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[I]t is the wine that leads me on,
the wild wine that sets the wisest man to sing at the top of his lungs,
laugh like a fool
it drives the man to dancing...
it even tempts him to blurt out stories better never told.
— Homer, The Odyssey

It seems wine-drinking has always been exalted as a fun and mind-altering activity, with its laughs, songs, and blunders, enjoyed by humans universally in the same intimate way, regardless of the passing of the eons.

From **ancient Greek symposiums** to new wine-making technologies and **wine tourism**, there is just something really special about **wine!**

It wouldn't be excessive to say that **early wine production**, dating back to the **6th millennium BC**, played at least some part in the rise of civilization during the **Neolithic period**.

It had only been a couple of millennia since humans changed from their nomadic lifestyle to **permanent settlements**, and water, as much as milk, were ridden with fatal diseases and unsafe to drink.

Fermented **grape juice**, however, with the bacteria-fighting properties of **alcohol** and **high caloric content**, managed to keep societies **nourished** and **hydrated**, presumably while also keeping their **spirits high!**

But how did it all start?

HISTORY

Although the practice of **wine-making** seems to have spread as a wave during antiquity from East Asia to the rest of Europe, **wine culture** has been strongly linked to **Greeks** either through their **philosophical texts**, such as **Plato's Symposium**, or through their **Dionysian cults** which became popular throughout the **Mediterranean** from **1600 BC** until year 1 AD.

God Dionysus, according to **Greek mythology**, the **god of wine**, was the first one to invent **viticulture** at his imaginary birthplace of Mount Nysa, and the one responsible for spreading the craft of wine-making to the people of Anatolia.

Historically, the vast amount of **wine-carrying amphorae** unearthed throughout the **Mediterranean** landscape as well as seascape from variably located **shipwrecks**, truly suggests a vibrant **wine trading economy** in the region.

And although **Greeks** possibly learned the practice of **wine-making** from their **Armenian** or **Phoenician** neighbors due east, they managed to advance **winery** and establish a **monopoly in wine-trading** for centuries.

It seems the **Minoans** and later the **Mycenaeans** of **Crete** played an important part in this, using viticulture as a means to grow their economy and introducing the practice of **wine-making** as well as their indigenous vines to other parts, such as **Egypt**, **Sicily**, southern **France**, modern-day **Italy**, and **Spain**.

From various references by **Homer**, **Herodotus** and others, like **Aristotle**, **ancient Greek wine** varieties were quite popular and regularly distributed across the **Mediterranean**.

Especially well-liked were wines coming from **Lemnos**, **Lesbos**, **Chios**, **Kos**, **Crete**, **Lefkas**, and many others.

And despite the fact that it is these same varieties that are still cultivated today, **ancient wine** must have tasted much differently!

By various historic accounts, **spices**, **herbs**, and **fruits**, were used to **sweeten the taste** of the fermented **grape juice** that was stored in jugs lined inside with tree resin (later linked to **Greek Retsina**), and sealed with a layer of **gypsum**.

GREEK WINE VARIETIES

It seems the **Mediterranean climate** and **rich soil** of the **Greek** peninsula, create unique conditions for hundreds of **wine varieties** that grow here.

Included are international ones, such as **Chardonnay**, **Sauvignon Blanc**, **Cabernet Sauvignon**, **Merlot**, and **Syrah**, which are often mixed with **local grapes** to produce idiosyncratic wines such as **Limnio**.

It is the **local grape varieties** however that produce some of the best **wines** worldwide, and an absolute must-taste for every **wine-connoisseur**.

Below we have selected the **5 top ones** for which you should look on your next trip!



Asyrtiko

This rare white grape variety, indigenous, but not limited, to the island of **Santorini**, yields one of the best wines worldwide, the **Vin Santo**. With the **vines of Santorini** being considered the oldest in Europe, the **Asyrtiko grape** grows in the arid volcanic soil, giving truly unique wines of terroir.

Either oaked, fresh, or aged, the **Asyrtiko** is famous for its crisp acidity, and **high levels of alcohol**.

It is best paired with **sea-food**, **poultry**, or **pasta**.

