



WORDS ELISABETH KING

## SADDLE SIPPING IN COWBOY COUNTRY

GIDDY up and go sipping. That's the rallying cry at Cherry Wood Bed, Breakfast & Barn in Zillah, in Washington State's Yakima Valley. Saddling up to head for one of the several wineries in the immediate vicinity isn't just a great day out, you're also helping to save your steeds from a one-way trip to the abattoir. Owner Pepper Fewel has rescued over 100 former rodeo and ranch horses and around 30 are available to carry riders on winery tours. Cowboy hats are encouraged and Pepper's daughter Tiffany has coaxed the horses back to physical and psychological health using the natural horse method showcased in the movie, *The Horse Whisperer*. They are so laid back and perfect mounts even for occasional riders such as myself.

For those who aren't so sure they will stay aboard or want to drink more, Cherry Wood also offers winery tours in a cowboy limo, a pick-up truck doubling as a hay wagon. Accommodation is in stylish but rustic teepees boasting private outdoor showers and tubs. Breakfasts are huge and the coyotes atmospherically call at night, but you don't have to stay overnight in this most breathtaking part of the northwestern US if you are passing through. Day-trippers are most welcome.

Anyone on a drive from Seattle to Oregon should detour into Washington State's wine country, where fitness fanatics can also take advantage of cycling, hiking and walking tours. California may have had a long head start in the wine business, but Washington State, with more than 800 wineries is the second largest producer of premium wines in the US - a definition that covers any bottlings priced at over \$US8.

The local industry was kick-started in the 1970s when the US Tobacco Company purchased Chateau Ste Michelle and invested millions in vineyard and winery development. Ste Michelle remains the big cheese and crushes three out of every five grapes in the state's 13 officially recognised American Viticultural Areas (AVAs).

Last year the prestigious Conde Nast Traveler magazine advised readers to

*You know you're in wine country the minute you enter the plush lobby, where six wine tasting rooms offer some of the region's finest labels.*

by-pass the crowded Napa wine country and make a beeline for Yakima Valley, aka the cradle of the Washington State wine industry. This is apple-growing country, too, and the locals are equally proud of their cider making. Tieton Cider Works, owned by third-generation Yakima apple growers, opened a state-of-the-art tasting room and production facility last year. According to the bartender who poured us a long, cool cider: "We grow the fruit we use. We press, we ferment, we bottle it all under one roof".

There's plenty of hops, pears and row crops in the Yakima Valley, in addition thousands of hectares of wine grapes. The

micro-climate is slightly cooler than other regions of Washington State, so wineries produce a diverse range of varieties, from merlot, shiraz and cabernet sauvignon to chardonnay and riesling. Three AVAs make up the Yakima Valley - Red Mountain, the Rattlesnake Hills and Snipes Mountain. If you are on a driving holiday, winery touring is a cinch, with 65 wineries clustered around the towns of Zillah, Prosser and Benton City.

Many of the winemakers specialise in syrah, but don't limit yourself. Reflection Vineyards, not far from Cherry Wood, crafts long-living reds. The Roberts family of Westport Winery offers classic gewurztraminers. Drop by at Stottle Winery where Josh Stottlemyer's vognier is fruity to the max. Riesling fans should head for Mercier Estates.

Yakima is also part of the Columbia Valley, Washington State's largest wine region. The southernmost part of the area extends to the Columbia River Gorge, the dividing line between Washington and Oregon. Soaring cliffs, a temperature-moderating river and volcanic hills make up some of the most dramatic Manifest Destiny landscapes in North America. Little wonder two million tourists pass through each year.

But Walla Walla is a major draw for Seattle wine lovers. Explorers Lewis and Clark made their way through the uncharted country in 1805 and 1806. Missionaries Marcus and Narissa Whitman followed in their footsteps 30 years later and built a mission to convert the local Cayuse Indians. Following an outbreak of measles, which decimated local tribes, the Whitmans and their followers were killed in 1847.

# WINESTATE

M A G A Z I N E

## SEPTEMBER 2015

Wine of the Year Public Tasting  
National Wine Centre - **ADELAIDE**  
*4 September 2015*

## OCTOBER 2015

Wines of South Africa Public Tasting  
Leopards Leap, Franschhoek, Western Cape -  
South Africa  
*October 2015*

## NOVEMBER 2015

“Boutique Wines of Australia”  
Hong Kong  
*5-7 November 2015*

## JANUARY 2016

Best of the West  
Perth Hyatt Regency Hotel - **PERTH**  
*15 January 2016*

Wines of South Africa  
Perth Hyatt Regency Hotel - **PERTH**  
*18 January 2016*

## APRIL 2016

Best of South Australia  
Veronafiere, Verona - Italy  
*10 April 2016*

Best of South Australia  
Milan, Italy  
*15 April 2016*

[www.winestate.com.au](http://www.winestate.com.au)

As the parents of the first white child born in Orgeon, the Whitman name is commemorated widely in Walla Walla, from Whitman Street through Whitman College and the Marcus Whitman Hotel. Built in 1927, this luxurious grande dame of a property cost nearly half a million dollars to build in an era when the term millionaire really meant something.

By the 1970s, the historic pile had seen better days. But in the early noughties a series of renovations returned a true sense of style and elegance to the grand old building. You know you're in wine country the minute you enter the plush lobby, where six wine tasting rooms offer some of the region's finest labels, including Tero Estates, Flying Trout Wine and Mansion Creek Cellars. The Marc restaurant, the hotel's signature eatery, was named 2014 Restaurant of the Year in the Washington State Wine Awards. Boasting 235 bottlings on its wine list, the restaurant's executive chef Antonio Campolio has a paddock-to-plate approach and sources many of its ingredients from the hotel's kitchen garden.

Campolio describes his culinary style as “progressive modern American that blends traditional Northwest flavours with molecular gastronomic twists”. What you get are dishes such as roasted beef agnolotti with pork belly and lamb sweetbreads with orange marmalade, maltese sauce and blood orange. The signature dessert of chocolate custard with foie gras gelato, espresso gelato and caramelised bananas is justifiably famous in Portland and Seattle. 