

WINE TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

As a wine-producing country, Moldovan winemakers have realized that in addition to profiting from their core business, they can also attract significant financial resources from wine tourism. Wine tourism in the Republic of Moldova, although a relatively new sector of the economy, can be assessed as a competitive and balanced sector that enjoys great interest among tourists and at the same time effectively benefits from the representative heritage of the country.

In this article, the authors identified the main prerequisites for the development of wine tourism, shortcomings and obstacles in the development of wine tourism, as well as recommendations for improving the services provided.

Keywords: wine tourism, opportunities, impediments, dysfunctions, recommendation

I. Introduction

Wine tourism developed more strongly at the end of the 20th century, after the Republic of Moldova became an independent country. As a wine-producing country, the Republic of Moldova is well known in the world, ranking among the most outstanding wine-producing countries in the world. Viticulture and winemaking is an occupation, which Moldovans have practiced for millennia. Looking at the geographical map of the Republic of Moldova, we see that it has the outline of a grapevine. The custom of making wine is an occupation which has been practiced by the locals for millennia and is reflected in the history and culture of the Moldovan people.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that Moldova has a well-developed wine industry. About this fact we are told by the surface of vines, which is 148,500 hectares, including 107,800 hectares of vines are used for the commercialization of wine production, and 40,700 hectares are cultivated around the houses to make homemade wine. Some families have their own winemaking recipes that have been passed down.

Most of the country's commercial wine production is for export. The Republic of Moldova ranks 10th among the countries of the world in terms of wine exports, which constitutes about 3.1% of world wine exports. Every fourth dollar earned from the country's exports is due to wine, which accounts for about 9% of GDP, and in the structure of the country's consolidated budget revenue – about 15 % [4].

Moldovan winemakers have created and produce more than three thousand names of wine products of the most varied from aperitifs, divine, sparkling, white wines, reds, rosés to exotic drinks. The wines, sparkling wines and sparkling wines of local producers have won hundreds of the most prestigious awards at most of the international exhibitions and competitions at which they have been presented and are in great demand by over 55 countries of the world.

For the last 20 years, wine companies have been producing high quality wines with a geographical indication, which are in demand on the EU market, ensuring sustainable development of both the wine sector and wine tourism.

2. Materials and methods

To elucidate the object of study, the authors used a series of research methods such as: documentary research, description, explanation, grouping, comparison, analysis, synthesis. The documentary research allowed us to identify the main wine enterprises located in the Republic of Moldova, specify the tourist offers and tourist attractions located in the areas near the wineries. Using the method of grouping and comparison, we established the division of the composition of the wine-growing enterprises according to the wine-growing regions, calculating the share of each region separately and comparing the obtained results. The analysis method was used to research the main wine enterprises, identifying the most spectacular tourist attractions near them. Synthesizing the results obtained from the research, the related conclusions were made and recommendations were presented regarding the development and promotion of sales in wine tourism.

3. Results and Discussions

People are what make Moldova special and valuable. Travel to any corner of Moldova and you will be greeted by people who are truly warm and friendly, hardworking and passionate about their activities. Culinary delights served in the center of a meeting will be accompanied by a wine product.

Any visit to Moldova is necessarily accompanied by a tasting of wine products, and in some cases also a visit to their winemakers.

Moldovan wine products are stored in specially designed underground galleries, which are appreciated worldwide and told in popular legends.

In the process of their entrepreneurial activity, the winemakers discovered that in addition to the profit from their main activity - production of wine production, they can also receive additional profit from serving tourists. Thus, many winemakers have expanded their business by offering their visitors a diversified programmer of activities on the premises of wineries. Tour operators who want to organize more comprehensive and interesting excursions offer, in addition to visits to wineries, other tourist attractions, such as visits to the region's picturesque natural sites, historical monuments, museums and others.

The Republic of Moldova is divided into 4 wine regions:

- Codru;
- Stefan Voda;
- Trajan's wave;
- Divin.

Each of the four regions is governed by an association of wine producers. Some areas of vineyards in these regions have received a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). At the same time, the mentioned surfaces are protected at the level of the European Union. Let's discover these four wine regions together in Table 1.

