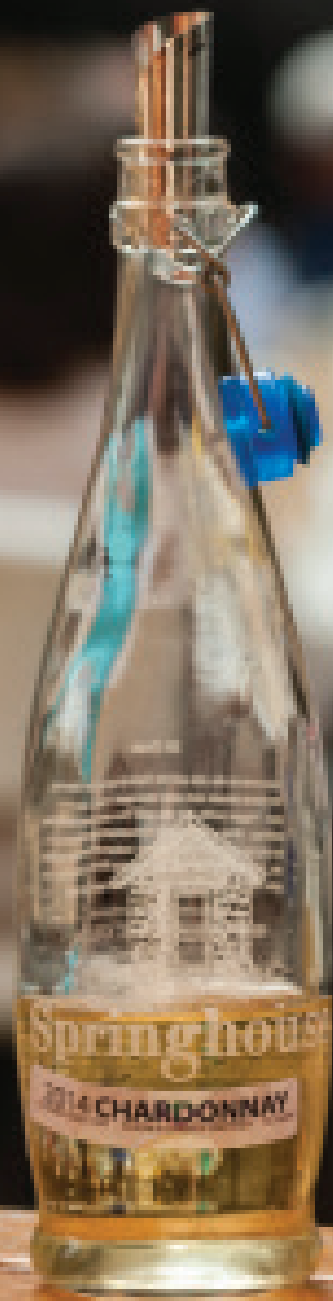


# IN THE GRIP OF THE GRAPE

A EUROPEAN-STYLE WINE CRUISE CLOSE TO HOME IN PORTLAND

BY SUZANNE MORPHET PHOTOS BY RICK DUVAL



Chardonnay from Springhouse Cellar, one of the first stops on the Un-Cruise Adventures wine tour.

**O**N A RECENT WINE CRUISE I learned a few surprising things: a higher alcohol content doesn't make better wine; the smaller the grape, the more concentrated the flavour; and most importantly, you needn't go to Europe for a river cruise that takes in award-winning wineries, spectacular vistas and rich history.

In fact, you need go no further than Portland, Oregon. That's where Un-Cruise Adventures has launched its new wine-focused cruise that takes in four rivers, nine wineries and countless moments of swirling and sipping, both on board and off.

Our home for the week is a replica coastal steamer — the SS Legacy — similar to the ships that plied the Columbia River from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. It's casual yet elegant, with lots of wooden cabinetry and turn-of-the-century décor. The ship can accommodate 88 passengers, but on this cruise, there are just 63. (A couple from the San Juan Islands occupy the spacious Owner's Suite on the top deck and over the course of the week, they reveal they won a \$217 million lottery in 2013.)

Leaving Portland, we waste no time getting down to the business of pleasure. While our ship waits for us near The Bridge of the Gods on the Columbia River Gorge, we visit three wineries our first day — two in Oregon and one in Washington.

"What's unique about the gorge is the variation in climate, altitude, aspect and soil," explains Carey Kienitz, the winemaker

at Springhouse Cellar, as we taste a flight of his whites and reds amid the Romanesque ruins of this former pear cannery and distillery.

The gorge may still be better known for apples and pears than grapes, but wineries now abound — more than three dozen dot this eye-catching canyon.

Further up the road and set among acres of orchards, Mt. Hood Winery epitomizes this burgeoning industry, where small

"PAST WALLA WALLA, THE LANDSCAPE CHANGES TO ARID PLATEAUS, DEEP-SIDED CANYONS AND BASALT ROCK FORMATIONS THAT ARE BLACKER THAN THE BLACKENED SCALLOPS WE ENJOY FOR DINNER ONE NIGHT."



## THE OLYMPIANS OF BEAR MOUNTAIN.

Join us on March 5th, as Bear Mountain hosts Cycling Canada's Road to Rio Fundraising Gala in support of our future Olympians. Proceeds will go to Cycling Canada's National Mountain Bike Team Program. With the new training centre for Cycling Canada's Mountain Bike team, as well as being the site of this year's first Canada Cup, Bear Mountain has completely redesigned the cycling experience and is committed to connecting visitors and residents alike.

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“ARRIVING AT ANICHE CELLARS, WHERE THE ALL-FEMALE WINEMAKING TEAM MAKES WINES IN A FORMER HORSE STABLE, WE SIT WITHIN EARSHOT OF CLUCKING CHICKENS AND SAVOUR CRISP WHITE AND COMPLEX RED BLENDS.”



Replica coastal steamer SS Legacy underway on a wine cruise on the Columbia River.

PHOTO BY PETER WEST CAREY



At our final wine tasting at The Wine Shack at Cannon Beach on the Pacific Coast, Julie throws up her hands. “Who cares anyway?” she asks peevishly.

I laugh and buy a bottle to take home. I may not know a Merlot from a Malbec, but I know a good cruise when I’ve had one, and this one has been – as Steve would say – “spectacular.”

**IF YOU GO:**

- Un-Cruise Adventures offers its wine cruise — *Ameritage! Four Rivers of Wine & History* again starting April 16. All-inclusive rates begin at US\$3,995 per person: [uncruise.com](http://uncruise.com)
- **GETTING TO PORTLAND:** We took the Clipper ferry to Seattle and then continued by train. The amount of marble and decorative detail in the recently restored Seattle train station is astonishing. The Amtrak train is comfortable and food is available, but there’s no dining car.
- **STAY IN PORTLAND:** The Heathman is a historic boutique hotel in the heart of downtown: [portland.heathmanhotel.com](http://portland.heathmanhotel.com)

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