

Umpqua Valley

Location: Umpqua Valley AVA sits between the Coast Range to the west and the Cascade Range to the east, with the Willamette Valley AVA to the north and the Rogue Valley AVA to the south. Named for the legendary fishing river that runs nearby, the appellation stretches 65 miles from north to south, and is 25 miles from east to west.

Wine history: The Umpqua Valley's winegrowing history dates back to the 1880s when German immigrants who had worked for the Beringer Bros., the oldest continuously operating vineyard in Napa, planted the first wine grape vineyard in the Valley. Post-prohibition, Richard Sommer established Hillcrest Vineyards near Roseburg in 1961. He was the first to plant Pinot noir in Oregon despite being told by his California (Davis) cohorts that it was impossible to successfully grow wine grapes in Oregon. Obviously, they were wrong. Just eight years later, in 1969, Paul Bjelland of Bjelland Vineyards founded the Oregon Winegrowers Association in the Umpqua Valley. During the 1970s new wineries opened, including Henry Estate Winery, whose winemaker Scott Henry developed a now world-famous trellis system, which increases grape yield, among other benefits. The Umpqua Valley appellation continues to evolve as new winemakers discover the area, bringing with them a passion for innovation and world-class wine. The Umpqua Valley appellation became official in 1984.

Climate: One of Oregon's more diverse climates, the Umpqua Valley can successfully grow both cool and warm varieties. It's comprised of three distinct climatic sub-zones: 1) The Northern area around the town of Elkton enjoys a cool, marine-influenced climate. It receives around 50 inches of annual rainfall, making irrigation unnecessary. Pinot noir and other cool-climate varieties thrive here. 2) The Central area to the northwest of Roseburg has a transitional, or intermediate, climate where both cool and warm varieties do quite well. 3) The area south of Roseburg is warmer and more arid, similar to Rogue and Applegate valleys to the south, making irrigation necessary. Warm-climate varieties, including Tempranillo, Syrah and Merlot thrive here.

Soils: Umpqua Valley soils are as varied as the climate. Generally, they are derived from a mix of metamorphic, sedimentary and volcanic rock; though more than 150 soil types have been identified in the region. The valley floor levels have mostly deep alluvial or heavy clay materials, while the hillsides and bench locations have mixed alluvial, silt or clay structures-all typically excellent for winegrowing.

Topography: The complex topography of the Umpqua Valley is a result of the collision of three mountain ranges of varying age and structure: the Klamath Mountains, the Coast Range and the Cascades. Many say the area should not be thought of as a single valley but, rather, more accurately "The Hundred Valleys of the Umpqua" because it is made up of a series of interconnecting small mountain ranges and valleys.

Predominant varieties

Pinot Noir

Pinot Gris

Riesling

Syrah

Tempranillo

While you're here...

History is rich in the Umpqua Valley. The Applegate Trail passed through this area in 1846 as a way for pioneers to reach the western valleys of the Oregon Territory. There are a half-dozen beautifully kept covered bridges, historic homes, museums, pioneer cemeteries and antiques shops mixed in with charming cafés and restaurants serving Oregon wine. Nature is alive and well in the Land of the

Umpqua, which is named for the legendary fishing river that runs through it. On the banks of the North Umpqua River in the Umpqua National Forest sits the historic Steamboat Inn. It's a revered, magical place with a fly-fishing tradition that dates back to 1957. Its evening dinner, which is always served at dusk to give fishermen ample time on the river, pairs fine meals featuring the freshest of local ingredients with Oregon wines. Crater Lake National Park, and its outdoor recreation and adventure opportunities, is just a two and a half hour drive from Umpqua Valley. The beautiful Diamond Lake is even closer.

Below are some links to help you plan your trip to the Umpqua Valley:

Umpqua Valley Wineries Association

The complex topography of the Umpqua Valley, formed by the convergence of three mountain ranges of varying ages and structure, contributes to the occurrence of varied soil types and the many sub-valleys known as the Hundred Valleys of the Umpqua. The rich diversity of landscapes and climates provide a wide range of conditions needed to produce an exciting array of grape varieties.

Southern Oregon Wineries Association

A visit to a winery in Southern Oregon can involve much more than just tasting wine. Located in beautiful valleys with stunning vistas, a family member or winemaker may be pouring wine in the tasting room, or be nearby to share stories and special wines with you. Many wines are only available at the winery or have very limited distribution, so be sure to take some wines home to share your discovery of Southern Oregon wineries with friends and family.

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Southern Oregon offers some of the state's most refined and rugged adventures. On the one hand there's the Tony-Award winning Shakespeare Festival in Ashland and the visits to the nearby vineyards, chocolatiers, and cheese makers, and of course the fine restaurants that serve the fruits of their labor.