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# Decanter

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# Travel: Vaud for wine lovers

Whether you drive along the northern shore of Lake Geneva from Nyon round to Aigle, speed along in the tilting train, or even cover some of the distance on foot, you could be forgiven for thinking the only game in town is wine. Sue Style pays a visit



Here in Canton Vaud, the country's second largest wine region, a quarter of all Swiss wine is produced. Everywhere you look, an artful patchwork of carefully tended vines teeters on terraces buttressed by drystone walls, criss-crossed by yellow-signposted walking trails and interspersed with small cobbled villages of old-world charm.

An enchanted land for wine lovers, the vineyards afford spectacular views out across the shimmering lake to France and distant Mont Blanc and the Dent du Midi. Many, particularly between Lausanne and Vevey, rival those of the Douro or the Mosel for giddy steepness and jaw-dropping beauty.

Practically any time of the year you decide to visit – spring and autumn are my favourites – the





**Auberge de la Gare, Grandvaux**

A small (five-room) jewel of a hotel perched on a little balcony above the lake, owned and run by Raymonde and Philippe Delessert. The restaurant is known for miles around for its delicious, seasonally inspired, fairly priced food. As the name suggests, it really is the village's station hotel and the train stops right outside. [www.aubergegrandvaux.ch](http://www.aubergegrandvaux.ch)



drive to Epesses and finish in Cully.) Start in Cully for the short boat trip to Rivaz – just time enough to lean back and gape at the Lavaux vineyards stacked steeply up to the skyline. On arrival in Rivaz, walk up (five minutes) to Domaine Chappuis in the village where Christophe Chappuis makes superlative Chasselas, as well as fine red blends. From here, take off on the well-marked walking trail up to the village of Epesses, a 45-minute walk through some of the world's most spectacular terraced vineyards.

In Epesses, it's time to settle down for a leisurely lunch at the aptly named Auberge du Vigneron

the wine bar-deli Les 11 Terres ([www.11terres.ch](http://www.11terres.ch)) opens – or by 11 of the village's wine-growers (including top talents Blaise Duboux and Luc Massy), it's a place to taste a selection of the best wines and stock up on local cured meats.

Walk back down to Cully (15 minutes) or catch the Postbus (check timings at [www.cff.ch](http://www.cff.ch)). Check in at the Auberge du Rivaz where you can feast on traditional Swiss dishes, lake fish fresh from the local fisherman, Monsieur Monbaron, or grilled meats from the rotisserie and a wine list stuffed with Lavaux's best.



Above: you can taste the weekly-changing offer of open wines at Vinorama, a wine bar-cum shop in Rivaz

disappeared in the 1960s and was resuscitated in 2002 by Duboux and a band of believers.

The final piece in the lakeside vineyard puzzle is the Chablais region, spread out along the right bank of the Rhône between the Château de Chillon and Bex, on the threshold of neighbouring Valais. Bado, established in Aigle by Henri Bado in 1908 and now part of the Schenk group, is famous for its best-selling Chasselas, Aigle Les Murs, whose iconic label, painted by Frédéric Roux in 1918 and unchanged ever since, shows the estate's lizard that basks in the estate's steep shale terraces above the town. It's their bread-and-butter wine, whose huge sales allow oenologist Dominique Dufaux to have fun with small cuvées of other varieties (Viognier, Pinot Gris), reds (Pinot Noir, Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc) and even an orange wine from Chasselas named Hommage. Many of these can be tasted in the newly created wine bar and shop adjoining the winery.

The best part about visiting the Lake Geneva wine region is that distances are short – from Geneva to Aigle it's barely 100 kilometres, or one hour speeding along the motorway or using the train service. But speed, of course, is hardly the point. It's the chance to slow down and wander through the vineyards, stopping along the way to familiarise yourself with the landscape, meet the people – and taste the very special wines.

Sue Style for Decanter  
(in association with Lake Geneva Region Tourist Office)

English fizz • NZ Sauvignon Blanc