

Traverse City, Michigan

You might not imagine this at first blush, that this northern area of the United States could have the right combination of climate, topography and soil – a terroir, as the French say. Strangely enough, it's this “northern-ness” that makes wine from this region remarkably tasty. The region's warm days and cool nights gently balance the acids in the grapes and prevent the vines from metabolizing the sugars they are busy making in the daytime, which makes the grapes sweeter and more flavorful than they would be if grown farther south. Add good food to the good grapes and Michigan becomes a great area for pilots to explore!

Prime Wineries

Brys Estate Vineyard and Winery. It's a small, family-owned boutique winery whose vineyards are the source of great pinot blancs, pinot gris, gewurztraminer, riesling, chardonnay and merlot. BrysEstate.com,

Chateau Grand Traverse. It has spectacular views, wines and atmosphere to match in their large tasting room. This winery is also well noted for its Rieslings and Chardonnays (both barrel-fermented and “unwooded”). CGTWines.com.

Where to Land

Cherry Capital Airport (TVC), 231.947.2250.

Where to Stay

Grand Traverse Resort & Spa, 800.236.1577.

Prime Dining

AERIE RESTAURANT-LOUNGE. It's on the 16th floor of the Tower at Grand Traverse Resort and Spa. Diners are mesmerized by a panoramic view of northern Michigan, including breathtaking views of Grand Traverse Bay and the verdant, rolling golf courses surrounding the resort. Try the Grilled Venison Loin with hazelnut barley, risotto and blackberry zinfandel sauce. 231.534.6000.

AMICAL. It draws patrons who come just for the dessert menu! They also serve some of the area's freshest salads, pasta, lamb and salmon. There's a fireplace on the patio. Read over Amical's wine list and prepare to enjoy it all. 231.941.8888.

SAMUEL'S. It is one of the best-kept secrets in all of the Midwest. Meals are made from scratch and use remarkably fresh local ingredients. Enjoy the fresh baked bread and roasted garlic while they prepare your encrusted trout served with fresh corn cut from the cob and candied yams. 231.271.6222.

America's wine successes also have a few 'secret spots,' like this area around Traverse City, Michigan.