Table 1

General information about the wine-growing regions of the RM

„Codru” region	„Stefan Voda” region
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Codru is a wine-growing region, which is located in the center of Moldova. It is located on the border with Romania and Ukraine. The Codru region is known for its high quality white and sparkling wines. White grapes occupy approximately 63% of the vine plantations. In this region are the most attractive wine enterprises, such as Cricova, Milestii Mici, Castelul Mimi, Chateau Vartely and Asconi.	Stefan Voda is a wine-growing region, which is located in the south-east of Moldova. It is known for its red wines. The most famous red wines are Cabernet, Sauvignon, Saperavi and Rara Neagra. The most attractive wine enterprise in this region is the Purcari winery.
„Trajan's wave” region	„Divin” region
This wine region is located in the south-west of Moldova. The name of the region originates from an ancient monument named "railroad wall", which was built to protect the country's territory from enemy attacks. The wines produced in the region are pale pink and red with a complex bouquet and fruity taste. In this region are the famous wineries Cricova and Chateau Vartely, as well as many other producers of quality wines.	The region occupies the entire Republic of Moldova and is more of a geographical region than a wine region. It is intended for the production of divin, which is produced from grape varieties aged no less than 3 years in oak barrels. The divine has a pleasant appearance and a special taste with a color from golden to brown. The most famous producers of divin are the wineries: Kvint, Barza Alba and Calaras.

Source: author's elaboration based on [3]

The wine tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova has recently demonstrated positive growth, demonstrating competitiveness and attractiveness. The most attractive directions of wine tourism are included in the year 2004 in the national program „Wine Route in Moldova” [2]. This program pursues the following goals: establish a connection between tourism and the wine sector, promote wine tourism, offering a quality tourist product, strengthen the economic potential and use the human potential in rural areas, increase income from wineries and wine tourism, develop a walk on certain routes, along which tourists will discover beautiful and picturesque landscapes, monasteries, rural farms, craft workshops and others, get acquainted with the enological traditions of different regions.

The Wine Route of Moldova program was formed and developed thanks to the own investments of the owners of wine enterprises, as well as support through grants and assistance from the Moldova Competitiveness Project, funded by USAID and the Government of Sweden. As a result, the number of wineries open to tourists has doubled, and the Wine Route of Moldova includes 20 oenotourism destinations, including well-known wineries and 11 small wine producers.

A remarkable success was achieved by wine tourism in the Republic of Moldova on 28 February 2021, when the ANTRIM (National Association for Inbound and Domestic Tourism) with the support of the USAID-funded Moldova Competitiveness Project, the Government of Sweden and the United Kingdom formalized with the affiliation certificate of the Council of Europe the wine tourism route „Wine Route of Moldova”, becoming the first tourist itinerary of the Republic of Moldova registered in the „ITER VITIS- Les Chemins de la vigne”. This is the pan-European wine tourism route that integrates the landscapes and wine heritage of 18 wine-growing states, promoted by the European Iter Vitis Federation, being certified according to the standards of the Council of Europe since 2009.

The European route „Wine Route of Moldova” includes 1560 km with visits to 28 wineries, 12 wineries, 21 cultural-wine events, 30 tourist attractions and dozens of oeno-gastronomic and adventure experiences. Wine products offered to visitors of wine enterprises

are marked with the «PGI» (Protected Geographical Indication) mark, which is a guarantee of the originality and quality of the products, protecting the consumer from fakes and counterfeit products. In the following table, we will present the names of 28 wineries, grouped by the first three winemaking regions with a protected geographical indication, which are part of the European tourist route „Wine Route of Moldova” (hereinafter WRM) (table 2).

Examining Table 2 we can mention that out of the 28 wine enterprises in the Codru wine region are placed 16 entities (57.14%), in the Stefan Voda region are placed 5 entities (17.86%), and in the Trajan's wave region are placed 7 entities (25%). At the same time of the area occupied by the 3 wine regions are approved by the PGI quality system: Codru with 4,48 % (2686,7 ha/60.000 ha x 100), Ștefan Vodă with 7,23 % (1204,2 ha/10.000 ha x 100), Trajan's wave with 7,23 % (3107,01 ha/43.000 ha x 100). So, on the first place in the quality percentage is for products from Stefan Voda region, the second place - products from Trajan's wave region and the third place - Codru region.

