



DESTINATION OF THE WEEK: MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

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WHAT TO DO

Mendoza is approximately 600 miles from Buenos Aires, and is quickly becoming one of the most esteemed wine-producing areas in the world, making it the perfect getaway for oenophiles.

One of the most popular tasting rooms in the city itself is The Vines. Here you can learn about the wines you sample from the knowledgeable staff and savor gourmet bites just a short walk from the central Plaza Independencia.

One of the most famous, and largest, wineries to visit is Familia Zuccardi. This family-owned winery was founded back in 1963, and offers tastings, tours, and lunch at their two restaurants, not to mention a huge wine of lines ranging from budget to ultra-premium, including some vineyard-specific treasures sourced from all over the region.

The ultra-modern Viña Cobos, is a landmark boutique winery and well-known internationally thanks to the globe-trotting exploits of co-owner and winemaker Paul Hobbs, who was one of the first foreigners to see the potential of Mendoza's wine industry. Nearby is the enormous Bodega Septima, owned by Cordoniu, where visitors can taste wines sourced from a variety of appellations in and around Mendoza and enjoy lunch at the rooftop restaurant with spectacular views of the vineyards and the Andes in the distance. For something a little quieter, you can have a private lunch on a deck under oak trees while tasting the intense, fruit-driven wines at appointment-only Piattelli.

However, some of the most exciting developments on the wine scene are happening 90 minutes away in the hills and valleys of the Uco Valley, where young winemakers are exploring the diverse terroirs of the vast appellation. The most imposing is Clos de los Siete, an enormous private estate called created by some of France's most well-known wine chateaux, each of which has their own winemaking facility. It is overseen by wine consultant Michel Rolland, who also has a winery on the property and makes the eponymous red wine to which all the wineries contribute grapes.

Nearby is another internationally acclaimed winery called Bodegas Salentein, which has an imposing state-of-the-art winemaking facility as well as a charming posada, or country inn, where you can spend the night.

These are just a few of hundreds of wineries in the region that travelers can visit. Feel free to share some of your own favorites.

There's more to Mendoza than wine, though. It lies in one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in South America, and the proximity to the Andes means there's a plethora of activities including rock climbing, hiking, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, rappelling, zip-lining, swimming and mountain biking. Reputable tour companies include Argentina Rafting Expediciones, Huentata and Rios Andinos, which can arrange everything from single-activity outings to multi-day itineraries.



If you want to combine sports with wine, which essentially pulls together most of the great things about Mendoza (wine and beautiful landscapes) try one of the Baccus Biking Tours, which guide you on bike to wineries around the region.

If you are just looking for a quick urban break while you're in town, the city of Mendoza itself can be lovely, and you don't have to go far to find tourist attractions. First, head to Mendoza's main square, Plaza de Independencia, for some great people-watching, and then stroll through the Mercado de Artesanias, where you can find hand-crafted items to bring back home.

Afterwards, head over to visit one of the world's largest urban parks, El Parque General San Martín. The park spans 971 acres and has a theater, museums, a botanical garden, paths, a zoo, a lake, sculptures and monuments galore.

WHERE TO EAT

As one might imagine, with such a bounty of delicious wine, there must also be good dining! And that there is. Mendoza has several phenomenal restaurants in the city center, not to mention many wineries offering impressive upscale menus as well.

For a savory lunch, try La Sal in the city center. La Sal has a great selection of fish, meat and rices – there are several different styles of tempting paella you can try. It's also "part jazz club, part art gallery, and part restaurant," which makes for a unique ambiance.

If you are looking for a traditional Argentinian meal, try Don Mario. This restaurant specializes in Argentinian barbecue, and if you want to try a little bit of everything, order the "parrillada." The parrillada comes in small (2-3 per person), medium (3-4 per person) or large (5-6 per person) and has various types of grilled meats and sausages so you can try many things.

For gourmet food combined with delicious Malbec wines, try the 1884 Francis Mallmann restaurant. Located in the Escorihuela winery, this restaurant opened in 1996 but the winery itself dates back to 1884, as you can tell by its name. With over 600 wine options to combine with your meal, a trip to this restaurant will not disappoint. Menu items include fresh beef, fish and shellfish, and of course local foods like Andean potatoes and vegetables from Norte and Litoral regions nearby.

Another favorite dining experience can be found at Siete Cocinas, chef Pablo del Rio's restaurant housed in a gorgeous old building right in the city center where the chef prepares specialties from all over Argentina from carefully sourced, seasonal ingredients.

El 23 Gran Bar is a trendy spot to relax and order tapas and wine. It's located next to a winery actually called WINERY, and many head here after wine tasting. They don't have a website, but stopping in for a light bite with wine is well worth, as the ambiance is sexy and smooth and the drinks are flowing. El 23 Gran Bar is located on Calle Chile 874.



