



WINE COUNTRY

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MORE THAN 120 WINERIES AWAIT VISITORS TO WALLA WALLA: THE UNOFFICIAL CAPITAL OF WASHINGTON WINE COUNTRY

(WALLA WALLA, Wash.)—There’s a distinct difference between simply going wine tasting, and actually visiting wine country. When it comes to Washington’s wine country, one destination clearly stands apart from the competition: Walla Walla.

A unique combination of climate, character, charm and culture help shape Walla Walla wine country, and result in an experience that is far greater than the sum of its individual parts. From charming tasting rooms to fanciful winemaker dinners, visitors have ample opportunities to immerse themselves in the Walla Walla wine country experience.

The history of Walla Walla wine country, which many trace commercially to the founding of Leonetti Cellar in 1977, actually dates back to some of the area’s earliest settlers. Specifically to the 1840s, when the area’s first grapes were planted by French fur trappers living in nearby Frenchtown. Around the same time, early Italian immigrants brought their winemaking traditions with them to Walla Walla, where they planted wine grapes and began making homemade wine. Vines with these origins still exist in the Valley today.

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But it wasn't until the founding of Leonetti Cellar, followed by Woodward Canyon Winery in 1981 and L'Ecole No. 41 in 1983, that the true roots of Walla Walla's wine country were established. With official recognition by the American Viticultural Association (AVA) in 1984, the Walla Walla Valley AVA was official and the region's wine country wheels were set in motion. By 1990 the number of wineries had grown to six, and by 2001 there were 30. Today, more than 120 wineries call the Walla Walla Valley home, along with more than 2,800 acres of grapes including the most widely planted varieties of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, and Merlot.

The Walla Walla Valley's climate creates optimal growing conditions, and combined with the fertile soils allow growers to control and manipulate many of the growing conditions. Coincidentally, the valley's location at latitude 46° straddles the same line that passes between the Burgundy and Bordeaux regions of France, perhaps one of the reasons why Walla Walla's first wine growers—French fur traders—achieved early success that ultimately led to the valley's reputation as the unofficial capital of Washington wine country.

About Walla Walla:

As the unofficial capital of Washington wine country, Walla Walla is home to more than 120 wineries, a nationally recognized culinary scene, access to an abundance of outdoor recreation, and an arts & entertainment scene that rivals cities many times its size. This community of just over 30,000 residents is known for many things, including its friendliness and hospitality, the quality of its wine, and of course the famous Walla Walla Sweet Onion. An easy and scenic four-hour drive from Seattle, Portland, or Boise, Walla Walla can also be accessed via Alaska Airlines daily non-stop flights from Seattle. For more information and to begin planning a trip to Walla Walla, visit www.visitwallawalla.com.

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