First ranked: Estate Argyros Vin Santo 20 Years Barrel Aged, **Santorini**, Greece

Moschofilero

Local to the **Peloponnese** peninsula, this reddish grape variety produces one of the best **Greek white wines**, notable for its freshness, its flowery aroma, and its medium to low levels of alcohol.

The **Moschofilero vines** grow in the cold soil of the hill of **Mantineia**, and the wine best accompanies **sea-food**, **vegetables** and **salads**, as well as **cheese**.

First ranked: Semeli, Thea Mantinia, Protected Designation of Origin Mantineia, Greece

Malagouzia

Although **Malagouzia** was considered extinct during the **70s** and very little was known of it, today it is widely regarded as a world-class **grape variety** thanks to the hard work of university professors, top **growers** and **oenologists**.

Vines of the **Malagouzia variety** give exquisite **dry white wines** as well as some amazing sweets.

It is best paired with **sea-food**, **vegetables** and **salads**, **white meats** and **poultry**, as well as **spicy foods**.

Origin of this variety is considered to be the west side of central Greece (Aetoloakarnania) which is known mainly for the production of **sweet wines**.

First ranked: Ktima Gerovassiliou Single Vineyard Malagousia, Epanomi, Greece

Agiorgitiko (Black/Mavroudi Nemeas).

The **Agiorgitiko grape variety** is considered truly multidimensional and characteristic of **Greek red wines**, with flavors of red berries oozing through the body of the fresh ones, while violets, chai, and tobacco prevail in the aged.

Nemea, **Agiorgitiko's** main Point of Designated Origin in the **Peloponnese**, is one of the largest **wine-producing territories** in **Greece**, its vineyards stretching for 20.000 acres across and 900 metres above sea level.

This is precisely the reason why the **Agiorgitiko grape variety** can yield such diverse wines, ranging from dry to sweet reds and sometimes even to some interesting sparkling ones.

A glass of **Agiorgitiko** pairs wonderfully with red **meats**, **vegetable** dishes, as well as **cheese**.

First ranked: Gaia Anatolikos, Sweet Red, Nemea Greece

Mavrodaphne/ Thiniatiko

Although **Mavrodaphne** is commonly linked to the area of **Patras**, the rarest varieties of this **Greek desert wine** can actually be found on the island of **Kefalonia**.

Best drank aged, **Mavrodaphne** is unique in its combination of flavours, like berries, black cherries, eucalyptus, chocolate, and coffee.

In recent years the **Mavrodaphne grape variety** has been experimented with, yielding some interesting **dry wines** that are paired great with **red meat**, **pasta**, and some more **gourmet dishes** like **peppered fillet**, or **fish cuts** with **sweet wine sauce**.

