

# The Most Extreme Wine Tastings Around the World

Fighter jet rides, blind tasting in a cave, scuba diving for bottles: There's a lot to do out there for adventurous wine lovers.

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Fighter jet ride at the Leclerc Briant Champagne house. | CREDIT: HENRI-PIERRE GROLLEAU

Winemakers rarely shy away from a risk. They've faced extreme [frosts](#), [fires](#), [plagues](#), and even phylloxera—the microscopic pest that nearly destroyed Europe's vineyards in the 1860s—over the centuries. When COVID-19 hit, many winemakers switched gears, offering [virtual tastings](#) and navigating complicated shipping issues almost immediately after the shut-down orders.

As rules on gatherings continue to shift, many tasting rooms have moved outdoors, but it's not all wine patios and tasting igloos out there. From scuba diving for bottles in an undersea wine cellar to descending a rock face for a blind tasting in a cave, some are much more thrilling. Here are the world's most extreme wine tastings.

## Full Contact Tastings at Battle Creek Cellars

**Where:** Portland, Oregon

When winemaker Sarah Cabot isn't crafting terroir-driven [Pinot Noir](#), she's suiting up as running back for the [Oregon Ravens](#) football team. She blends her passions with a Football Plays and Passes Wine Tasting, where groups of 8-10 head to the vineyard or a local park for a 60-minute on-field tasting. Cabot runs plays that pair with five reserve or tasting room exclusive wines from [Battle Creek Cellars](#), like running plays with Pinot Noir and passing plays with Chardonnay.

## Fighter Jet Ride at Leclerc Briant

**Where:** Montagne de Reims, France

A personal Champagne concierge at the [Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa](#) arranges all the details for this extreme wine experience, where a guest takes off in an Aero L-39 Albatros fighter jet for a 30-minute discovery ride over the [Champagne wine region](#). A professional pilot performs aerobatic maneuvers like loops, rolls, tight turns before letting you take the controls. The experience ends with a private tasting at [Leclerc Briant](#).

## Blind Tasting in a Cave

**Where:** Soca Valley, Slovenia

Johannes Bergfors, founder of [Meeting Mountains](#) in Slovenia, has a different idea of what a blind tasting entails. He partnered with [Kabaj Winery](#) to lead guests deep into the Srnica Cave for a tour and tasting of three wines in complete darkness. Wise tasters won't swallow though, since the experience ends by abseiling down a 40-meter rock face to exit the cave and enter back into the light of day.

## Kayaking at Chatham Vineyards

**Where:** Eastern Shore, Virginia

A brief paddling clinic initiates guests into the Chatham Vineyards "[Paddle Your Glass Off](#)" kayaking experience before launching into Church Creek. From there it's a 45-minute paddle into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay where paddlers dock their kayaks for a wine tasting on the wharf at [Chatham Vineyards](#). This year-round experience comes with a complimentary bottle of Church Creek wine for every two paddlers.

## Fat Bike at 45 North Vineyards

**Where:** Leelanau Peninsula, Michigan

The three-mile loop surrounding 45 North Vineyards in [Michigan's](#) Leelanau Peninsula is deceptively steep. The constant uphill climb is tricky on snowshoes, but

even more challenging on the groomed fat bike and cross-country skiing trails during winter. By summer their IMBA-certified mountain biking trails open up for a heart-pounding trek followed by a flight of five wines at the tasting patio. Rent gear from nearby [Sutton Bay Bikes](#).

### **Hiking with the Winemaker at TOR Winery**

**Where:** Napa Valley, California

This appointment-only tasting takes place on the trails of one of Napa Valley's most remote and exclusive zip codes. Led by winemaker David Grega, hikers make the vertical climb up the rocky, volcanic soils of Pritchard Hill for a mountain top view of the valley (1,500 ft elevation) before heading back down to Melanson Vineyard for a tasting of [Tor Wines'](#) Chardonnays and vintage Cabernets.

### **Oyster Harvesting by Kayak at Center of Effort Wines**

**Where:** San Luis Obispo, California

Oysters and wine are a classic pairing, but the new pairing experience from [Center of Effort Wines](#) (COE) is far from traditional. Guests head out in kayaks into Morro Bay to paddle over [Grassy Bay Oyster Co.](#)'s oyster beds to learn about the sustainable farming practices in both COE's Edna Valley vineyards and in the waters of Morro Bay. They'll harvest, shuck, and pair fresh oysters with COE wines in the "shucking shed" before freshening up at [Hotel SLO](#) and heading to the vineyard for cooked oysters and wine at the winery's hospitality center.

### **Diving for Wine at Maslina**

**Where:** Hvar, Croatia

The absence of light and consistent temperatures of the Adriatic Sea provides ideal conditions for storing and aging the wine collection at the [Maslina Resort](#). Starting summer 2021, guests can spend a half day learning to dive before a certified instructor leads them 20-feet below the surface into one of two underwater limestone wine cellars to select their wine for dinner, all included in the [Dive & Wine package](#).

### **WSET Boot Camp at Chêne Bleu Winery**

**Where:** Provence, France

If a wine boot camp doesn't sound extreme, consider that you'll become Level 2 WSET ([Wine and Spirits Education Trust](#)) certified in less than one week after graduating from this [full-immersion boot camp](#) at [Chêne Bleu Winery](#). You'll spend six days tasting more than 100 benchmark wines from around the world while attending lectures, visiting noteworthy producers, and getting hands-on experience in the vineyards of La Verrière.

## **Pinzgauer Excursion at Owen Roe Winery**

**Where:** Yakima County, Washington

Winemaker David O'Reilly first purchased his vintage Czech Pinzagauer so he could skillfully navigate the uneven terrain of his [Yakima Valley vineyards](#). Now he offers guests the chance to strap-in for a wild, 90-minute rumble through the vines onboard this high-mobility all-terrain military vehicle before returning for a tasting overlooking the Wapoto Valley.

## **Lampara Fishing at La Scala Fenicia**

**Where:** Capri, Italy

Harvest is an extreme sport all itself at [La Scala Fenicia](#), where workers navigate 16-foot pergolas to harvest grapes by hand. By night, it's the guests doing the navigating as they boar *cianciole cetaresi* boats lit by a single lamp at the stern to cast nets alongside local fishermen and catch anchovies. [The Italian Planners](#) organize this wine tasting on the boats, paired with fresh anchovies under a blanket of stars.

## **Llama Hike at Divine Llama Vineyards**

**Where:** Yadkin Valley, North Carolina

This [Yadkin Valley winery](#) is pairing the fruits of their soil with the animals that tread upon it with their weekly [Llama Treks](#). Guests are teamed up with one of the farm's friendly llamas for a two-mile hike over rolling hills and murmuring creeks before returning for a tasting flight on the patio. The treks take place weekends through fall, winter, and spring; reservations required.

## **Seaplane Wine Flight at Obsidian Wine Co**

**Where:** Sonoma, California

The owners of [Obsidian Wine Co.](#) prefer enjoying wine outdoors, and their new [Outdoor Adventure Series](#) takes guests far from the tasting room. [Hike a volcano with the winemaker on May 22](#) or take to the air for an [extreme tasting on a seaplane](#) anytime of the year. The seaplane takes off from Sausalito, where guests can sip along as the tour continues over the obsidian-littered vineyards of the North Coast.