



Mornington Peninsula:

Our Region

Surrounded by Bass Strait, Port Phillip Bay, and Western Port Bay, the Mornington Peninsula is one of Australia's only true maritime wine regions. Situated on the south-east coast of Australia around latitude 38°, it is also classified as a cool climate region. The maritime influence means the risk of spring frost is very low, so early-ripening varieties flourish in the mild summer & autumn, producing grapes with outstanding fruit flavour, high natural acidity, and fine tannins.

The Mornington Peninsula has traditionally been Melbourne's summer playground - with its endless ocean beaches, and contrasting sheltered bay beaches. There is a boundless choice of aquatic activities for visitors to the area; dolphin swims, surf lessons, scuba diving, and sailing to be enjoyed. As well as sophisticated garden mazes, luxury hot springs, and a wide choice of high quality accommodation, the Mornington Peninsula now boasts great food to complement the growing reputation of the wine region. With many winery restaurants utilising the superb locally-grown produce, as well as offerings at a string of farmers' markets, cafés and restaurants, the region is rightly viewed as a mecca for food and wine.

Wineries have created a range of cellar door experiences to complement their wines; Montalto Vineyard & Olive Grove with a popular sculpture walk, Port Phillip Estate with its iconic architecture, intimate tastings at tiny producers like Quealy Wines and Polperro, and the luxury Jackalope Hotel at Willow Creek Vineyard.

45 Years Under Vine

There was an embryonic wine industry on the Mornington Peninsula as far back as 1886, when a wine from Dromana won an honourable mention in the Intercontinental Exhibition, and in 1891, 14 Peninsula grape growers were mentioned in a Royal Commission into the Fruit and Vegetable Industry. By the 1920s most vineyards had been uprooted or abandoned, with the last of these, operated by Seppelt and Seabrook destroyed by fire in 1967.

The modern wine industry began in 1972, when Baillieu Myer planted Elgee Park Vineyard in Merricks North, with a goal of producing high quality, cool climate wines like those of the great wine regions of France. Soon after, Nat and Rosalie White planted the first Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vines and built the Peninsula's first winery at Main Ridge Estate. They also had the council regulations changed to allow cellar door sales. These pioneers were rapidly joined by others, including Merricks Estate, Stonier Wines and Elan in the 1970s, then Dromana Estate, Moorooduc Estate and Paringa Estate in the early 1980s. The Mornington Peninsula Vignerons' Association was formed in 1982.

The late 80s and right through the 1990s vineyards continued to be planted, and exciting producers like Kooyong, Ten Minutes by Tractor, Montalto and Yabby Lake Vineyard became additional regional drawcards. There is now around 1000 hectares of vineyard planted in the region. Over 50% of the plantings in the region are Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay, 11% Pinot Gris/Grigio, and a diverse range of other varieties, with Shiraz being the most significant of these.

Terroir at a Glance

Our logo highlights the topography of the region, with the ridges and undulating landscape resulting from volcanic activity 60 million years ago, followed by uplift through faulting in the last 15 million years. The ancient soils vary from sedimentary sands to volcanic red clay. Vineyard altitudes range from 40-250 metres, with warm sandy slopes in the north and west, to deep clay soils in the sheltered sites along the ridges.

Despite being a small region by area, the meso-climates vary as significantly as the altitude, aspect, and exposure to prevailing breezes significantly affects each vineyard site. Heat summation for the growing season varies from 1080 heat degree days (HDD) near Main Ridge, to 1240 HDD at Dromana, and as high as 1451 HDD in Mornington. This heat is very evenly accumulated, as the peak temperatures are moderated by the sea, so the mean temperatures in January, February and March are 19.2°C, 19.4°C, and 18.1°C respectively. By April the mean is down to 15.1°C, but can often still provide sufficient 'Indian summer' conditions to finish ripening later varieties such as Shiraz.

The differing sites, soils and mesoclimates, combined with over 40 years of experience of the growers, are what give the region its reputation for, particularly, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. These varieties are especially reflective of their site, and the wines now show both a recognisable regional stamp, but even more importantly, they have recognisable vineyard character. Visitors to the region discover beautiful wines that are as varied and alluring as our landscape, but also come to know the personalities, dedication and passion of the people that grow and make them.

Projects and Research

The MPVA is at the vanguard of industry-led technical developments for the varieties in which the region specialises.

In 2012 local producers established seven weather stations strategically placed throughout the region to provide real-time access to weather data to all members to assist with preventative spray programs, and greater understanding of regional climate variability.

Pinot Noir benchmarking for individual blocks was initiated in 2005, and is an ongoing project, to understand how the site, soil, climate and vineyard and winemaking practices affect the finished wine from vintage to vintage. This has also led to a cooperative Pinot Noir Project that aimed at standardising the winemaking practice to more clearly compare the individual site characters.

A program a farm water analyses involving around 20 growers continues to provide greater understanding of environmental and cultural practices and their impact on the surface water of the region.

A major trial of phylloxera resistant rootstock and their viticultural and oenological impact on MV6 clone Pinot Noir has recently been established, and will benefit not only the Mornington Peninsula growers, but the broader Pinot Noir brethren.

Events and Occasions

As a region, we aim to bring the stories of our vineyards and wines to both consumers and the wine trade through a variety of events and festivities.

Mornington Peninsula International Pinot Noir Celebration is held biennially in February – the next in 2019 – where Pinot Noir from around the world is tasted by Australian and international media, trade, producers, and of course, consumers, during two days of serious fun!

Mornington Peninsula Piers & Pinots is held during the Labour Day long weekend in March each year – around 20 vigneron showcase Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris in an intimate setting by the beach at Flinders Yacht Club.

Winter Wine Weekend is held during the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June annually – around 50 wineries exhibit under one roof to launch the event which flows throughout the weekend at cellar doors.

Mornington Peninsula Winery Walk is held every May as part of *Aussie Wine Month* – local vigneron and friends celebrate the end of harvest tasting a variety of wines along a 10 kilometre, beautiful, meandering historical rail track in the heart of the region.

The MPVA Wine Show is held in October and aims to support excellence in the local wine industry. Local producers can receive valuable feedback from a panel of judges and build wine quality each year, to achieve consistently high quality regional wines. This is embodied in the top awards for Provenance, showing 3 vintages of a single wine to demonstrate vineyard character, quality and consistency.

Mornington Peninsula Roadshows are held in in capital cities, usually each year, with the next in Sydney, but also major cities in Asia and London in 2018, where 12 wineries will showcase the region to international trade and media in a unique and dedicated tasting.

The inaugural Australian Pinot Noir Challenge was held in August 2017. The Challenge is open to all Australian Pinot Noir producers, with judging held on the Mornington Peninsula. The aim of the APNC is to showcase the depth and breadth of Australian Pinot Noir regions, sites and styles, and recognise the country's best examples each year.

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