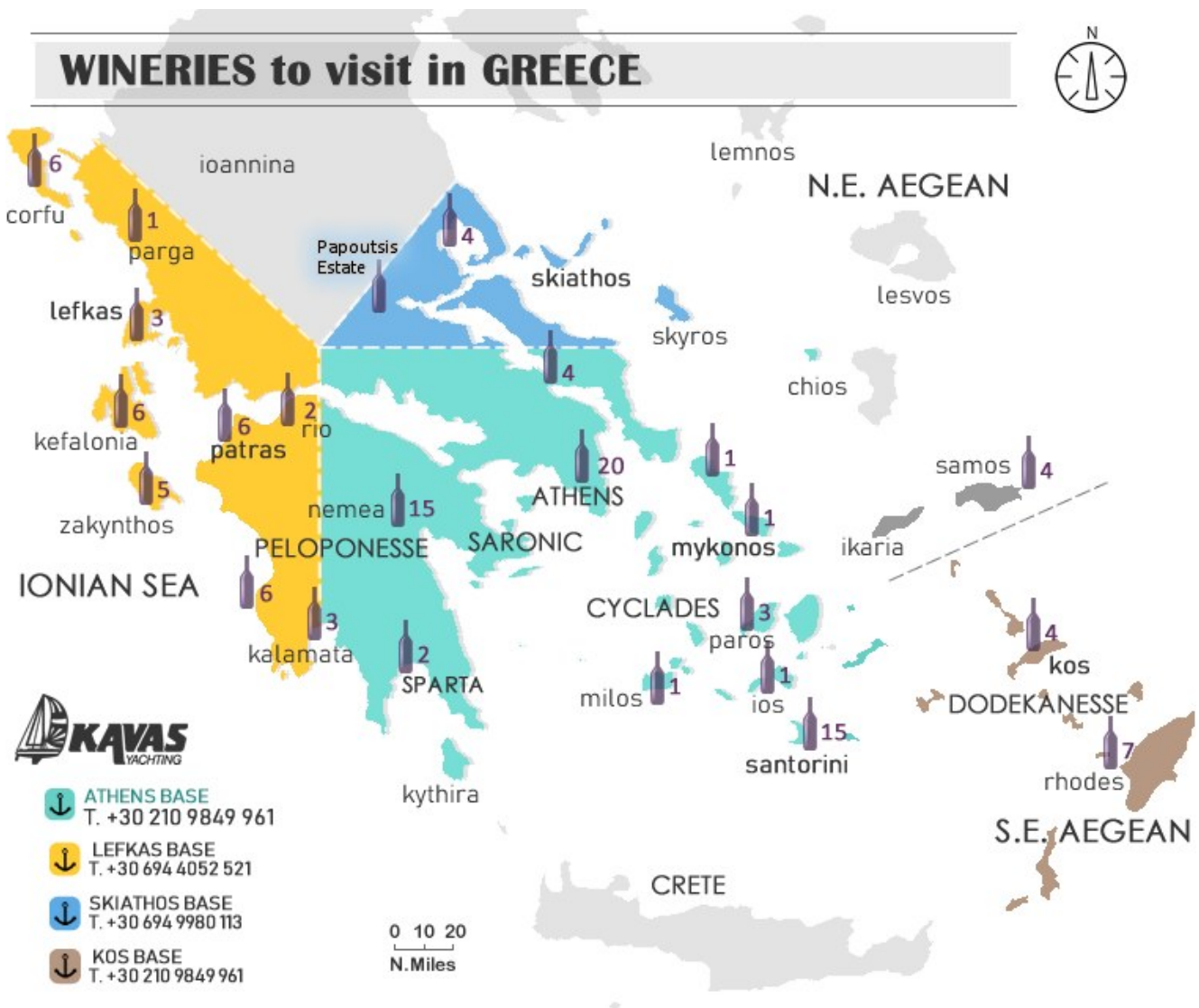
As a **desert wine**, **Mavrodaphne** is best enjoyed after a piece of **tiramisu**, **chocolate souffle**, or some **mocha mousse**.

First ranked: Gentilini Eclipse, 2017, Cosmetatos, Kefalonia, Greece

WINERIES TO VISIT IN GREECE

With Greece having over 4.000 years of wine-making tradition, the wineries and vineyards you can visit here are scattered practically everywhere, producing hundreds of local, lesser known varieties.

Combined with the **hospitality** for which **Greeks** are famous, as well as the savory local delicacies that can be found in each place, **wine tourism** around Greece might just be the perfect concept for your next yacht-charter expedition.



Ionian isles

The vineyards of the [Ionian islands](#), stretching from sea-level to 800m of altitude, produce some of the best Greek grape varieties yielding exquisite wines from points of Protected Geographical Indication.

Kefalonia

Kefalonia is the main point of origin of the **Robola white grape variety** which despite its vulnerability to **phylloxera**, which requires barren and mountainous grounds, is highly productive.

PDO wines of Kefalonia are generally regarded as elegant and refined, with a local character, that will surely be appreciated by lovers of **wine culture**.

Visitors of **Kefalonia** should not forget to also taste a rare variety of **Mavrodaphne** that is exclusively produced there - the **Thiniatiko**.

While on your **yacht-charter expedition to Kefalonia**, drop by and say hello at the [Gentilini Winery](#), the **Kefalonian Robola Wine Cooperative**, or the [Melissinos Winery](#), and learn more about the **variety** as well as the techniques used in its production.

ZAKYNTHOS

The island of **Zakynthos** has a truly rich **wine-making tradition**, producing dozens of local **varieties** from its 4.500 acres of vineyards.

Such varieties are the **Goustolidi**, the **Katsakoulias**, and the **Robola Black**, to name a few.

