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APR 5, 2018 @ 05:05 PM 281 👁

Exploring Chile's Wine Country: Lapostolle Residence at Clos Apalta Vineyard



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Lapostolle

Biking through Clos Apalta vineyards

Chile converted me. Well, *Carmenere* converted me. During my stay in Santiago, this avowed Sauvignon Blanc drinker sampled the wine that Chile is feted for, fell in love with its rich, spicy, slightly bitter flavor—and found myself crossing over to Team Red. I then, naturally, crossed over to the land where this divine grape, along with the country's best red vintages, are cultivated: Colchagua Valley, two-and-a-half hours south of Santiago.

The zone, smack-dab in the center of the country and first cultivated by 16th-century Jesuits, basks in the cooling forces of the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean—and is thus ideal for the production of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Syrah and my beloved Carmenere. Instead of winery hopping, I elected to immerse myself in the region's *crème de la crème*: Lapostolle's Clos Apalta Residence, owned by the French family behind Grand Marnier and billing itself as “French in essence, Chilean by birth.” Moral of the story? Yes, *oui, si*: this is a property and wine label not to be missed.



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Casa Lapostolle's Clos Apalta winery

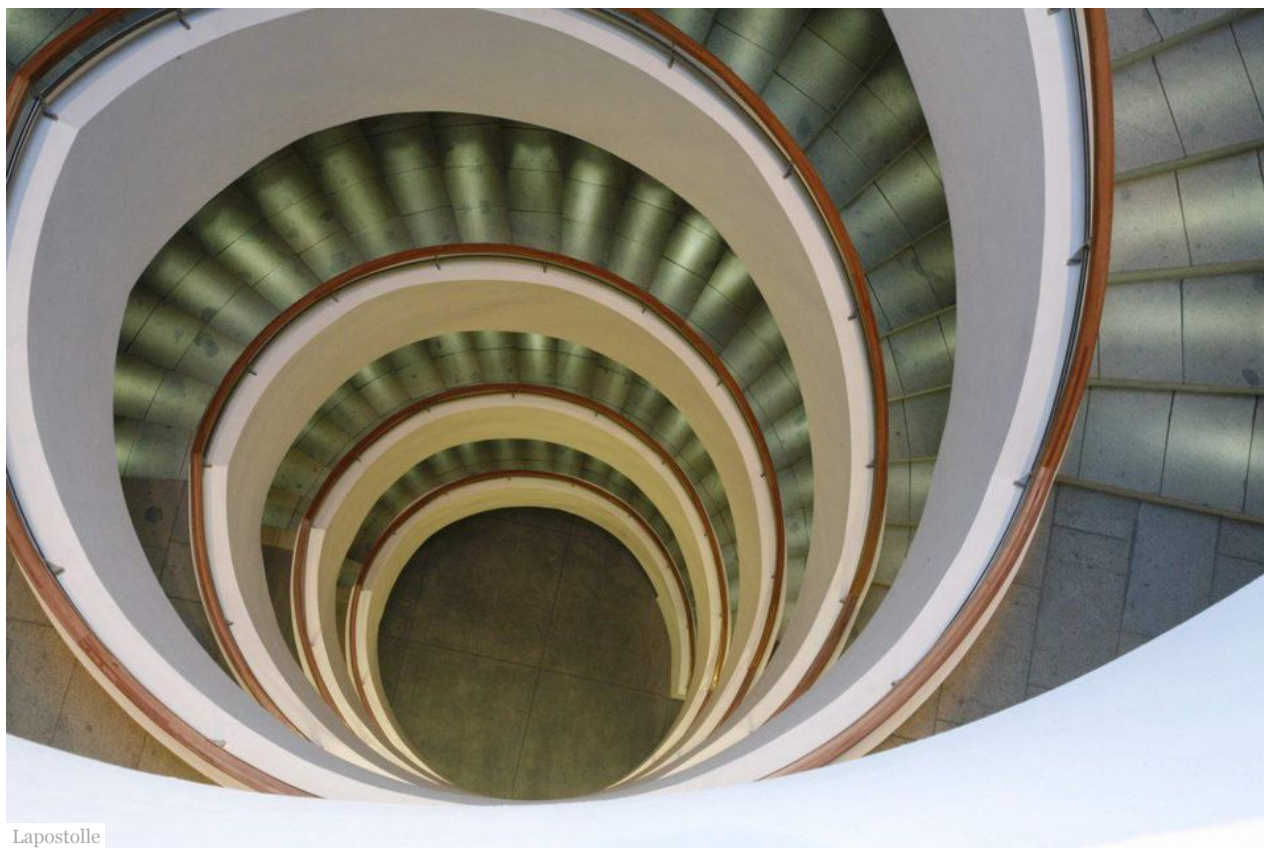
SETTING The sprawling Clos Apalta vineyard is a glorious bioorganic haven where foxes duck beneath trees, the snow-capped Andes tower over vast vineyards and olive trees line the roads. Visitors can soak in the gorgeousness by biking, hiking or relaxing by the infinity pool; I opted for a horseback ride, during which I marveled at the late-day sunlight dancing deliciously across the vines.



