunate to have lunch at Clos Pons, you might be served local meats and cheeses, veal scallopine with mushrooms, orelletes—fried pastry—topped with tangerine-flavored olive oil and fruit salad, drizzled with orange-flavored olive oil.

Vineyard 3: Castell del Remei Cellar

Dating back to 1780, the **Castell del Remei Cellar** offers the opportunity to learn more about the history of winemaking in the area as well as to taste the wines they produce.

The tour will take you to see the old wood barrels used for aging wine as well as the newer stainless steel tanks. Half of the winery is used for barrel aging and the sight of almost 2,000 French and American oak barrels is spectacular.

The property has some notable buildings to tour, including the castle, the winery,

and the church devoted to the "Virgin of the Remei." In addition to offering wine tastings, they host cultural events and art exhibitions. There is a restaurant there, and they plan on opening a hotel in the future.

Castell del Remei distributes their wine to 42 different countries from the grapes grown on the property, including merlot, cabernet sauvignon, tempranillo, grenache, syrah, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, macabeo, and pinot noir.

Where to Stay

Finca Prats Hotel Golf & Spa

is an exclusive, relaxing oasis that's perfect for a stay after touring the vineyards and wineries. The 40-room-and-suite hotel offers golf, spa services, and a beautiful indoor swimming pool. Relax here and enjoy the spa!

Where to Have Dinner

Xalet Suis, a small family-run restaurant, is a special place to sample Spanish fare with farm-to-table ingredients. Headed up by chef Jordi Balasch with his two sons, Gerard and Sonia, Xalet Suis offers classical and local cuisine.

Here you will find appetizers such as the classic Iberian ham, grilled squid and the tiny snails that are a local favorite. Entrée selections include the freshest of seafood, steaks, duck and lamb. True to its name, you can also order fondue... cheese, beef, seafood and even chocolate!

Top to bottom: Castell del Remei Cellar; Castell del Remei Cellar restaurant; Castell del Remei Cellar church; Castell del Remei





DAY 3: ALT EMPORDA

On the third day of your trip to Catalonia, spend it in Alt Empordà, a county in Girona. Visit two wineries, have lunch at a wine growers' cooperative, and stay in a converted farmhouse that is now a hotel and spa.

Vinyes dels Aspres

The family-owned winery **Vinyes dels Aspres** is located in the town of Cantallops in Alt Empordà. There, you can take a tour of the vineyards and learn about the winemaking process with head winemaker, David Molas.

The winery began three centuries ago. At the end of the 1990s, new techniques of winemaking were added along with renovations to the buildings. From the first bottle of new wine made in 2002, they produce over 40,000 bottles per year.

Some of the wines you will find there include: Oriol Blanc, a young white wine; Blanc dels Aspres, an aged white wine; Oriol Rosat, a young rosé; Oriol Negre, a young red; Negre dels Aspres, an aged red wine; and Vi de Panses, a sweet wine.

The wine tasting is held in an antique-laden dining room. There is a small shop there, too. Plan to spend around an

hour and a half at the location. There is a fee of around \$10 for the tour and tasting.

Wine Tasting at Vinyes d'Olivardots

The role of winemaker has long been exclusively reserved for men. In fact, a study completed only a couple of years ago showed that only 10 percent of the winemakers in California were women.

Vinyes d'Olivardots is the exception to that rule with Carme Casacuberta, alongside her grown daughter, leading the charge. Casacuberta and her husband bought the estate Olivardots in 2002, built the

wine cellar in 2006, and now produce quality wines sold in Spain and many other countries throughout Europe.

There, you can take a tour of the vineyards where the grapes are hand-picked at harvest time followed by a wine tasting. You can see their use of the "lyre trellis" system, developed back in the 80s in France's Bordeaux region. This method helps guard against mildew by using the wind, typical in this area, and the sun as defenders.

You will learn about how they make their wines, from picking by hand and even crushing the grapes with their feet.

Wines include Finca Olivardots, a blend of syrah, grenache, and carignan, a red Spanish and French grape; Gresa, a barrel-aged red; and Vd'O Col.lecció with its unique labels of gray for wines grown in the slate soil, beige in sandy soil, and numbering instead of names to signify the vintage.

Vinyes d'Olivardots
Paratge Olivardots
Girona, Capmany, Spain 17750

Traditional Lunch and Wine Tasting in Cooperativa El Parral

Agrobodega El Parral is a unique opportunity to taste and buy local wines and foods

and have a tasting of the most extraordinary local ingredients at what began as an agricultural cooperative in 1916. The cooperative at one time housed up to 4 million pounds of grapes. Today, the renovated space is a fabulous stop for tasting and buying local products from wine and sausage to olive oils of all types.