YOUR EXPERIENCES

Destination of the Week pieces are not meant to be comprehensive guides to destinations since we don't have the time or funds to visit all these places in person and report back to you. Nor are they endorsements of all the hotels we mention. They are simply roundups of top destinations that we have specifically pinpointed for the opportunity they present to use your miles and points to get to and stay there. As always, we welcome your comments to help enrich the content here, provide opinions and first-hand experiences of these destinations.

GETTING THERE

Mendoza has a small international airport (airport code MDZ) located about 5 miles northeast of the Mendoza city center. Unfortunately, there is no way to fly nonstop from the USA to Mendoza. The best way to arrive from the United States is to fly to Santiago, Chile, or to Buenos Aires, Argentina and then continue on to El Plumerillo, although many international flights to BA arrive at Ezeiza airport (EZE) and those to/from Mendoza fly from Aeroparque Jorge Newberry (AEP), so you will have to switch airports if you want to connect immediately. There are also bus options which are much cheaper, about 7 hours from Santiago or 15 from Buenos Aires.

You can arrive in MDZ from Miami or JFK with a stop in Santiago via LAN airlines or from Miami or JFK with a stop in Buenos Aires via Aerolíneas Argentinas. LAN also flies to MDZ from the AEP airport in Buenos Aires.

Once at MDZ, you can take the Line 60 bus from the main terminal. It will take you to downtown Mendoza and Plaza Independencia and costs 1.20 ARS (less than 50 cents). Many hotels, especially those out in the vineyards will offer airport pick ups and drop offs. Car rental is also available, as are taxis. However, be careful not to accept offers from any drivers who approach you – if you want to take a taxi, make sure to get one in the taxi section outside of the airport.

One last reminder is to make sure to check for visas and fees you may need in order to enter the country. This information is always changing so make it a point to check the most updated requirements before your trip.

WHERE TO STAY

Hyatt

Park Hyatt Mendoza: This hotel is a quick 15-minute ride from the Mendoza airport and right in the center of town on one side of the Plaza Independencia. All 186 rooms and suites come with an oversize marble bathtub, work desk, safe deposit box, complimentary WiFi and scale. Guests can relax in the Kaua Spa (including pools, sauna, Turkish bath and sundeck) or have fun in the casino attached to the hotel. Dine or drink at Bistro M, Grill Q, Uvas, Las Terrazas de la Plaza, or the Vines Wine Bar. Room rates start at 900 ARS (\$138) per night in mid-January, or 8,000 Hyatt Gold Passport points for an award night.

InterContinental Mendoza

The InterContinental Mendoza is located a few minutes outside the historic city center in front of the largest shopping mall in Mendoza (take that as you will), with easy access to the wine regions and only 15 minutes from the airport. Each of the 180 guestrooms and suites has a stereo, work desk with lamp, rainfall showers, and WiFi is free for all IHG Rewards Club members. However, if you are not an IHG member, it will cost you 70 ARS (\$11). Pets are not allowed at the hotel. Dine at one of the three restaurants or one bar. Room rates start at 679 ARS (\$105) per night in mid-January or 25,000 points for an award night.

Starwood

Sheraton Mendoza

Situated at the foot of the Andes Mountains, this hotel's 180 guestrooms and suites feature views of the city or mountains, the Sheraton Sweet Sleeper Bed, safe, hairdryer, and iron. Non-smoking rooms are available and WiFi is \$15 per day. Parking is \$2-\$10 per day. Relax in the fitness center, indoor pool, steam room, or sauna. They offer spa facials, body treatments and massage therapies and there is also a salon. Enjoy a meal in the El Mirador restaurant, which boasts 360 degree views of the city and Andes Mountains, and is actually the highest restaurant in Mendoza. Room rates start at \$130 per night in mid January or 7,000 Starpoints for an award night. For more information, you can read TPG Managing Editor Eric Rosen's review of the hotel [here](#).

Visa Signature

When cardholders use a Visa Signature credit card to book a room through the Visa Signature Hotels program, they are eligible to receive extra perks such as discounted room rates, room upgrades, free breakfast, early check-in and late check-out, dining and spa credits and more. Visa Signature cards include the Chase Sapphire Preferred, Chase Sapphire Ink Bold, Ink Plus, British Airways Visa, the Hyatt card, the Marriott Rewards Premier and Marriott Rewards cards, the Southwest Plus card, Bank of America's Alaska Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines cards, Capital One Venture, Citi Hilton HHonors and Citi Hilton HHonors Reserve, US Bank FlexPerks, Citi AAdvantage Visa Signature, and many more, so chances are you're carrying at least one of them in your wallet.