Table 2

Composition of wineries included in the tourist routes part of the WRM

Codru wine region 60,000 ha, including PGI quality scheme approved 2686.7 ha or 4.48 %	Wine region Stefan Voda 10.000 ha, including PGI quality system approved 1204,2 ha or 12,04 %
1) Ascony Winery 2) ATU Winery 3) Barza Albă 4) Brănești Winery 5) Castel Mimi 6) Château Vartely 7) Château Cojușna 8) Crama Mircești 9) Crama Tudor 10) Cricova 11) Kvint 12) Hîncești Winery 13) Mihai Sava 14) Milestii Mici 15) Poiana Winery 16) Tranciu Winery	17) Château Purcari 18) Et Cetera Winery 19) Gogu Winery 20) Leuntea Vin 21) Sălcuța Winery
	Trajan's wave wine region 43,000 ha, including PGI quality system approved 3107.01 ha or 7.23 %
	22) Corbu Winery 23) Kara Gany 24) Gitana Winery 25) Vinăria din Vale 26) Vinia Traian 27) Vinuri de Comrat 28) Fautor

Source: author's elaboration based on [3]

In the next stage of the research on tourism in wineries we will study the basic services provided by wineries. Thus, in the following table we will discover together the tourist offers of the main wineries in the Republic of Moldova, which organize tours, highlighting the existence of the following aspects (Table 3):

- Accommodation;
- Wine tours and tastings;
- Wine and souvenirs shop;
- Weddings, events, corporate conferences;
- Restaurant.

Table 3

Information on the tourist offer of Moldovan wineries- Other tourist attractions.

Name of entity, address, date founded	Accommodation	Wine tours and tastings	Wine and souvenir	Weddings, events,	Restaurants or other food	Other attractions
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			shop	corporate conferences	premises	
1) Asconi Winery, 1 Stefan cel Mare street, Puhoi, Ialoveni district, founded 1994	+	+	+	+	+	+
2) ATU Winery, 58 Dacia street , Chisinau, founded 2016	+	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	Pool
3) Barza Alba S. A., 49 Victoriei street, Balti, founded 1944	-	+	+	-	-	+
4) Leuntea-Vin cellars, Leuntea, Causeni founded 1817	-	+	+	-	+	+
5) MIMI Castle Winery, 1 Dacia street, Bulboaca, Anenii Noi, founded 1893	+	+	+	+	+	Pool
6) Chateau Vartely, 170/B Liberation street, Orhei, founded 1996	+	+	+	+	+	Sauna
7) Cram Mirceshti, Mirceshti, Ungheni, founded 2011	+	+	+	+	Lunch and dinner	+
8) Crama Tudor, Sadova, Calarasi, founded 2007	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	Terrace
9) Cricova Wine Combine - 1 Ungureanu street, Chisinau, founded 1952	-	+	+	+	+	+
10) Pripa domains, Purcari, Stefan Voda, founded 2016	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	- children's land; - terrace; -picnic area
11) Crama Et Cetera, Crocmaaz, Stefan Voda, founded 2002	+	+	+	+	+	- children's land; - terrace; -picnic area
12) Gogu Winery, 87 Peace Street, Causeni, founded 2011	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	+
13) Kara Gani Winery, 31 Krupskaya Street, Vulcanesti, founded 2006	+	+	+	+	Lunch and dinner	+
14) KVINT, 38 Lenin Street, Tiraspol, founded 1897	-	+	+	+	Lunch and dinner	+

15) Chateau Cojusna, 1 Mechanizatorilor Street, Cojusna, Strășeni, founded 1995	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	-
16) Mihai Sava Winery, Costești, Ialoveni, founded 2016	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	+
17 Mileștii Mici Winery, Mileștii Mici, Ialoveni, founded 1969	-	+	+	+	+	+
18) Novak Winery, Lingura, Cantemir, founded 2004	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	participation in seasonal wine production
19) Podgoria Vin, Lingura, Cantemir, founded 1999	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	participation in seasonal wine production
20) Poiana Winery, Ulmu, Chisinau- Leușeni route, founded 1975	+	+	+	+	+	+
21) Chateau Purcari, 10 B Calea Ieșilor street, Chisinau, founded 1827	+	+	+	+	+	+
22) Branesti Cellars, Branesti, Orhei, founded 2016	-	+	+	+	+	+
23) Vinaria din Vale, 1 Unirii street, Slobozia Mare, Cahul, founded 2002	-	+	+	-	-	-
24) Javgur Winery, Ialpujeni, Cimislia, founded 1957	-	+	+	+	Lunch and dinner	- arbor (up to 10 people)
25) Tronciu Winery, Lăpușna, Pereni, fondată 2017	-	+	+	-	Lunch and dinner	- wagon and bike tours
26) Traian Winery, Găvănoasa, Cahul, founded 1975	-	+	+	+	Lunch and dinner	+
27) Comrat Winery, 1 Vinzavodscaia street, Comrat, founded 1897	-	+	+	+	+	+
28) Basavin Winery, Karl Marx street, Basarabasca, founded 1969	-	+	+	-	-	+

