



## YOUTH MOVEMENT

## Finger Lakes area a hot spot for lovers of wine

*Time for most young travelers is limited, so don't waste it. Every month, Youth Movement brings you expert advice on affordable, imaginative travel to make the most of your days away from school or the office.*

**By Anne Ford**

Rand McNally Travel News

"You're a good spitter," says winemaker Peter Bell admiringly, watching a visitor dispose of a mouthful of riesling in the dump bucket.

Like many of the dozens of other wineries surrounding Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, Fox Run Vineyards (670 New York Highway 14, Penn Yan) is a good place for wine novices to start their education. Bell, Fox Run's winemaker since 1996, is happy to give impromptu lessons in the basics: swirl, sniff, swig, spit. (Careful with that last one; many people reflexively knock it back instead.)

"Swirling is not an affectation. It's to maximize aroma," Bell says. He urges visitors not to be delicate about getting a whiff of the wine: "Stick your nose right in. You get most of your information from the way the wine smells." And besides, it'll lend your pronouncements ("I'm getting some, um, oakiness with a hint of tar") more authority.

Seneca Lake wineries are known for riesling, which is a favorite of beginner wine enthusiasts and wine writers alike. It's a good starting point for newbie drinkers who are sick of chardonnay but aren't ready for something really intense. A bottle of Bell's semi-dry 2004 riesling goes for \$12.99. In addition to expanding their palates, visitors can take a free comprehensive tour of Fox Run's vineyards and winery. Poised on the upper western edge of the lake, north of most of the area's other wineries, it's "become kind of a hub winery," Bell says. "People want to know where to go from here."



Sources: ESRI, TeleAtlas Chicago Tribune

One place he might point them to is the 5-year-old Atwater Estate Vineyards (9055 New York Highway 414, Hector), which specializes in dry white wines such as riesling; its \$15 dry riesling has been voted the best in New York State. Atwater occasionally has terrific deals—its estate red wine was recently on sale at \$20 for three bottles—and its helpful, down-to-earth staff enjoys helping new wine drinkers find their favorites in the tasting room.

At Red Newt Cellars, also in Hector (3675 Tichenor Rd.), tasting room manager Donna Lodge is on a one-woman mission to wean novices from syrupy vino. "They get this perception that they only like sweet," she says. When she convinces them to try something drier, she warns them, "It's 11 o'clock in the morning. You just had pancakes and syrup. It's not going to taste good in your mouth. You have to picture it with a steak in cold weather." The unpersuaded buy \$9.99 bottles of the house Red Newt White or settle for a jaunty "Salute the Newt!" T-shirt.

Drinkers with a real sweet tooth often enjoy this area's dessert wines, particularly those made in the fashion of ice wine. To qualify as a true ice wine, a wine must be made from grapes that have frozen naturally on the vine and been pressed while



Photo by Laurie D. Borman

### A REAL CORKER: Corks for the taking at Red Newt Cellars.

still frozen. Many wineries, such as Standing Stone Vineyards (9934 New York 414, Hector), skirt the process by commercially freezing the grapes and/or keeping them frozen artificially after picking. Whether done naturally or artificially, the freezing process concentrates the grapes' sugars—Standing Stone's Vidal Ice, called "a knockout" by Wine Spectator, smells like something you could pour on waffles.

Drinkers and non-drinkers alike can enjoy another specialty of the region—grape pie. Stonecat Cafe (5315 New York 414, Hector) offers a variant—grape cream pie—which the waitress says tastes like a grape-flavored creamsicle. Just south of the cafe on New York 414, Skyland Farm, a craft store and cafe, sells a more classic version made with jam-like filling and a double crust. Visitors here can also try 30-some flavors of gelato such as rose petal, hazelnut biscotti and apricot chardonnay. The store features the work of more than 300 local artists, who create everything from beach-glass jewelry to airplanes made out of wooden rocking horses; there's also a cutting garden out front for make-your-own bouquets, and a few sheep and goats to feed out back. Sound too playful for wine sophisticates? Owner Barb Hummel has a theory about that: "People can only do, like, three wineries at a time. They come here to have fun."

Another nearby thrill: the Corning Museum of Glass (1 Museum Way, Corning), where the \$12 admission fee entitles you to readmission for the rest of the year. Check out the German

drinking-game glasses, meant to be filled and passed around. Each player was supposed to drink only to the next horizontal line marked on the glass; if you overshot the mark, you had to keep drinking. For an extra charge, visitors can make their own glass ornaments, bottles, flowers or beads under the supervision of a resident glassblower. Good thing the museum isn't on the wine trail itself, with all the molten glass around, this is one activity you need to do stone-cold sober.

**Best budget tip:** From Jan. 14 to 22, many Seneca Lake wineries will participate in "Bargain Bash," a time when visitors can stock up on wines with damaged labels and other flaws that don't affect taste or quality. Sign up at [www.senecalakewine.com](http://www.senecalakewine.com) for free e-mail newsletter.

**Best splurge:** Not a newbie? Or just want to bring your oenophile friends a bottle of something impressive? Fox Run is known for its \$45 tawny port, a sweet, very alcoholic wine that Bell describes as "a finely nuanced and exquisitely balanced fortified wine, with aromas of dried fruit, mocha, toffee and roasted nuts." (He adds: "Whenever it runs out, people start crabbing.")

**More, more, more:** The first thing to get is a Seneca Lake Wine Trail map, available at just about any area winery or by contacting the Seneca Lake Winery Association (877-536-2717). The particularly ambitious can also hit the wine trails on nearby Keuka Lake and Cayuga Lake. For info on all three trails: [www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com](http://www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com).

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