

The World's Most Beautiful Wine Region: Switzerland's Lavaux



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Imagine a wine region folded into a series of magnificently steep hillsides set along a crystal clear alpine lake. Now toss in sweeping views of the Alps, an assortment of medieval villages, and 20 miles of walking paths threaded through the vineyards and you have Lavaux Switzerland. I've spent decades exploring wine regions and Lavaux is far and away the most charming destination I've experienced, ever. Maybe it's the fact that each winery is an intimate family-owned affair and that 95% of the production is consumed locally (read: you won't see these wines anywhere else). Or, it might be the undulating corrugated rows of stone terraces (roughly 10,000 total) set against Lake Geneva, that create a truly elysian setting. Did I mention that in 2007 Lavaux, which runs between Lausanne and Montreux, was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, largely because of its beauty? Arguably, there are intimate wine regions, and there are beautiful ones, but it is Lavaux's welcoming, inviting walkability that tips the scales for me.

You can explore the region from any of the towns between Lausanne and Montreux. I started out from Vevey via train, (they depart on the hour) directly to the Chexbres-Villages stop, which is about ten minutes away. The train ride alone is a scenic treat, winding you up into the vineyards, bisecting the region and offering panoramic views of the vineyards, Lake Geneva and the Alps. Once in Chexbres you can wander the narrow streets and pop into wineries as you go—most are open and do not require an appointment. There are roughly 200 different wineries in Lavaux, many of which have been owned by the same

family for generations, some with a history that dates back to 1300's. The primary grapes are Chasselas, Pinot Noir and Gamay and the most awarded wines hail from the Grand Cru Dézaley appellation.

If you choose to wander the vineyards keep an eye out for the occasional vineyard hut or as the Swiss refer to them: "capite." These are tidy little spaces originally used by winemakers to as a respite from the sun and vineyard work. Today many winemakers have transformed them, providing seating, tables and wines to taste—with payment on the honor system. Some are available [to sleep in](#) overnight.

Where to Taste:

[Louis-Philippe Bovard \(Domaine Louis Bovard\)](#) - Cully. In 2016 the Gault & Millau guide labeled Bovard an icon winegrower. His Dézaley Grand Cru 2003 received a 92 from *The Wine Advocate*.

[Blaise Duboux](#) - Epesses. A winery currently operated by the 17th generation—Duboux uses the biodynamic methods in the vineyards.

[Domaine Mermetus](#)—Visit here for a broad and intriguing selection of whites and reds.

Father and son, Henri and Vincent Chollet hold the county record with their 31 Cuvée wine which includes 24 different grape varieties.

[Contant Jomini](#) -Chexbres. Located in the village of Chexbres be sure to try the Grand Cru Dézaley and the Merlot at this quaint village tasting room.

Where to Eat:

Take a break from walking and make a stop in the lovely town of Saint-Saphorin. Ask anyone where Auberge de l'Onde is—it is widely considered to be one of the region's best restaurants. During your meal, leverage the encyclopedic knowledge of sommelier Jérôme Aké Béda, you will surely taste some of the best wines in Lavaux—paired with an utterly delicate filet of local perch. Closed Mon and Tue; +41 (0)21 925 49 00.