Source: author's elaboration based on [3]

Examining Table 3 we can conclude that out of the 28 wine enterprises analyzed: in all 28 entities wine tours and tastings and sale of products are organized, in 10 entities events, corporate conferences can be organized, in 21 entities there are restaurants, in 8 entities there is accommodation. At the same time, we note other interesting offers in some wineries, such as: cycling, boating, swimming pool, picnic area, sauna, children's playground.

In addition to the basic services offered by the wineries in the tourist tours a number of tourist attractions can be visited, which have been systematized in Table 4.

Table 4

Winery area attractions

Winery name	Main attractions				
	1	2	3	4	5
1) Asconi Winery	Craftsmen's workshops, Ulmu, Vasieni, Ialoveni	Botna Valley - area with 11 ethno-folkloric groups	Suruceni Monastery - was built in the XIX century	Museum of History and Ethnography, Vāsieni, Ialoveni	Aquapark, Danceni, Ialoveni
2) ATU Winery	The Village Museum	Dormition of the Virgin - old Wooden Church, Chisinau	Chisinau Zoo and the Horse Riding School	Botanical Garden of Chisinau, 18 Forest Street	Ural Tours & Vespa Club - motorcycling Racing Track - drone sport
3) Barza Alba S.A.	Vasile Alecsandri National Theatre	Cathedral of Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen, was built between 1924 and 1934	Armenian Church of Balti, was built in the XX century	Bell Tower of St. Nicholas Church, Balti	Stefan cel Mare Monument, Alley of National Culture Classics
4) Cellars Leuntea-Vin	Monastery Martha and Mary	Church Dormition of the Virgin, Causeni	Pheasant farm, Leunea, Causeni	x	x
5) Castel MIMI Winery	Bender	Church Dormition of the Virgin, Causeni, the oldest church in Moldova, was built between the 17th and 18th centuries	The oldest industrial cellars in Moldova, inherited from the nobleman Pavel Leonardo	Nistru River	Master-classes and workshops on fishing, hunting, cooking
6) Château Vartely	Orheiland amusement park	The Pond	Monastery and Archaeological Complex Old Orhei	Ivanos Park, Orhei	x

7) Crama Mircești	Monastery: Saint Ilie, Beautiful, Raciula, Harbovat, Harjauca	Workshop of the folk craftsman Victor Hurdiș, Mircești, Ungheni	Tourist Pension Honey house, Raciula, Calarasi	Wine and divin factory Calarasi Divin, Calarasi	- Tourist Inn and Museu - Parental home, Palanca, Calarasi - Nature reserve The beech tree, Magurele, Ungheni
8) Crama Tudor	Tourist Pension Honey house, Raciula, Calarasi	Scientific nature reserve, Calarasi	Complex of monasteries, Calarasi	Pushkin House Museum, Chisinau	x
9) Combined of Wines Cricova	Cathedral Dormition of the Virgin, Chisinau	The Park: Valley of the Mills, Dendrariu, Valley of the Roses, Alunelul, Chisinau	National Palace, Friendship Palace, Theatre: Opera and Ballet, Mihai Eminescu, Eugen Ionescu, and other, Chisinau	Alley Of Classics, Chisinau	x
10) Pripa Domains	Odesa (Ucraina)	Nistru River	Monasteries in the Black Sea region	x	x
11) Crama Et Cetera	Odesa (Ucraina)	Nistru River	Monasteries in the Black Sea region	x	x
12) Wine factory and Divines KVINT	Tighina Fortress	Nistru River	Chitcani Monastery	x	x
13) Chateau Cojușna	Capriana Monastery	The Vatra Ethno-Cultural Complex	Manor of the Ralli nobleman – branch of the A.S. Pușkin House-Museum, Dolna	"Codrii" nature reserve	The green lake
14) Mihai Sava Winery	Suruceni Monastery	Petru Costin Gallery	Aqua Magic	Costesti Lake	x
15) Mileștii Mici Winery	Dormition of the Virgin Cathedral, Chisinau	The parks of Chisinau: The Valley of the Mills, The Dendrariu, Valley of the Roses, The peanut	Theaters of Chisinau: National Palace, Friendship Palace, Opera and Ballet Theatre, Mihai Eminescu, Eugen Ionescu, and other.	x	x
16) Novak Winery	Saints Three Hierarchs Church, Lingura	Museum of History and Ethnography, Tartaul	Craft and artistic weaving centre, Ciobalaccia	- Vineyards of various types and architecture; - Plum, apple and cherry	- ATV rides in the Tigheci Forest - Water reservoir

