



The Rioja In Winter

What to do with 3 days in the Rioja from late January to early March. Culture, Wine and Gastronomy at its best!

If you are arriving to the Rioja from Bilbao, you will have sufficient time your first day to visit two premium wineries (bodegas), with wine tastings, before sitting down to lunch.

If you will be arriving from San Sebastián-Donostia, then plan on leaving early in the morning if you want to visit a couple of wineries before having lunch.

The Rioja is stunningly beautiful even in the dead of winter. A land of atmospheric fortress towns with medieval walls, the Rioja is filled with Noble homes with heraldic shields, charming family run country inns and rural hotels, Gothic churches and Renaissance Monasteries, dólmenes (ancient burial markers), vibrant boutique wineries, and award winning restaurants serving superb regional Riojan and Basque cuisine.

There are now more than 600 wineries in the three distinct sub zones of the Rioja wine region; the Alta, Baja and Alavesa, and Haro's Barrio de la Estación is the only place in the world where you can find five major wineries dating back more than 100 years within easy walking distance of each other.

The following are some of our favorite stops during late winter, or most any other time of the year.

Bodegas Gómez Cruzado

After breakfast you can start your wine tourism in Haro's Barrio de la Estación with a visit to the family owned cellars of **Gómez Cruzado**, which dates from 1886 when the nobleman Ángel Gómez de Arteche decided to start bottling his own wine in Haro. This small boutique winery has an annual production of less than 200,000 bottles. Its outstanding Pancrudo wine is made from handpicked 100% Garnacha grapes from vines over 70 years old.

The 1-1/2 hour private premium tastings are available Monday-Friday upon request only, with a maximum group of 8. The standard 1-hour tour and tasting is available daily at noon, plus Saturday mornings at 10:30. Reservations are required.

You can also enjoy a tasting in their Barrel Room Monday-Sunday without a tour, reservations not required.

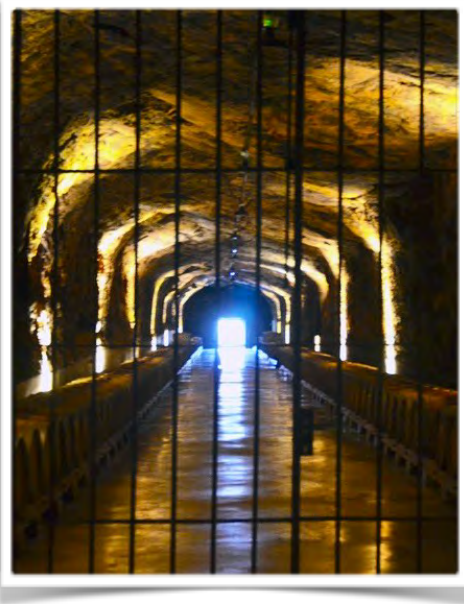
Bodegas Roda

Across the street from Bodegas Gómez Cruzado you'll find Roda, where you can do a tasting of its premium wines and tour the 19th wine cellar located just off its wine bar. The wine bar is open Monday-Saturday from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. On Sundays it's open from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.

If you want to do a 2-hour premium tasting, with a tasting of 4 wines, tours are available Monday-Saturday at 10:00 am and noon, reservations required with a minimum of 2, maximum of 18. The price is 50€/person.

Exclusive private tours are available through [Iberian Traveler](#).

The standard visit, with a tasting of 2 wines, is available Monday to Saturday at 10:00 am and noon, and costs 10€. Reservations are required.



The 7th edition of the Haro Wine Carnival takes place on Friday and Saturday, the 5th and 6th of February, and will be inspired by Bacchus, the God of the Wine.



Bodegas La Rioja Alta

Also found in the Barrio de la Estación, this winery dating from 1890 offers an unforgettable experience with a 2-hour premium tour available Monday-Friday beginning at 10:00 am (in English) and 11:30 am for 30€/person, which includes a tasting of three wines, including their Gran Reserva 904, a snack, and a gift of a half bottle of wine.

Exclusive private guided tours are also available upon request through [Iberian Traveler](#).

The standard 1-1/2 hour tours on Saturday (10:45 am, 11:30 and 12:15) and Sunday (noon), include with a tasting of three wines, including the Gran Reserva 904, and costs 15€. Reservations required.

If you do not want to tour the winery, you can stop in the shop and taste wines by the glass Monday-Friday from 9:00 am to 6:30 pm, Saturdays from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, and on Sundays from 20 March to 17 December from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm, except during August.



Torre de Oña



This impressive wine estate in the village of Párganos-Laguardia (Álava), is in the area referred to as the “Golden Mile” of the Rioja Alavesa, and is a member of the Grupo La Rioja Alta. Their Torre de Oña Reserva 2010, a blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Mazuelo, is aged for 20 months in French oak, and racked three times.

Tours are available from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday-Friday and at 11:30 am on Saturdays for 10€. Reservations required.

Premium visits are available upon request and begin at 11:00 am, with a maximum group of 12. The 2-hour visit includes a walk through the vineyards and tour of the winery, followed by a tasting of three wines in the wine bar and costs 25€.

Special private tours are available upon request through [Iberian Traveler](#).

The Torre de Oña Shop, in the reception area, has a wine tasting area open to visitors to sample the wines from Torre de Oña, Áster and Lagar de Cervera wineries without taking the tour.

Private dining is available for groups of up to 22 guests, minimum of 6, and is available Monday to Friday from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm. The set (seasonal) menu is 48€/person.

Torre de Oña's **Casa-Palacio**, located in the center of the estate, is available for up to 10 people in one group (5 double rooms), with a minimum reservation of three rooms. Reservations include dinner each night, daily breakfast and a selection of complimentary wines during your stay.

The Casa-Palacio is a short 20-minute walk from the medieval village of Laguardia, and makes a perfect base for visiting the Rioja.

The second “[La Cata del Barrio de la Estación](#)” will be celebrated this year from September 17th through the 19th.



Bodegas Ostatu

Generations of the Sáenz de Samaniego family have worked the vineyards in the Rioja and in the late 1960s decided to market their own wines, opening a new vineyard in the small village of Samaniego, on the road from Laguardia to Vitoria. Today, in the microclimate of the Rioja Alavesa, the family produces a selection of excellent wines, including Gloria de Ostatu and Laderas de Ostatu, and have produced the first Eusko labeled olive oil.

You can tour the vineyards, visit the winery and discover the wine making process, or taste the wines in the shop, or have Iberian Traveler arrange a private tour with lunch and a wine paring.



Marqués de Murrieta



Reopened after an extensive 8-year renovation, this 300-hectare estate is one of the oldest and most impressive family run wine estates in Spain, and dates from 1852, when Luciano Murrieta y García-Lemoine produced the first wine from the Rioja and was the first to export Riojan wines. Located in the south of the Rioja Alta, it produces an outstanding selection of premium reds from its tempranillo, garnacha, mazuelo, graciano and cabernet sauvignon grapes, and white wines from the viura grape, and was named by Wine Spectator in October 2015 as one of the best wineries in the world.

Reservations are required to visit the Ygay Castle and winery. Private visits can be arranged through [Iberian Traveler](#).

