



Adventures on the Wine Route: A Wine Buyer's Tour of France

Kermit Lynch

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When *Adventures on the Wine Route* was first published, Victor Hazan said, “In Kermit Lynch’s small, true, delightful book there is more understanding about what wine really is than in everything else I have read.” A quarter century later, this remarkable journey of wine, travel, and taste remains an essential volume for wine lovers. In 2007, Eric Asimov, in *The New York Times*, called it “one of the finest American books on wine,” and in 2012, *The Wall Street Journal* proclaimed that it “may be the best book on the wine business.” In celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary, *Adventures on the Wine Route* has been thoroughly redesigned and updated with an epilogue and a list of the great wine connoisseur’s twenty-five most memorable bottles.

In this singular tour along the French wine route, Lynch ventures forth to find the very essence of the wine world. In doing so, he never shies away from the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that have made him one of our most respected and outspoken authorities on wine. Yet his guiding philosophy is exquisitely simple. As he writes in the introduction, “Wine is, above all, about pleasure. Those who make it ponderous make it dull . . . If you keep an open mind and take each wine on its own terms, there is a world of magic to discover.” *Adventures on the Wine Route* is the ultimate quest for this magic via France’s most distinguished vineyards and wine cellars. Lynch draws vivid portraits of vintners—from inebriated *négociants* to a man who oversees a vineyard that has been in his family for five hundred years—and memorably evokes the countryside at every turn. “The French,” Lynch writes, “with their aristocratic heritage, their experience and tradition, approach wine from another point of view . . . and one cannot appreciate French wine with any depth of understanding without knowing how the French themselves look at their wines, by going to the source, descending into their cold, humid cellars, tasting with them, and listening to the language they employ to describe their wines.”

Here, Kermit Lynch assures a whole new generation of readers—as well as his loyal fans—that discussions about wine need not focus so stringently on “the pH, the oak, the body, the finish,” but rather on the “gaiety” of the way “the tart fruit perfume[s] the palate and the brain.”

Adventures on the Wine Route: A Wine Buyer's Tour of France Details

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Author : Kermit Lynch

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Terrance Gelenter says

You only need one book about French wine and this is it.

Glenn says

I had high hopes for this book - a favorite topic, region, and person from my time in Berkeley.

However, it was written in the 1970s and so a lot of the experiences feel dated (e.g., cracking open a 1950 bottle of whatever seemed like no big deal, but today that seems exotic / rotten).

Also, it is a lot more fun to talk about wine when drinking wine, rather than read about someone else drinking wine (often too much).

Book totally lacks pictures, charts, or maps, which would have been useful.

Kermit's thesis is that buying from small growers is best, and refrigerating upon delivery. Also, the year doesn't matter as much as the approach or conditions at that particular winery. And then he repeats ad nauseum.

Patrick says

Kermits Adventures on the Wine Route is such an enjoyable escapade that I was ready to pack my bags and follow his route. I've since discovered that he has a minor update to the book that I'd love to read and then probably reread this. Many of the expressions he looks for in wine are also what I thoroughly enjoy, so this story has given me many great producers to check out. It also ignited an interest in French wine. I'm madly passionate about Italian vino and there is something about French wine that has never quite captivated me. Perhaps it's the commercial aspect of it. I tend to follow the underdog and stray from the popular however thanks to Kermit I've managed to discover some new favourites.

Adventures on the Wine Route was a page turner for me and I couldn't put it down. I was "lost in France" for duration of his story telling and can't wait to go back.

Mike Blick says

This was a interesting but slightly dated way to learn about most of important French wine regions. I enjoyed it.

Amanda says

Many stories about discovering that small French restaurants don't always take AmEx...

Leacafe says

If you would like to know more about the culture of wine. This book takes you on a journey in France and its wine making regions. As a French-born person I was amazed by how knowledgeable the author Kermit Lynch is about my own country. The Chapters on the Loire Valley and on the South of France might have been my favorites!

Courtney says

I don't think I would have enjoyed this book nearly as much were I not already quite familiar with the wines and wine regions of France, and the wine industry in general. When he tells about drinking a Vouvray from the 40s, my mouth watered. When he tells about his first meeting with the Bruniers, I thought of the several bottles of Vieux Telegraphe I've been lucky enough to have drunk, and the wine grew even richer in my memory.

However, even if you are not a seasoned wino, the many annecdotes about the people he encounteres on his wine tours and little nuggets of French culture in general are very delightful. His descriptions of cuisine are wonderful, as are those of the landscapes.

It's also an interesting read for anyone interested in the evils of globalization and corporate take-overs; many of the passionate pleas that Lynch makes herewithin resonate highly with the anti-establishment of the wine industry (such as myself): the sterilization and homogenization of regional wines in the hopes of appealing to a global market, the evils of wine "scores" and "blind tastings," and the struggles of small wine merchants to keep up with huge banking corporations who can afford to pay more for a prized winemaker's juice. These points of contention were most recently (and quite forcefully) reiterated by the film *Mondovino*, but are done so much more eloquently, and in my opinion, effectively, here by Lynch.