Exclusive to the island of **Zakynthos** and an absolute must-have is also the **white wine PGI Verdea**, the island's traditional, multivarietal wine to which you can be treated upon your visit at the [Grampsas Winery](#), the [Art & Wine Winery](#), or the [Ampelostrates Horse Vineyard](#), among many others.



LEFKADA

Lefkada produces **white and red wines** of Protected Geographical Indication made from local varieties such as the **red Verjami**, the **white Vardea**, but also the international **Muscat White variety**.

The island's vines grow on its mountainous slopes, reaching 600m and generally produce fresh, dry whites, and deep reds with good acidity.

If you're lucky enough to find yourself in **Lefkada**, don't miss out on visiting the [Lefkaditiki Gi](#) where red and white wines are made from local varieties using modern techniques.

CORFU

Some **excellent wines** of Protected Geographical Indication come from the few **vineyards** of [Corfu](#), using local varieties like the **white Petrokoritho**, **Muscat**, **Robola**, and the **red Kakotrygis**, and **Mavrodaphne**.

Corfiot wines are generally fragrant and mineral when white, and full-bodied with finesse when red.

If your sails ever bring you to [Corfu](#), it's worth visiting the [Theotoky Wine Estate](#), a domain of organic farming on the west side of the island where the exceptional **Couvée white, red, and rosé wines** are made and bottled.

Central Greece & Attica

Savatiano is the main variety cultivated in the **vineyards of central Greece**, along with **Roditis**, as well as a couple of international varieties, covering approximately 50.000 acres of land, half of which belong to the region of Attica.

Grapes of this **variety** are mostly used for the production of common white table wines with flavours of citrus and grass being prevalent. **Savatiano** is also the variety traditionally used in the making of **Retsina**.

Central Greece

On the east coast of Greece, between Evia and the mainland, you can moor at the small **marina of the Atalanti Bay**, in order to visit the [Papoutsis Estate](#). There, local and international varieties are being cultivated like **Chardonnay**, **Malagouzia**, **Asyrtiko**, **Roditis**, **Merlot**, and **Cabernet Sauvignon**, yielding some truly savoury red and white dry wines.

If however you prefer to moor at the spacious marina of **Volos**, you can easily pay a visit to the [Grappa Vino &](#)

[Aperitivo Winery](#), located within walking distance, or ride up to the [Globos Winery](#) just a couple of miles away. And if you are into hiking or simply in the mood for a bit of adventure, you can find a safe spot to drop your anchor in the **Pagaseticos Bay**, and get to the **Milea Winery** in **Argalasti** where white, red, and rose varieties of **organic farming** are being cultivated at 700m of altitude.

Sailing south towards **Evoea**, you can visit the the [Lykos Winery](#) where you will have a chance to tour the vineyard and taste **wines** from the **Malagouzia variety** accompanied with local delicacies!

ATTICA

Local to **Attica**, in the region of **Mesogaia**, are the [Papagiannakos Winery](#) as well as the [Gikas Winery](#), where the hot and dry climate is perfect for the vinification of the **Savatiano** and **Roditis varieties**.

Peloponnese

NEMEA

Growing from the sea level all the way up to the base of **Mt. Kyllini** at 800m, the exclusively red **Agiorgitiko grape variety** produces the **red wines PDO Nemea** - one of the largest **PDO zones of Greece** covering approximately 7,500 acres of the **Peloponnese**.

Close to **Corinth**, the [Bairaktaris Winery](#) is open for tours and tastings of their best **Agiortgitiko**, but also **Moschofilero**, **Malagouzia**, and **Muscat White wines**.

MANTINEIA

Stretching for 2.500 acres across the center of the **Peloponnese**, the **vineyards of Mantinia** are where the **Moschofilero** is chiefly cultivated, giving characteristically aromatic dry, **white wines**.

Sailing from the [Saronic](#) to the **Argolic Gulf**, you can moor at **Paralio Astros**, and make an **excursion to Mantinia** near Trikala, where you will have a chance to visit many scenic **vineyards** and **wineries**, like the [Tselepos Estate](#), the [Troupis Winery](#) located at the heart of **PDO Mantinia**, and the [Domain Spiropoulos](#), located at 800m of altitude, and carrying over a century of **wine history**.

