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Señorío de Otazu: A cathedral for art and wine

Lead

Not too far from Pamplona, there's a place of pilgrimage for wine and art connoisseurs. The Señorío de Otazu lures the visitor with superb wine, modern sculptures, and a cellar like no other.

Once a war-torn kingdom, Pamplona is now an important wine region within Navarre, the neighbouring province to La Rioja. It boasts numerous wines, some certainly able to compete with La Rioja's top varieties - as was also the case in the early 19th Century. However, the phylloxera plague later that century destroyed the hard-earned success of the Navarran grape-growers, and the area only recovered in relatively recent years. One of the nuclei of Pamplona's revived wine culture is Señorío de Otazu, a 15th Century winery rebuilt in 1994 and possessing a production area of around 110 hectares - enough for an annual production of some 300,000 bottles.

The winery's grapes - namely Tempranillo, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay - benefit from the influence of the Atlantic's microclimate. Much rain falls in winter and spring; the summer sees searingly hot days followed by cool nights, the temperature contrast over 24 hours apparently working wonders for the flavour of the award-winning wines.





It's not only the reds and whites that make the place worth a visit, though; the remarkable collection of modern Spanish art amassed by the Penso family is a testament to the stylish manner in which they operate the winery. But even more extraordinary is the sight which meets you once you head down the narrow staircase within the historic main house.

The high ceilings of the wine cellar are reminiscent of a cathedral – in fact, such is the architectural drama of the home to the oak barrels, it alone could be worth the trip to Casa Del Penso.

An innovative insurance policy against a fresh outbreak of the grape plague, perhaps?

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More information about Señorío de Otazu can be found at www.otazu.com

Photos: Señorío de Otazu

Gallery

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