Agrobodega El Parral
Carrer Santcliment 27
Capmany, Girona, Spain 17750

Left to right: David Molas winemaker, Vinyes del Aspres, seated; Vinyes del Aspres wine tasting room; Carlota Pena, Carme's Casacuberta daughter, leading a wine tour of Vinyes d'Olivardots; Sampling of wine produced by Olivardots winery alongside soil samples; Wine cellar at Olivardots; Your hosts at Agrobodega El Parral; View from Cooperative El Parral; Agrobodega El Parral shop.



Spa Vilamont



Castell de Peralada



C. Worthington



Spa Vilamont



Spa Vilamont



Spa Vilamont

Where to Stay

Hotel Spa Vilamont was originally an old farm house that dates back to 1800. It is located in the center of Garriguella in Alt Empordà. The farm house was restored six years ago but still has the same flavor of what it must have been so long ago.

The small hotel has eleven rooms with private bathrooms, a spa with a swimming pool, a Jacuzzi and sauna, massage and beauty services, dining, and all types of excursions and activities to explore your surroundings.

Hotel Spa Vilamont
Plaça de l'Església 5
Garriguella, Spain 17780

Where to Have Dinner

A trip to Spain would not be complete without having a five-star dinner in a castle.

Castell de Peralada, dating back to the Middle Ages and located in the village of Peralada, fits the bill. Since the time of the monks who lived and made wine there, the castle has kept the oenology spirit alive and today offers a unique spot for dining and for those who love casinos.

When Miguel Mateu bought the Castell de Peralada in 1923, his main goal was to bring back its winemaking tradition. He more than achieved his goal. Peralada today, headed up by Javier Suqué, grandson of the

Clockwise from top left: Hotel Spa Vilamont; Peralada Castle Museum; Vilamont Hotel Dining; Vilamont Hotel sauna; Vilamont Hotel pool; One of the artistic presentations by the chef at Castell de Peralada restaurant.



Peralada Castle.

founder, is one of the leading wine and cava producers of Spain.

Before you dine in the five-star restaurant, take a tour of the **Peralada Castle Museum** and the convent library, which holds Mateu's collection of some 80,000 books and manuscripts.

The museum houses his Medieval and Renaissance sculptures, tapestries, paintings, glassware, ceramics, and more.

Castell Peralada Restaurant will impress you with its haute cuisine prepared by chef Xavier Sagristà who achieved fame through his time at the world-renowned elBulli restaurant. The food is stylishly presented, using local ingredients from the Empordà region.

Castell de Peralada
Plaza del Carmen 1
Peralada, Girona, Spain 17491

DAY 4: ON TO GIRONA

A perfect way to end your four-day tour of Catalonia, and before you leave Alt Empordà, is to visit to Masia Serra winery... gorgeous views, wonderful people, excellent wine...

Masia Serra

Masia Serra is a family-owned winery in Cantallops, Alt Empordà, a small village in the foothills of Albera Massif, the mountain range between Spain and France. The views of the vineyards and the old olive and oak trees are extraordinary, like an artist's palette against the backdrop of the mountains.

This is a place to come not only for wine tasting, but for



View of Masia Serra vineyards with Pyrenees as backdrop.

picnicking among the vines, relaxing after a long bike ride while sipping a glass of their wine, and feeling the passion of the winemakers, Jaume Serra and Silvia Vila.

Their story begins in 1961 when Jaume's grandfather planted vineyards on the property. Not much was done with the vineyard until 1996 when Jaume and Silvia decided to make a go of wine production, starting with his grandfather's vineyards. They produced 1,300 bottles.

Today, they produce 45,000 to 50,000 bottles a year: two whites, three reds, and one sweet wine along with a small production of olive oil.

Jaume and Silvia exude passion for life, the winery, and for their guests. In keeping with their welcoming attitude, their life plan includes adding several guest rooms with pools, making it a perfect spot for

travelers who want to stay in one place and visit local wineries or just relax in the tranquil setting.

As part of the tour, you will see the wine cellar, including one oak barrel that hasn't been empty since 1848. A stone patio with an outdoor built-in grill is the perfect setting for lunches and parties. The winery opens its doors for celebrations, weddings, and corporate meetings.

Their wines reflect their passion for life and are aptly named. "Io" is comprised of letters from the Ancient Greek phrase Euoi, a Maenad shout of happiness. "Aroa" is dedicated to their daughter.

"Like our daughter, who is a lovely girl, the wine has character," Jaume said. "It is elegant and has character."

There is no doubt that Jaume is passionate about wine making

and about his family. In fact, he has a tattoo for each of his children.

"This is our project of life," Jaume said. "We want to make things slowly and enjoy."

A visit including lunch is around \$50 per person. They ask that you call first.