ACHAIA

Thanks to its mild climate, **Achaia** produces quite a diverse collection of varieties, depending on the altitude of cultivation.

Growing at the hills of **Egialia**, at mountainous conditions, is the white **Roditis variety**, which yields the only dry white wine of the region with the indication **PDO Patras**.

At lower altitudes, at the vineyards of **Patras**, the globally exported **Mavrodaphne variety** is commonly cultivated.

At the same climactic conditions, a rare **Muscat White variety** thrives, known to experts as **Muscat blanc a petits grains**.

Visitors of the area should definitely consider visiting the [Tetramythos Winery](#) in Ano Diakopto, where they may taste **quality wines** of organic farming.

Another site worth touring is the [Rouvalis Winery](#) where the gravity-flow type of infrastructure was first established in the area.

Aegean Isles

SANTORINI

The island of **Santorini**, apart from being one of the most picturesque and cosmopolitan of the [Ionian islands](#), is also the main point of origin of the exquisite **Asyrtiko white grape variety** which yields world-class wines of terroir.

First-time visitors but regulars too, are welcome to tour the [Boutari Winery](#), the [Argyros Estate](#), the [Venetsanos Winery](#), and the [Koutsogiannopoulos Winery](#) among many, walk among the **Asyrtiko vineyards**, learn some amazing wine history, and of course taste their best **wines** paired with complementary platters of local goods.

LEMNOS

One of the largest islands of the **Aegean**, b produces some of the best **dry white wines** from its 1.250 acres of limestone soil.

In its **vineyards** the **Muscat of Alexandria variety** is mostly cultivated, along with the local **Limnio variety**, an **ancient Greek cultivar**, which is produced more scarcely.

There, visitors can drop round and see the **Garalis Winery** where they can taste distinguished wines of both varieties cultivated on the isalnd.

SAMOS

Covered in 4.400 acres of **Muscat vines**, **Samos** produces unique **sweet wines**, with the most traditional one being the **Vin Doux**, a **vin de liqueur** usually served as an **aperitif**, made by the **United Winemaking Agricultural Cooperative of Samos**.

Visitors of the [Vakakis Winery](#) may also have a chance to taste some top-quality white, red, and rose **wines** from their **organic vineyards** of **Muscat**, **Asyrtiko**, and lesser known **local varieties**.

PAROS

Grown in the sandy soil of the island, and the strong meltemi winds, the vineyards of **Paros** contain mostly Greek varieties like the white **Monemvasia** and the red **Mandilaria**, giving the light-bodied **wines PDO Samos**.

If you're ever there, it's worth visiting the [Moraitis Winery](#), a family-run establishment producing some of the best organic **Monemvasia wine** you'll ever taste!

Dodekanesse

RHODES

The **vineyards of Rhodes** are cultivated chiefly around **Mt. Attavyros**, reaching an altitude of up to 2.600m.

Rhodes has two Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) **wines**:

PDO Rhodes refers to **white wines** made mainly with **Athiri**, and to rosés, and reds made with **Mandilaria** for the most part.

Rhodes also produces **PDO Muscat of Rhodes**, a refreshing sparkling wine made from **white Muscat**.

The [Kounaki Winery](#) is the ideal place to fully taste the crispiness of the **Rhodian whites** as well as the plummy notes of the red ones, so don't forget to make a stop!



KAVAS YACHTING & WINE

Kavas, being a genuine admirer of this Mediterranean gem that is Greek wine, offers to his clients a bottle of one of the most refined varieties from the [Papoutsis Estate](#) to accompany their journey.

Using exclusively **organic methods of farming**, **George Papoutsis** and his spouse **Despina**, both **oenologists**, produce exceptional **dry, red and white wines**, which you are welcome to enjoy at their **winery** located just 2km outside of **Atalanti**.

GREEK WINE TOURISM

Greek summertime is here, and the vineyards around the **Greek islands** are heavy with grapes of dozens of **varieties** once again.

Visiting **Greece's vineyards** and **wineries** will definitely tug at the heart of **oenophiles**, but will certainly be a world of fun for the casual tourist as well!