

A pleasure called Rioja Alavesa:

The Rioja Alavesa Wine Route is, given its moderate extension and easy access, an inviting route that can be visited from sunrise to sunset - nature, art, cuisine and people who understand that co-existence, hospitality and a warm welcome are a way of life. But it is also a full schedule of activities during all seasons of the year that seeks to highlight a new concept of tourism.

Rioja Alavesa, located on the Banks of the River Ebro, on the slopes of the Cantabria Mountain Range, is marked by hundreds of vineyards and surprising medieval villages that constitute an attractive backdrop for major cultural, gastronomic and natural traditions. It enjoys a privileged micro-climate for growing grapes, a quality that has made the region a benchmark in the Spanish wine-making sector. A land with such an ingrained wine culture that is ideal for receiving all types of visitors attracted by the boom in wine tourism. **The Rioja Alavesa Wine Route** is based on this premise. One of its main objectives is to promote tourism and economic development in the region, for which it has recently renewed its certification as one of the "Wine Routes of Spain." Apart from a unique experience in vineyards and wineries and apart from the attraction of the land, travellers may also enjoy, popular festivities, personalised excursions as well as country houses and hotels offering charming accommodation for the night; or they may enjoy the cuisine, true to its roots and blessed with a prodigious production of legumes and vegetables, sausages, meat and sweets.

The Rioja Alavesa Wine Route includes 15 municipalities (Baños de Ebro, Kripán, Elciego, Elvillar, Labastida, Laguardia, Lanciego, Lapuebla de Labarca, Leza, Moreda de Álava, Navaridas, Oyón, Samaniego, Villabuena de Alava and Yécora) and 4 Administrative Districts (Barriobusto, Labraza, Párganos and Salinillas de Buradón), traditionally associated with the culture of wine, which retain the charm of the medieval villages built among vineyards and that treasure a vast natural, archaeological and artistic heritage. Examples of the area's tourist potential are the international prize for walled cities awarded to Labraza or the arrival of the 'Number One Million' tourist to Laguardia.

The proximity of these towns and the excellent roads are a perfect excuse to discover the incredible landscape of endless vineyards, dotted with olive trees, ancient dolmens and majestic cellars combined with the most daring and avant-garde architectural proposals. And all this in perfect harmony. In addition, the **Rioja Alavesa Wine Route** offers a unique tourist bus service, similar to those found in large cities, that, for a single price, enables tourists to visit the entire region. Travellers may join or leave the bus at the places they find of interest without the need to depend on their private vehicles to travel from one town to the next.

Wineries of many types constitute the heart of this Route. Some are located in ancestral cellars where wine is still made in the traditional manner; others are more modern, designed by some of the best architects in the world for the better known brands. This is the seduction of contrasts that wine deserves as a festive item that provides pleasure and joy.

Furthermore, the **Rioja Alavesa Wine Route**, which is open to new members, also consists of dozens of companies, including wineries, wine museums and interpretation centres, wine cellars and wine shops, hotels, specialised shops, wine bars, restaurants, reception agencies and entertainment companies.

Viticulture is the central theme of the Route. Currently, the region has 13,500 hectares of vineyards and its wines, produced within the framework of the Regulatory Council of the Rioja Denomination of Origin, enjoy well-deserved international reputation. The quality of the wines is due, to a great extent, to the calcareous clay soil, the location of the vineyards and, above all, to the care of the people in combining the traditional manufacturing legacy with new technological developments. Red wines are the most characteristic product from this area, although in recent years, white wine is contributing interesting proposals. The major national brands have wineries in the area, which perfectly exemplifies the quality of their wines.

But Rioja Alavesa is much more, as it offers its wide-ranging cultural heritage and ancient traditions that are clearly based on the world of wine, such as the traditional Harvest Festival and the Uztaberri Eguna or open wineries festival, which will take place next February 14 in Lapuebla de Labarca. Nor must we forget the famous articulated Nativity Scene of Santa Maria de los Reyes in Laguardia, the Medieval Festival of Labraza, the Witches' Meeting at the Sorceress' Dolmen in Villar, the day of the Pipers in Laguardia, or the many celebrations that have attracted visitors for decades.

Of a more modern but equally appealing type are events such as the Medieval "Pintxos" Contest in Laguardia, which is now several years old and offers a unique opportunity to sample the culinary potential of an exceptional district in every sense ... In short, a perfect place for a break which one will always want to repeat.

Information: 902 11 40 50
www.rutadelvinoderiojaalavesa.com