Masia Serra Winery

Dels Solés, 20
Cantallops, Spain 17708

Visit to Girona

Now that you have tasted wine and sampled local food throughout the region, relaxed in the countryside, or leisurely rode bikes through vineyards, you might spend your last day

Clockwise from top left: Jaume Serra and Silvia Vila, owners Masia Serra; Wine tasting at Masia Serra with local meats and cheeses; Oak barrel that has not been empty since 1848; Masia Serra small cottage for vacationing visitors is a perfect spot for cyclists who want to explore the area and have a home base in the country; Masia Serra outdoor grilled steak lunch.



in Girona, one of the major cities of Catalonia.

Located in the autonomous community of the same name, Girona is quite cosmopolitan and the perfect spot for shopping, sampling local foods in charming but hip restaurants, and for cultural experiences.

Like a Mondrian painting, the colorful buildings on each side of the Onyar River shimmer in the water and provide a romantic backdrop for strolling along the banks and over the bridges.

Girona has a population of over 97,000, is home to the University of Girona, and a popular tourist destination. A number of notable professional American cyclists have made Girona their winter training home thanks to the good climate, food, and atmosphere.

Here's a sampling of things to do in Girona:

- Stroll along the river that separates the historic center from the commercial side.
- Visit the Cathedral in the Romanesque style, built between the 11th and 18th centuries.
- See the 12th century Roman baths.
- Discover where the **Game of Thrones** was filmed. Take a Game of Thrones self-guided walking tour.
- Go back through 600 years of time in the Jewish Quarter, a maze of narrow streets and

old buildings.

• Go shopping at the Rambla de la Libertad, the outdoor market area dating back to the 13th century and stretching along the Onyar River. Low ceilings and arches make this market area symbolic of Girona.

The Lioness' Bottom—Girona, Spain

“No pot ser veí de Girona qui no faci un petó al cul de la lleona,” meaning, “You can't be a resident of Girona until you've kissed the backside of the lioness.”

Head over to Plaça de Sant Fèliu to see people getting really silly as they climb up several steep steps to, yes, kiss the buttocks of a stone lion.

Lore has it that nearby was the Lioness Hostel, which had a lioness climbing a column on a wall. The hostel encouraged people to come by and tap the rear end of the statue. The hostel closed, and the statue was moved to its current location. Apparently, this statue is a copy, with the original one resting in Girona's Museum of Art.

So, before you leave Girona, do kiss the posterior of the lion to ensure you will definitely be coming back!

To learn more about Girona: [Official website of Girona Tourism](#)

Clockwise from top left: Girona, Spain; Visit where Game of Thrones was filmed; Girona's famous stone lioness ready for a kiss; Sample the breads and pastries of Girona at one of the many shops there.



THE 26 WINE ROUTES OF SPAIN

Enoturisme PENEDÈS

The Alicante Wine Route
rutadelvinodealicante.com

The Arlanza Wine Route
rutadelvinoarlanza.com

The El Bierzo
Enotourism Wine Route
bierzoenoturismo.com

The Bullas Wine Route
rbullas.es/rutadelvino/

The Calatayud Wine Route
rutadelvinocalatayud.com/

The Campo de
Cariñena Wine Route
rutadelvinocampodecarinena.com

The Cigales Wine Route
rutadelvinocigales.com/en/

The Empordà Wine Route
[ca.costabrava.org/que-fer/
enogastronomia/ruta-del-vi](http://ca.costabrava.org/que-fer/enogastronomia/ruta-del-vi)

The Garnacha – Campo
de Borja Wine Route
rutadelvinocigales.com/en/

The Lleida – Costers
del Segre Wine Route
rutadelvidelleida.com

The Jumilla Wine Route
rutadelvinojumilla.com/

The Marco de Jerez Wine
and Brandy Route
rutadeljerezybrandy.es/es/

The Montilla – Moriles Wine Route
rutadelvinomontillamoriles.com/en/

The Navarra Wine Route
rutadelvinodenavarra.com/en/

The Penedès Wine Route
enoturismepenedes.cat/en

The Rías Baixas Wine Route
rutadelvinoriasbaixas.com/en

The Ribera del Duero Wine Route
riberate.com

The Ribera del
Guadiana Wine Route
rutadelvinoriberadelduero.es/en/

The Rioja Alavesa Wine Route
rutadelvinoderiojaalavesa.com/en/

The Rioja Alta Wine Route
rutasdelvinorioja.com/en/

The Serranía de Ronda
Wineries and Wines Route
ruta-vinos-ronda.com/

The Rueda Wine Route
rutadelvinoderueda.com/en/

The Somontano Wine Route
rutadelvinosomontano.com

The Txakoli de
Aiaraldea Wine Route
[aiaraldea.org/en/discover-the-
valley/txakoli-route](http://aiaraldea.org/en/discover-the-valley/txakoli-route)

The Vino de Utiel –
Requena Wine Route
en.rutavino.com/

The Yecla Wine Route
rutadelvinoyecla.com