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Wine Trail Traveler Newsletter

Agri-Tourism and You

Farming was a way of life during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today the small farm has gone the way of horse-drawn carriages and soda fountains. Encroaching suburban areas have snuffed out small farms. Housing is pushing farther and farther out from the center of cities and towns. Currently the large commercial farmer has hundreds of acres to farm. Recently, a young farmer from Indiana said that he farmed 1200 acres of land but lived in town with his wife and child.

Today agri-tourism offers many opportunities to visitors. Agri-tourism is the practice of attracting visitors to agricultural sites. Whether you want to pick fruit or vegetables, go for a hayride, eat at a restaurant, stay at a bed and breakfast, or visit a petting zoo, there is something for everyone. How do children learn where grape juice, milk or eggs come from? Visit agricultural destination sites and let children see for themselves. Vineyards and wineries make excellent agri-tourism destinations.

Agricultural tourism provides the opportunity for people of all ages to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. There is nothing more eye opening than a quiet drive along country roads. Remember John Denver singing "Country Roads?" Interstate roads may get you to your destination sooner, but the slower country roads give you more time to enjoy the countryside.

If you are planning a visit to a winery, check out their website. Some wineries focus on a "total" experience, not only a "tasting" experience. Find out what the winery has to offer. Some wineries are very receptive to having families visit. You may come across wineries that have chickens, cows, sheep or other interesting sights for children.

Another aspect of wineries and vineyards is the preservation of the land. Would you rather have a vineyard in your backyard, a strip



The vacancy sign at this Michigan destination informs visitors that lodging is available. A beautiful inn and gourmet breakfast makes this winery visit special.

mall or multiple-use housing? Harry Hepbron from Maryland's Dove Valley Vineyards and Winery believes that building wineries and planting vineyards is a way to preserve the land for generations, and it provides a livelihood.

Donald Coe from Michigan's Black Star Farms is determined to help the small farmers in the area. An example of this was when a farmer told him he was only getting four cents a pound for his pears. Donald worked with him and now the farmer provides pears grown inside bottles for Black Star Farms. Today when you visit the winery, you will find bottles of brandy with a pear in each bottle. This provides a unique gift for the person who has everything. Black Star Farms is an agri-tourism destination. Not only is there a vineyard, winery and tasting room, there is a creamery with a viewing room from the tasting room that shows visitors the process of cheese making. The cheese pairs well with Black Star Farms wines. Stables, paths and farm animals are also found on the estate. A bed and breakfast inn provides lodging

for visitors.

With the value of the dollar being so poor in Europe, now is the time to consider visiting agricultural destination sites in the United States. Whether you want to spend a day or two or a week, you will find just the perfect place to visit. More and more farms are promoting agricultural tourism.

K.S.

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Italian Vineyard Destination

Under a Tuscan Sun paints a romantic view of Italian vineyards in Tuscany. So how pleasant is it to stay at a Tuscan vineyard estate? We had the opportunity to spend two weeks at Mormoraia about seven kilometers from San Gimignano, a walled city often referred to as the medieval Manhattan. The approach to the winery tasting room and check-in office winds past vineyards guarded by a perimeter of olive trees. In this part of Tuscany, rows upon rows of Sangiovese and Vernaccia grapes catch the sun's rays.

In late October only the unharvested grapes still cling to the vines. The seventy-five acres of vineyards spread out amongst rolling hills. We spent several hours during our two-week stay strolling through the vines. Walking through the vineyards presents the opportunity to taste the grapes left after harvest. We discovered on our first trek a few rows of table grapes. These were larger than most wine grapes and were sweet and juicy. We also observed the gradual change in leaf color from green to yellow in most cases. Several rows did turn a bright red-orange to add contrast to the rows of yellow.

The present owners purchased Mormoraia in 1980 and the



Tuscan style apartment at Mormoraia.

transformation to a modern winery began. Previously the site was a convent. There were several buildings including the convent, stables and church. The convent was converted into apartments. In an old photograph at the office, we observed wine tanks in two of the rooms of the convent. Wine had been made on this property for centuries.

We rented a two-bedroom apartment on the first floor. The design of the apartment was in

the Tuscan style highlighting brick and stone floors, walls and ceilings with gentle arches. The apartment provided plenty of room to spread out. The kitchen was one of the smallest rooms. There was enough space for two people to cook if good at dancing around each other. A large table, chairs and buffet encompass the dining room area. From the dining room a living room area had two sofas for lounging, reading and watching television.

The master bedroom was large and opened out to a small grassy area surrounding the apartments. You could observe the towers from San Gimignano in the distance. Views of the hill and valley covered in grapevines and olive groves provided contrast to the landscape. A table and chairs were set up just outside the bedroom door. Even on a late October afternoon the weather was pleasantly warm enough to relax outdoors and enjoy a bottle of Vernaccia. Another bedroom, with two twin beds located off the dining room area, provided accommodations for family. Each bedroom had its own bathroom.

The 180-degree view from our apartment provided many vistas that changed over time. We were rewarded one morning when we



The medieval town San Gimignano is seen in the distance framed by autumn grape leaves.

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observed a dense fog that covered the hills and valleys. Only the towers of San Gimignano pierced through the fog and looked like the far away masts of ships on the sea.