				orchards of various types and architecture	-Fruit and vegetable shop
17) Podgoria Vin	Saints Three Hierarchs Church, Lingura	Museum of History and Ethnography, Tartaul	Craft and artistic weaving centre, Ciobalaccia	Fruit and vegetable drying room (August - November)	- ATV rides in the Tigheci Forest - Cold storage - Water reservoir - Orchards
18) Poiana Winery	Coders of Moldova - Nature Reserve	Trip to the Shepherd's House	Discovering the Surroundings of Poiana Winery by Bike	Boat Ride	x
19) Chateau Purcari	Nistru River	Odesa (Ukraine)	Black Sea Monasteries	Chisinau (1.5h)	x
20) Branesti cellars	Old Orheiul Rock Monastery	Curchi Monastery - is a monastery of monks from the century XVIII - XIX	Orheiland, Orhei	Ivanos Park in Orhei	x
21) Vinăria din Vale	Beleu Lake	The museum of history and ethnography, Slobozia Mare	Scientific reserve Lower Prut	The house of longing Traditional Peasant Court	x
22) Javgur Winery	Fortification Complex Trajan's wave	Ethnographic Museum in Cimislia	Lake and picturesque view over vineyards and winery	Plum orchard, walnut, blackberry, table grape plantations	Hydrobike Rides on the Lake near Winery
23) Tronciu Winery	Bardar Zooparc	Manuc Bei Castle, Hincesti	The Princely Court Pereni, Lapushna	Bicycle tours	x
24) Traian Winery	The monument to the Battle of Cahul	Trajan's Wall	The Vorontsov monument	x	x
25) Comrat Winery	The national museum of history and ethnography, Besalma	The tank monument	Turkish library	Discoteca Retro	Craft workshop
26) Basavin Winery	Abaclia Ostrich Farm	Chistoleni Monastery	The residence of Baciuc - cheese producers, Sadaclia	The railway station	x
27) Reducing Winery	Dormition of the Virgin Cathedral, Chisinau	The parks of Chisinau: The Valley of the Mills, The Dendrariu, Valley of the	Theaters of Chisinau: National Palace, Friendship Palace, Opera and Ballet Theatre, Mihai Eminescu,	Alley Of Classics	x

		Roses, The peanut	Eugen Ionescu, and other.		
28) Salcuta Winery	Specialized wood carving handicraft, Copanca	Dormition of the Virgin Cathedral, Causheni	Martha and Mary Monastery, Causheni	Museums: - Ethnography and History, Causeni; - Alexei Mateevici, Zaim	Tourist complex with lake, gazebos, tourist houses, vineyards, orchards, stable for animals and birds

Source: author's elaboration based on [3] and information from the internet

Based on Table 4 we note that in the regions close to the wineries other interesting tourist attractions can be discovered in natural scenic areas, such as: monasteries, museums, handicrafts, crafts, sports grounds, parks.

4. Conclusions

The research carried out allows us to make some conclusions and summaries. Thus, we can mention that there really are wine enterprises, which provide tourist services. All enterprises are located in 3 wine regions: Codru, Stefan Voda, Trajan's wave. The tourist offer starts from basic services (excursions, tastings, sales of products and souvenirs, restaurant, accommodation). Tourist companies, when drawing up tourist itineraries in wineries, cellars, wine cellars, castles, underground cities, can also organize visits to other tourist attractions around the wine enterprises.

In order to develop wine tourism and promote sales we recommend:

- creating an attractive system for serving tourists at wine enterprises by modernizing and diversifying the leisure offer of wine tourism;
- the formation of a clear vision and strategy for attracting national and international tourist flows;
- encouraging, supporting and stimulating investments with foreign capital in the most diverse wine tourism areas;
- modernizing and expanding the possibilities of using means of transport with the support of the Ministry of Transport and Road Management and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism;
- restoration and development of wine-themed architectural monuments with a view to their exploitation through tourism;
- the development and implementation of an information system that meets the new requirements of tourism, in line with international practice.

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