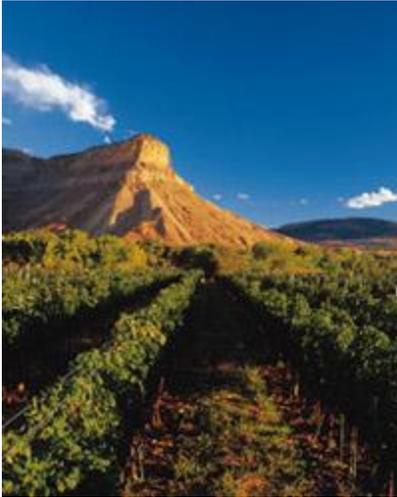


TRAVEL +LEISURE

10 Unexpected U.S. Wine Trails



Courtesy of www.grandvalleywine.com



New Mexico

by Steve Winston

Trail: [Central Region](#)

Number of Wineries: 11

Distance: 150 miles

Description: The first commercial wine-growing region in the United States was not California. Or New York State. Or the Pacific Northwest. In fact, it was a place not commonly associated with great wine tradition...or great wine-producing weather, terrain, or soil.

The first commercial wine-growing region in America was New Mexico; that's right...New Mexico. Dry, volcanic soil (black in some places). Prairie dogs and coyotes. Cactus and snakes. Ancient stone-and-mud pueblos. In some areas, high-desert which stretches hundreds of miles beyond even the most-distant horizon. Yet, New Mexico was producing excellent wines when California was still shipping them in from Spain.

In 1629, a Franciscan priest from Spain, charged with the mission of spreading the gospel, first planted grapevines on the banks of the Rio Grande. By 1880, the state was actually out-producing New York wineries. But drought and Prohibition soon made New Mexico go dry...and stay that way for decades. In the 1970's, however, wine made a comeback here. And now, there are some thirty thriving wineries throughout the state. And New Mexico is again gaining a reputation for the quality of its wines.

New Mexico wine country is broken into three main areas: northern, southern, and central, the latter known for its intense sunlight, high desert, and dense forests.

Where to Sip: Known for its reds, [Casa Rondena](#) is an award-winning winery and one of the oldest in New Mexico; its Meritage Red—a fruity blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes—was recently named by a national food magazine as among the 10 best reds in the U.S.

Where to Stay: [Los Poblanos Inn](#), two historic buildings designed by renowned New Mexico architect John Gaw Meem, sits under cottonwood trees along the Rio Grande...not all that far from where that Franciscan priest first planted the grapevines.