The agri-tourism movement in the Tuscan countryside is popular. There are many farms, vineyards, olive groves and wineries that offer lodging in villas, farmhouses, apartments and hotel-like rooms. We were able to roll out of bed and walk a short distance to the vineyard. Most agri-tourism sites are close to charming towns where you can walk the streets and take part in a culture at a slower pace than to what you may be accustomed. We spent several days and evenings driving the seven kilometers to San Gimignano. Walking the curving ancient streets led to new experiences at every turn. There were many restaurants to choose from, and almost as many museums. Some believe the best gelato in Italy is found in San Gimignano.



Agriturism signs abound in the Tuscan countryside.

Driving the countryside roads can be a pleasurable experience. Only one car passed us as we drove from Mormoraia to the town of Certaldo. We parked the car and explored the town on foot. A short uphill walk led us to the medieval buildings where the town's rulers once lived. A bit of a further drive from Mormoraia was the town Monteriggioni. This was another walled town, small enough to walk between the town's two portals in a few minutes. Peacefulness surrounds this town and we enjoyed an Italian meal outside, catching some of autumn's last warm rays. From our base at Mormoraia we visited several wineries in the Chianti Classico and Chianti Coli Senesi regions of Tuscany.

The Tuscan countryside is charming and the views are magnificent. Plan to spend as much time as possible and explore the region's many wineries, towns and agri-tourism sites.

T.S.

New Winery Visits

Wine Trail Traveler has recently visited six wineries. Early in February we visited, Kreutz Creek in Pennsylvania. Kreutz Creek Vineyards was started as the result of a birthday wine kit. Today the winery and tasting room is located in the basement of the owner's home. In northern Maryland, Dove Valley Vineyards, in Rising Sun, Maryland opened in late fall 2007. Enjoy visiting here. The oak log building is comfortable and it would be ideal to come and purchase a glass of wine and sit among the antiques displayed throughout the room.

The Wine Trail Traveler trip in the middle of February took us to Maryland's Eastern Shore and Delaware. Nassau Valley Vineyards, the first farm winery in Delaware has a museum gallery where one can view the history of wine and production of wine from descriptive backlit displays and artifacts. St. Michaels Winery is located in the small resort town of St. Michaels, Maryland. The winery is located in what was formerly an old flourmill. When you visit notice how they have made use of the area while still keeping with the characteristics of an old mill. Tilmon's Island Winery is in Sudlersville, Maryland. Visit and enjoy talking with owner and winemaker Don Tilmon, an economics professor at the University of Delaware.

We visited Black Ankle Vineyards slated to open the tasting room in the summer of 2008 Years of planning has gone into this vineyard, winery and tasting room. Vineyards are planted and productive and the tasting room is using environmentally friendly building techniques. This will be one of a very few winery tasting rooms in the country built using bales of straw for insulation. The straw was grown on the property and some of the wood used in the construction of the tasting room was harvested on the estate.

K.S.



Self-guided gallery walk through the wine museum at Nassau Valley Vineyards in Delaware.

Our Winery Partners

Stop by these wineries that advertise with Wine Trail Traveler.

Dove Valley Vineyards and Winery (*new advertiser*)

645 Harrington Road
Rising Sun, MD 21911

Chateau Chantal (*new advertiser*)

15900 Rue de Vin
Traverse City, MI 49686

Prince Michel Vineyard and Winery (*new advertiser*)

154 Winery Lane
Leon, Virginia 22725

Basignani Winery

15722 Falls Road,
Sparks, MD 21152

Black Star Farms

10844 E. Revold Rd.
Suttons Bay, Michigan 49682

Chateau O'Brien at Northpoint

3238 Rail Stop Road
Markham, VA 22643

Fiore Winery

3026 Whiteford Road
Pylesville, MD 21132

Grove Winery and Vineyard

7360 Brooks Bridge Road
Gibsonville, NC 27249

King Ferry Winery

658 Lake Road
King Ferry, New York 13081

Kluge Estate Winery & Vineyards

100 Grand Cru Drive
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Pearmund Cellars

6190 Georgetown Road
Broad Run, VA 20137

Pickering Winery

Rt. 187 Between Wysox and Rome
Wysox, PA 18854

Veritas Vineyard & Winery

145 Saddleback Farm
Afton, Virginia 22920

The Winery at La Grange

4970 Antioch Road
Haymarket, Virginia 20169

Our Lodging Partners

The Inn at Black Star Farms

10844 E. Revold Rd.
Suttons Bay, Michigan 49682

Hampton Inn and Suites, Leesburg VA

117 Fort Evans Road N.E.
Leesburg, VA 20176
Phone (703) 699-8640

Recipes with Wine

Green wine? With St. Patrick's Day approaching try the Leprechaun Punch recipe.

Title: Kreutz Creek Vineyards Leprechaun Punch

Ingredients:

1 bottle Kreutz Creek Vineyards Vidal Blanc
6 oz sparkling water – lime
3 oz Melon Liquor
1/8 t ground ginger
6 slices of lime
Green Food coloring

Directions:

Mix all ingredients and you're Irish for the day!!! This recipe makes about 6 glasses, feel free to double it and ENJOY!

Provided by Kreutz Creek Vineyards, Pennsylvania.

Have a recipe that uses wines as an ingredient? If you'd like it published on Wine Trail Traveler send it to kathy@winetrailtraveler.com.

When you try a recipe, we hope you will take a moment to email us at kathy@winetrailtraveler.com and let us know your experience with the recipe. If you would rather, join the free forum and comment.

Hilton Garden Inn, Allentown West

230 Sycamore Road
Breinigsville, PA 18031
Phone (610) 398-6686

Hilton Garden Inn, Kennett Square

815 E. Baltimore Pike
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania 19348
Phone (610) 444-9100

Our Artists Partners

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