



CRAFTING YOUR PERFECT PET FRIENDLY WINE TOUR

Have you ever found yourself daydreaming about sipping delicious wines surrounded by picturesque vineyards, but felt guilty about leaving your furry best friend behind? We've been there too! As enthusiastic wine lovers (but definite novices) and devoted pet parents, we've found some fantastic ways to create an unforgettable pet friendly wine tasting.

Picking our perfect pet-friendly cellar door line-up

When we first started planning wine tours with our pooches, we thought more stops meant more fun and that our pets would be welcome everywhere. But boy, were we barking up the wrong tree!

After a few overly ambitious (and slightly chaotic) attempts, we've found our sweet spot: 3-4 pet-friendly cellar doors in a day. This lets us really enjoy each stop without feeling rushed or overwhelming our furry friends.

We also love mixing it up between well-known labels and hidden gems that welcome pets. It's exciting to visit the big names we've seen on bottle shop shelves, but some of our best memories come from tiny family-run vineyards where our dogs are greeted like VIPs (Very Important Pooches).

Here's a top tip we wish we'd known earlier: call ahead to confirm pet policies. We've discovered some absolute treasures this way – cellar door staff are usually happy to share which wineries they love and that will also roll out the red carpet for our four-legged companions!

Getting the hang of wine tasting

Let's be honest, our first few tastings were more "drink, nod, and don't let the dog steal the cheese" than sophisticated sampling. But we've picked up some tricks along the way that have made our experiences so much more enjoyable for both us and our two dogs.

Here's our no-fuss guide to tasting like a pro (or at least faking it convincingly):

- **Settle the dog:** Check with the cellar doors staff if your dog is allowed inside, otherwise, find a comfortable spot outside and make sure your furry friend is settled, restrained and has some water handy.
- **Look:** Hold your glass up and check out the colour. Is it pale and see-through or dark and rich?
- **Swirl:** Give your glass a gentle swirl. It looks cool and apparently it releases the aromas.
- **Smell:** Take a good sniff. What can you smell? Fruits? Spices? Perhaps don't worry if your dog tries to join in though – even though their sense of smell is way better than ours!

- **Taste:** Take a sip and let it sit in your mouth for a moment. What flavours jump out at you? Is it sweet, bitter, or somewhere in between?
- **Describe:** Put your impressions into words. There's no wrong answer here – if you taste banana in your Chardonnay, go with it!

Remember, wine tasting is supposed to be fun! Don't stress about identifying every flavour – just enjoy the experience and the joy of having your furry friend by your side.

Turning our tour into a pet friendly feast on wheels

Here's something we learned the hard way: wine tasting on an empty stomach is a recipe for disaster, for both humans and pets. Now, we make food a big part of our wine adventure for everyone.

Many pet-friendly wineries offer cheese platters or "build your own" options, and some even have special treats for dogs. We love creating our own progressive lunch, nibbling our way through the region while ensuring our pups have plenty of water and their own snacks. A creamy cheese with a bold red for us, a dog biscuit for Fido – it's a delicious way to explore the local flavours together.



And don't forget water for everyone! We always bring a big bottle for us and a portable bowl for our four-legged friends to stay hydrated. It keeps us all fresh and helps cleanse our palates (and their snouts) between stops.

By following these simple tips, we've transformed our wine tours from bewildering blur to brilliant adventure for the whole family – fur and all. The key is to relax, have fun, and not take it too seriously. After all, it's just grape juice... really, really good grape juice (and some excellent belly rubs)!

So grab your friends, your furry companions, pick a pet-friendly wine region, and start your own tasting journey. Who knows? You might discover your new favourite wine, find the perfect dog-friendly picnic spot, or at least have a great day out trying!