Cavas Wine Lodge: This Relais & Chateaux property – probably the most upscale luxury lodging in the area – is a hidden gem nestled on a 55-acre property between some of the best-known wineries in Mendoza. All of the rooms and villas in the lodge face west for beautiful views of the Andes mountains. Each room offers a king bed, large private deck, spa-style bathroom with a dual vanity, separate shower and vintage soaking tub, plus an outdoor shower, a private plunge pool and a wood-burning fireplaces. Breakfast is included with all room bookings, while the gourmet restaurant's prix-fixe dinner option is one of the most coveted dinner reservations in town. There is a gym, sauna and a spa that specializes in vinotherapy treatments including a Bonarda wine soak that leaves the skin refreshed and glowing. Room rates start at \$805 per night in mid-January.

Club Tapiz

Club Tapiz is a small hotel for wine and food lovers surrounded by vineyards but close to several of the area's major roads – and the hotel offers guests free bikes if they want to conduct a self-guided cycling tour of nearby wineries. There are two main buildings, a historic 19th-century mansion and a larger, newer house across the gardens. All rooms have a flatscreen TV, WiFi, safe, and breakfast is also included. There is a swimming pool, spa, business center, bicycle rental, library lounge, board games and more. You can taste wine and olive oil, as well as take part in cooking classes here. Room rates start at \$170 per night, but book in advance, as this hotel is sold out for almost all January 2014 dates.

Bohemia Hotel

This boutique hotel is actually an old mansion in central Mendoza. With only 11 guestrooms, the feel of this hotel is warm and familiar. Each room has a private bathroom and comes with a flatscreen TV and free WiFi access. There is a small international fusion restaurant, Cayena, and an outdoor pool where guests can relax on hot days. Rates for a double room start at \$118 per night in January, and go up during the holidays.

Hotel Villagio

This 26-room boutique hotel is located in central Mendoza, about a 20-minute drive from the airport and a quick walk to the Plaza Independencia. All rooms have complimentary WiFi, a hairdryer, 32-inch flatscreen TV with cable, and the hotel has a special floor for smokers, so make sure to reserve a non-smoking room if you prefer one. All room rates also include breakfast. The hotel has a gym, business center, spa, steam room, sauna, and outdoor pool. Salotto Bar offers food and drinks for guests. Room rates start at 774 ARS (\$119) per night in mid January.

Finca de Adalgisa

This hotel is located on a five-acre vineyard and winery property in Chacras de Coria, about 12 miles south of the city center of Mendoza. Each of the 11 rustic and charming rooms have a king-sized bed, a private bathroom, air-conditioning, heating, a safe, WiFi access, a terrace and an iPod docking station. Some rooms come with a fireplace. WiFi is only free in the common areas. The hotel also offers a pool, spa, bicycle rental, library, cooking class, and wine tastings and tours. Room rates start at 4272.53 ARS (\$655.50) per night in January.

Entre Cielos

This wine hotel and spa is located at the foot of the Andes mountains. The hotel offers 16 luxury rooms including a "floating wine loft" on stilts above the vineyard, and each room is named after something wine-related. All rooms come with free WiFi, a safe, flatscreen TV, small desk, and air conditioning. The hotel also has an outdoor swimming pool, jacuzzi, solarium, garden and Spa and Hamam. Guests can dine at the Katharina restaurant or the new Argentinian BBQ restaurant opens in January called The Grill. Vineyard tours are also available. Room rates start at 2,490 ARS (\$380) per night in mid January (rates are pre-tax but include breakfast and Hamam circuit).

Hotel Aguamiel

This wine concept hotel is located in small town called Lunlunta about 20 minutes from central Mendoza. Each of the 8 rustic suites are nonsmoking and come with WiFi, a telephone, air conditioning and a mini bar, and there is also a spa offering special wine therapy treatments. The focus of the hotel is on wine tasting and tours, but there is also a 9-hole golf course, library, restaurant, and an outdoor pool. Room rates start at 1,276 ARS (\$196) per night in January.



The Vines This just-opened spa resort and development is located in the Uco Valley, about 90 minutes from Mendoza and right in the foothills of the Andes. Accommodations include 22 villas starting at 1,000 square feet, with flatscreen TV's, complimentary WiFi, modern kitchens, private decks, spa-inspired bathrooms with power showers, and air conditioning. The property has an infinity pool with private cabanas and jacuzzi, climbing walls and running trails, a spa and fitness center and a bocce ball court. Dining options include Siete Fuegos, or "seven fires," by famed local chef Francis Mallmann, and the Bar & Cava wine cellar. Room rates start at \$1,258 per night but January 2014 is already booked up.