

Post



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# Wine all day - August 13, 2025

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## ***SUMMARY***

We had signed up for an all day wine tour: the Exceptional Wine & Cuisine Experience. At the tram depot meeting place we indulge in coffee and beignets. We met the other couple on the tour with us: Tracy from England and Gerry from Scotland and ended up having a great time with them! We had stops at 3 wineries. At the first one we sampled three wines and three paired breakfast items (causing us to regret those beignets!). I should mention this was at about 10:30 in the morning. Our next winery stop was for lunch with two glasses of wine. Dessert was truffles and pink sparkling wine on the tram to our third stop. At the final winery the four of us

ended up at a table with 27 wine glasses, 4 water glasses and 2 highballs glasses with gin. Oh yeah, and more truffles/nougat for dessert! Back at the cottage we chilled for a while (i.e. sat in a wine-induced stupor) before heading out to a great dinner at Arkeste at Chamonix Winery. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Here in Franschhoek one of the big things is the wine train/tram. It's a cute train that goes between many of the good wineries here. The train doesn't get to all the wineries, and there's actually two ends of the train, but no middle, so there are also train-looking trollies that get you back and forth and everywhere else worthy of wine drinking.

Our start time 10 am and the tour literature promised a beignet and coffee at the starting point. Our guide is not offering it but says she'll be happy to get us each one, which she does. They're big, delicious and filling.

As we wait for our start time our guide (who will be with us the whole day) informs us that there will be four of us on the tour today. In the main wine train terminal there's us, a group of four, and another group of two. We guess they're our companions, so we go and introduce ourselves. They're Gerry (Jerry?) from Scotland and Tracy from England. They're in their mid fifties and are on a "how will retirement be" trip. We're happy to demo for them. Tracy is in management and flies business class all over the world regularly. Gerry works for the French company who makes Bon Maman jams (among many other food products) . He's impressed by our knowledge of his jam.

At our first winery visit is to Paserene. We quickly rue our beignets as we're having a three course breakfast (complete with three wines). This is at 10 am. We feel like luses. The food is really good and the wine is delicious (as it has been pretty much all over South Africa). We learn we're at the second smallest winery (of the 188 in the valley). The guard shack into the winery is designed to look like a wine bottle laying down (we can see that). The tasting building is supposed to look like a birds nest (we cannot see that). We drink our three glasses of breakfast wine and are told that if we want to try any others, just ask.

One of the wines we taste is a good Chardonnay. We hear about the ABCs of wine: "Anything But Chardonnay". This region didn't have it, and it wasn't allowed to leave France. But of course with a challenge like that you know someone's going to try. They had plants in their luggage and went first to Switzerland and then to South Africa. Anyway, we now have good, inexpensive Chardonnay from South Africa.

We take one of the trollies to the second winery (Allée Bleue). This place is a much bigger operation. We're handed a glass of bubbly to carry around. We visit the production facility and see all of the steel and wood aging vessels. We also see some clay vessels (amphora) that look like they're straight out of Ancient Rome and others that look like they were delivered by aliens (or maybe actually delivered the aliens to this planet!). Our guide leads us on a long mental exercise where we're the winemaker and we have to make all of the decisions from planting, to harvesting, to pressing, to bottling, to labeling. We play along and it soon becomes clear this is a complex business and there's lots of ways to spend extra money on this wine you're trying to sell (at a profit, hopefully).

Exhausted from "making our wine" we head back to the tasting room/building for lunch. Again we have three courses and three wines. All are delicious. Dishes include Meatballs Bobotie, Kudu steak, Mushrooms and tofu. Everything is delicious.

Walking around after lunch we take pictures, including of an enormous 'floating rock' fountain, where wires have been strung in a big X pattern in the air and a really huge, heavy rock has been gently placed on the X to keep it suspended above the fountain. It's impressive. We hear a story of some jerk, earlier today, at the fountain tugging at the wires, eventually reporting "yep, it's really on there" when it doesn't fall. Ugh.

Feeling no pain, we pile back onto the trolley which takes us to the real train (on real tracks). The 'train' is a single car, with passenger space and motor all in one. It's two story, all enclosed save for a small covered, open air balcony at the front. That's where we are put, with a velvet rope as if to say "don't even think about it!" We're given more chocolate truffles and champagne glasses and they're filled.

As we 'chug' along we come to a cross street (OK, driveway) every few 100 yards. When that happens the "train" slows and two guys with red flags hop off to ensure no crazy driver tries to beat the train to the crossing.

At the Plaisir winery (French for "Pleasure") we climb down off the train and head inside. Along the way, the various buildings around are pointed out and we're told when they were built... 1764, 1831, etc. Inside a bottle of 2020 Grand Plaisir is opened and we're soon holding full glasses. We see the operation from a fancy catwalk. Back outside, in the sunshine, still clutching our wine, our guide from Plaisir does the "Sabrage" (opening a champagne bottle by swiftly sliding a saber down the neck of the bottle until it breaks off the glass top).

We drink champagne as we walk over to our tasting table. There we sit and do a vertical tasting of their good wine. And we try other wines and gin. In the end the four of us are surrounded by 27 wine glasses, four water glasses and two glass of gin. In theory we're now supposed to walk back to the train.

We buy wine and take the train back to the main station. We say our good byes to Gerry and Tracy and stumble home.

For dinner we walk to the restaurant, figuring it's just "off that ways a bit". It was so far, and uphill. Due to the distance we arrived late. It was pitch black by the time we got there. The food was excellent, as was the wine (groan). We took an Uber home, yay!

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## Photos



Karen, in from the cool morning air, the wine train/tram off in the distance behind.



We were promised beignet so by gosh, we're going to have them. Yum.



First stop, a winery for a three course breakfast paired with three yummy breakfast wines. Why did we eat that beignet?



Thankfully the breakfast servings were not huge, but they were very tasty.



This is the second smallest and third youngest winery (of the 188 in the area). When they bought the land this swing set was already here. So it stays and it's on their wine bottle labels.



They say that the guard shack/welcoming building (center) looks like a wine bottle laying down. I'd say they're right!



Second winery: Allée Bleue.



We get to play wine maker and make all the decisions. We know which choices we'd make and they all add to the cost of the wine. Argh.



They age their wine in metal, in wood,  
and some in these alien looking ceramic  
eggs. Interesting!



We never did get over the beauty of the  
area!



Where we had lunch they have a rock  
placed on some criss-crossed wire. Kids:  
please don't climb on this.



A picture of the actual wine train/tram. It's all self contained, two story, and just a small area, upstairs, is in the open air. (This picture was taken a different day when the weather wasn't quite as glorious.)



Being on a 'special tour' we get the upstairs, outside space. And accompanying bubbly. Here we are with Gerry and Tracy. They were tremendous fun.



There are no guard gates at the crossings, so the train slowed and there two guys, with official looking flags, jump off and ensure no cars get any crazy ideas.



One last winery, Plaisir (French for pleasure). This place is old and these buildings were built long ago.



## FARNSNIENTE



We sip (chug?) their delicious 2020 Grand Plaisir as we hear how it's made. It's not shipped to every country, but the U.S., yes, he thinks so.



We get to see the Sabrage, where the bottle is opened with a saber which breaks off the top. Careful now.





Top sheared off, the champagne is served.



As if that wasn't enough, we sit and taste (and taste and taste). All good, I say.

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