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In Vino Newsletter



IN VINO
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The vineyards of the southwest and the roads to Compostela

The presence of vineyards is attested in the South-West since Antiquity in Gallic land, notably in Gaillac, and this well before the Romans conquered Gallia Aquitania. The clay-limestone slopes of the South-West are well drained, the climate is mild, the rivers are navigable and the wine trade is set up, towards Rome and the Roman world, but also towards Northern Europe.

A first blow was brought to the development of the vineyards in 92 of our era by the decree of Domitian which forced the uprooting of 50% of the Gallic vineyard. The end of the Roman Empire disrupted the wine trade for a time. Fortunately for him, Christianization and wine as a symbol enabled him to resume a profitable business. Toulouse, capital of the Visigoth kingdom, and located on the European isthmus between the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, Spain and Europe, became a major place in the wine trade throughout the High Middle Ages. The development of Christianity favored the expansion of vineyards throughout the Southwest.

Around 830, on the borders of Europe, a star shines brighter: it is the miraculous invention of the tomb which is quickly attributed to Saint Jacques, one of the 12 apostles. From then on, this distant pilgrimage was born, the prestige of which would attract modest pilgrims, Kings or lords.

In 1130, a manuscript that remained confidential for a long time mentions that there would be four paths to get to the tomb in Galicia. These are the famous four routes which were traced from the 19th century and which fuel the imagination of today's walkers and pilgrims.

Thus, obligatory passage between northern Europe and Spain, the South-West will see abbeys and monasteries flourish which welcome pilgrims. These religious communities develop the culture of the vine. Pilgrim traffic and exchanges across the Pyrenees have become an essential vector for the dissemination of grape varieties, exporting native grape varieties from the South-West and importing other varieties.

It was at the same time that love courts developed in Toulouse, where troubadours celebrated, in Occitan, the beauty and virtue of ladies and shared pints of wine. This land of tolerance is also a land of diversity and authenticity. This diversity is found even in its wines and vineyards.

Today, this diversity is still identified in the mosaic of grape varieties that characterize the wines of the South-West. As in the old days, it is a vineyard that advocates originality and authenticity as a virtue.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List

Visit our official website: <https://www.vignobles-sudouest.fr/us/>
Photo credits: IVSO

ITER VITIS, les chemins de la vigne

Iter Vitis, les Chemins de la Vigne, has been recognised as a cultural itinerary by the Council of Europe, in 2009 for its mission supporting the recognition and preservation of cultural, tangible and intangible wine-making heritage.

The network of geographically-distant wine-making regions illuminate the remarkable cultural wine-making heritage of our joint history.

To better safeguard this living heritage, this cultural wine-making heritage which is as fragile as it is diverse, Iter Vitis is committed to spreading of knowledge so as to better understand the treasures of our territories.

The culture of the vine, winemaking and viticultural landscapes are an important part of European and Mediterranean food culture. Since the domestication of the vine, several thousand years BC, its evolution and spread has been considered a great human achievement, which shaped Europe's landscapes, both in terms of its territory and its people.

Iter Vitis France, a non-profit association (under the law of 1901) created at the end of 2012, reveals, through its members, the scale and richness of the wine-making lands..

<https://www.itervitis.fr/en/>