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Casita at Clos Apalta Residence

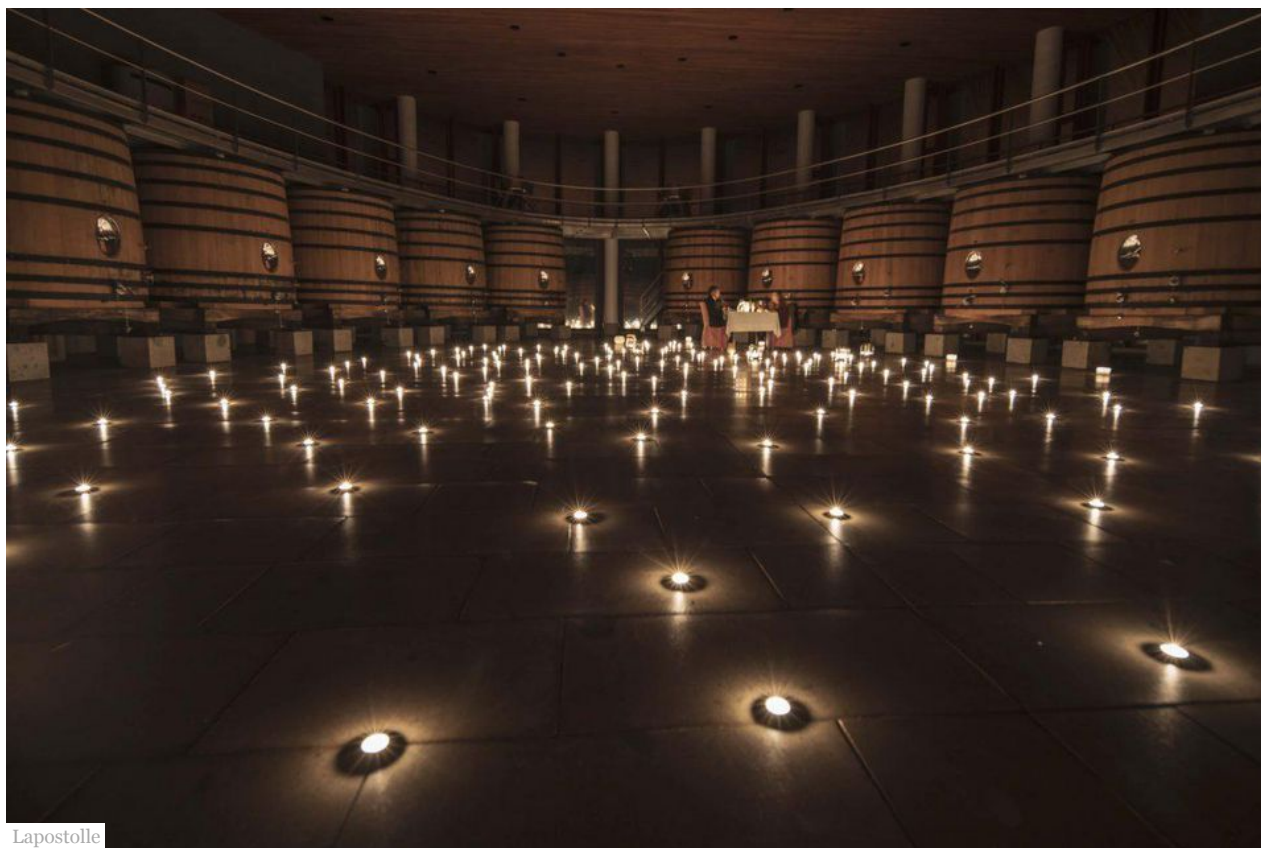
CASITAS Chilean wineries are, as a whole, quite intimate; you must book in advance—open tasting rooms are not the norm here—and the scene generally eschews tourist masses. Clos Apalta, though, takes exclusivity and intimacy to new heights: What was once the owner's house and guest cottages still, wonderfully, feel that way, creating a uniquely personalized stay. Four luxurious yet organic-feeling casitas boast floor-to-ceiling windows, sweeping vineyard views, silk, leather and native wood décor and a private terrace you'll want to move into. I woke in time for sunrise, parked myself on said terrace and watched the cloudy mist clear, leaving what looked like delicate wisps of cotton strewn across the vineyards. Then I went for a morning run under last night's moon and admired the mountains changing color as sun graced them with deep glances.



Lapostolle

Stairway inside winery at Clos Apalta

WINERY Clos Apalta wines are the highly touted, award-winning, artisanal arm of Lapostolle, representing just two percent of the brand's extensive output. It's thus fitting that they be born in a temple of sorts, which is what the six-story Clos Apalta winery feels like: a futuristic, anti-colonial architectural masterpiece—think winery-meets spaceship—dug 25 metres into the granite, with a spiral staircase leading to floor after floor of fabulousness. Descend to the tasting room at the very bottom and a massive glass table opens to reveal stairs to the vaults. Even without an overnight stay, a winery tasting here is a regional must-do.



Lapostolle

Clos Apalta winery

RESTAURANT The Residence's gorgeous common area has only four tables, and they are graced with personalized seasonal delights, course after course. All meals begin with a small bite and Aperitif—my favorite was the Kappa Perfect Sour, made with Grand Marnier and Lapostolle's own Kappa Pisco, made in the north of Chile. Starters include beef pastrami with cabbage potage and leaves from the orchard, or Tuna from Easter island covered in orchard flowers. There was pacific sea bass and local short ribs, and, for desert—always accompanied by Grand Marnier, of course—red-wine poached pears with blueberry sauce and chocolate Valrohna walnut crumble. [Relaischateaux.com/us/chile/apalta-colchagua-valley-santa-cruz](https://relaischateaux.com/us/chile/apalta-colchagua-valley-santa-cruz)

LOCAL TIP: To visit other stunning wine regions in Chile, including the Casablanca and Maipo Valleys, book with **Wines and Barrels Handcrafted Journeys**, whose impressively knowledgeable guides treat wine with all the reverence of a religion (winesandbarrels.com).

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