Although the book is technically "out of date" for the current wine market, most of it holds up very well. In fact, trends Lynch sees in the mid-late 80s the beginnings of trends which only continued to become more prevalent, giving this book an almost prophetic feel. The principles he espouses are as worth pursuing and fighting for now as they were then.

If you enjoy this book, I must highly recommend the wine writing of Terry Theise: in the same vein, but Theise is like the Keith Richards to Lynch's Mick Jagger: not so in the spotlight, but possibly even more rock n roll in many ways. <http://www.skurnikwines.com/msw/terry...>

Kermit Lynch was an innovator of importing wine, and remains a savior of sorts. Above all, he is an example to anyone with a passion to pursue their passions.

Joel says

a great book. Its all at the same time a look at France, a look at wine as a part of eating well, and a look at what is done to wine in the name of profit. If you care about good wine, read this.

DanielG says

Almost the whole book can be summarised as follows:

Wine Makers who agree with Mr. Lynch make good wines and make wine the old way (without filtration, chaptalization etc...) make good wines, the ones who use modern methods make "plonk".

Nevertheless 4 Stars because Mr. Lynch is an excellent writer.

Paul E says

Very interesting tour of the wine regions of France. Kermit provides an insiders view like none other I have read. His stories are interesting, funny, and colorful. While some what dated, it is still a great read.

Dvora says

I always thought there was more to the appreciation of wine than what I knew (either I like it or I don't). This book didn't teach me how to appreciate it more, but it taught me that I had a lot to learn and that if I did learn, it would give me great pleasure. Anyway, I'm from Berkeley and had shopped a couple of times in the author's wineshop (years before I read the book).

Mel says

Lately, reading about food and wine has been putting me in a happy place. This book is from the late 80s so some of the info in it is probably outdated, but that doesn't take away from how delightful this is to read.

This was such a good book and it didn't hit you over the head with tons of wine terminology etc. that just can become so boring and not enjoyable at all. It just let you learn about it all through a great travel/memoir type book about his journeys buying wine in France and all of the interesting people he encounters trying to buy wine for his shop in Berkley and what an innovator he was in the wine world. If you are into wine and into France or even if you are just into France or just into wine, this book is a fun read. I enjoyed it a lot. 5 stars and best reads pile. I also must add that I had the pleasure of drinking one the wines that he imported the other day at dinner. I ordered it not knowing he was the importer and when I looked at the back of the wine, there was his name, what a pleasant surprise, and it was a really great bottle of wine. So there's that too.

Andrew Schirmer says

At a recent wine tasting we were comparing notes on the bottlings we liked best--can there be any surprise they were all Kermit Lynch imports, including one from his touchstone producer, Domaine Tempier? These wines all embodied a certain kind of honesty, integrity, and truth to form, especially the Tempier. Indeed, it is the philosophy of Tempier--hard work, graciousness, respect for tradition, and innovation that is at the heart of this wonderful, wonderful book.

"Adventures on the Wine Route" is not a rose-tinted look at France and its wine producers--Kermit is extremely critical of many things, and it is a testament to his writing ability that the reader hangs on every word, cringing along with him when he goes to Chablis, or witnesses a favored producer cut corners in the name of "progress". Though it is tempting to view the book as an anti-globalization tract *avant la lettre*, it is really much more than that; Lynch has spent forty years importing French and Italian wines into the heart of California wine country, he is hardly an *anti-mondialiste*! What he does do is advocate passionately for natural wines, made true to their conditions, their terroir. This book was published in 1988; many of the devastating trends that Kermit was witnessing at that time have continued in their course. At the same time, however, the "natural wine" movement has entered the mainstream and continues to grow and find advocates. Thus, the dated quality of some of the observations and remarks only serves to add power to their prescience. Did I mention the characters? This book is packed with memorable figures from all over the hexagon, such as you can only meet in France; passionate, crotchety, gracious, conniving, brilliant...they live on in the reader's mind, long after the book has been closed

If you'll forgive the egregious insertion of a literary reference, allow me to posit that Kermit's wine philosophy contains something of Hemingway's remark about writing "one true sentence"; the producers he favors write "the truest sentence" they know. And unlike many of Papa's writings, they are always worth reading.

Rob says

A significant book for me being the first wine book I had ever read over 10 years ago right as I earnestly decided to embark on a hopeful career in the wine industry. I never thought that I would visit some of those unrecognizable (to me then) French villages and become so mad about French wine from then on.

Melissa says

This a book for those who love wine and like to read about it from someone who is a master with prose, and also someone who, like me, confuses my limited knowledge of French language, geography, and wine growing regions. Written in the late-1980s, Kermit Lynch does not delve into pretentious, uppity musings on elite wines, but focuses on the purity of how a sense of place and its people translates into its wine. (There's a fabulous passage about how the male winemaker's wine often reflects the temperament and demeanor of his wife.) Even twenty years ago, he bemoans how winemakers feel obligated to respond to the fads of the wine market rather than staying true to what works for their land, vines, and all that is naturally available to them. Each chapter of the book features a different growing region in France, and Lynch does well to help convey

the weather, terrain, cultural differences, and people in every place. A great read for those who like to read about wine and wouldn't mind a little French socio-geography lesson in the meantime.
