

ery makes both table wines and port, and rooms come with bicycles and fishing gear.

Instead of a river, a narrow glacial lake lies at the bottom of British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, an upstart wine region just north of the United States making its name with bracing rieslings and complex pinot noirs.

One of the destination wineries is Mission Hill, a stunning estate of Tuscan and modern architecture perched on a hilltop above the west side of the lake. It's worth visiting for its open-air gourmet restaurant alone, but you might also catch a summer concert at its outdoor amphitheater. Just across the lake, a sculpture of a giant wine bottle pouring out of the sky marks the restaurant of Summerhill Pyramid Winery, which combines biodynamic winemaking and showmanship (wines are aged inside a giant pyramid to "amplify the spirit"). The valley stretches 60 miles southward from those leading properties, with more than 125 wineries and dozens of fruit farms that grow apples, peaches, cherries, and berries.

Sandy beaches line the southern tip of the lake in Osoyoos, where the Watermark Beach Resort makes a good base for touring. Irrigation makes the valley so lush that it's hard to believe that the Okanagan is the northernmost reach of a desert climate.

Argentina's Mendoza wine region is even drier, thanks to the rain shadow of the 20,000-foot peaks of the Andes Mountains. Relatively unexplored by North Americans, the greater Mendoza area is emerging as one of the southern hemisphere's finest wine districts, producing towering reds, powerful whites, and seductive roses.

Because everything is grown on a flat plain with drip irrigation, wine estates tend to be huge and somewhat far apart, making it useful to hire a tour guide. Until this year, visiting the area usually meant staying in Mendoza city. But in January, a luxury hotel of 22 villas opened at the Vines of Mendoza resort in the Uco Valley. It provides a great base for exploring the Uco estates and hiking in the foothills of the Andes.

Even travelers who opt to sleep elsewhere should dine at the resort's Siete Fuegos restaurant. The open-flame gaucho cuisine tastes even better as the sun sets in flamingo hues over the nearby Andes.

Contact Patricia Harris and David Lyon at harris.lyon@verizon.net or follow their culinary travels at www.HungryTravelers.com.

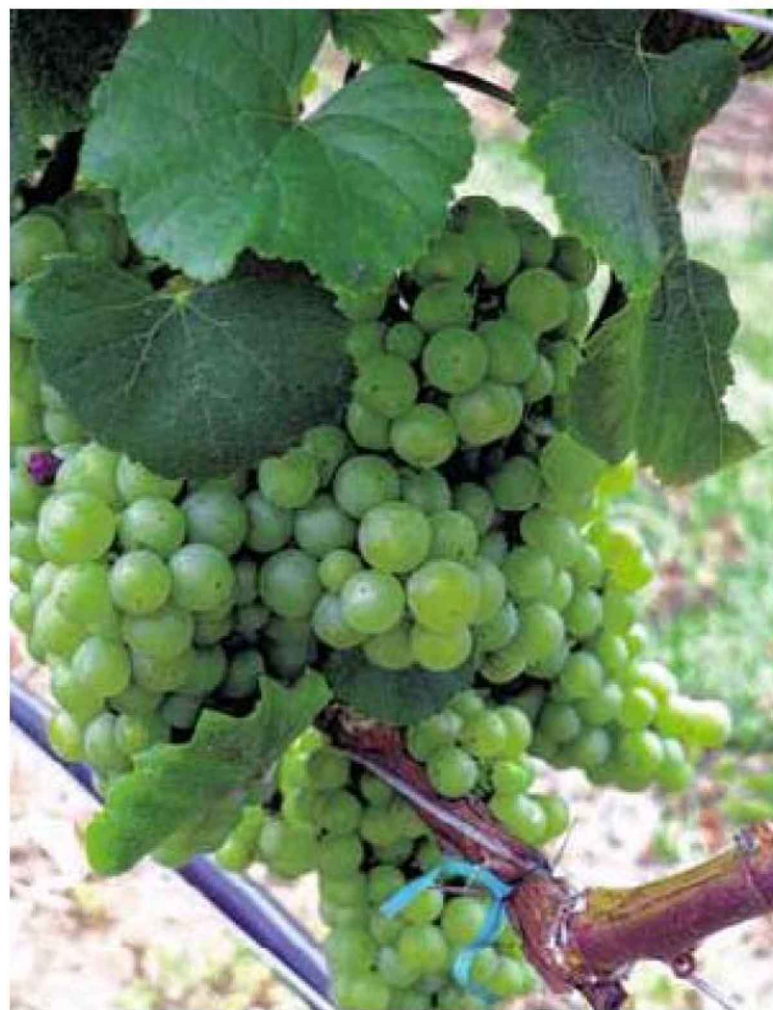


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White wine grapes cluster in Long Island's North Fork, where vineyards and farmstands are plenty.