



St. David's Bench

Wineries to visit: *Château des Charmes, Colaneri Estate Winery, Maleta Estate Winery, Niagara College Teaching Winery and Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery*

The Niagara Escarpment is a rocky ridge that cuts through the landscape of southern Ontario from Queenston to Tobermory. Nature lovers and hikers can access this diverse ecosystem and get up close to the varied flora and fauna via the Bruce Trail. The wineries in this terroir sit on a natural plateau called St. David's Bench. The topography in this area was carved out by ancient glaciers to form a natural bench below the Niagara Escarpment. The region follows along the Niagara Escarpment from the Niagara River to Beechwood Road. Vineyards are planted on the gentle slopes to allow for good drainage in the silty clay soils. The Escarpment location helps the vineyards warm early in the spring and provides frost protection throughout the cold months. Throughout the growing season vineyards located in the upper bench receive steady moisture from the abundant ground water.

It's impossible to miss **Château des Charmes**, a magnificent winery that combines the stateliness of a French château with the New World charm of a historic hotel. It's a grand statement by visionary pioneer and founder Paul Bosc Sr., who was among the first to plant vinifera grapes in the late 1970s and was instrumental in transforming Niagara's wine industry. Step through the doors to an inviting and friendly space and try the wines that have established its long held reputation for excellence.

Located in the heart of the St. David's Bench sub-appellation, **Colaneri Estate Winery** is a grand building sprawled out in the lush family vineyards. Built in the Romanesque style, the winery is a large semi-circle, representing a 'C' for the Colaneri name and also to allow guests the finest panoramic view of Niagara-on-the-Lake wine country. Currently Colaneri Estate Winery is offering tastings in the stunning tasting room, which overlooks the winemaking production facility. The intent is for the visitor to observe what goes into the crafting of the very wine they are enjoying.

Maleta Estate Winery's heritage and vineyard make the winery's location ideal as it sits adjacent to what was once the Sunnieholme Winery, founded in 1918. It is on what was probably the site of Niagara's first commercial vineyard, developed in the mid 1800s. The sloping land is situated in one of Niagara's warmer mesoclimates, on what was once the shoreline of an ancient lakebed. The hard Haldimand clay soil was reconditioned with organic materials like straw and horse manure and drained at every other row of vines. The wines made here reflect the rich soils and history of the land they are grown in.

Niagara College Teaching Winery is training the next generation of winemakers and this is the place to sample the award-winning wines crafted by talented newcomers under the tutelage of a master winemaker. Tours will take you through the teaching winery and educational vineyards and you can include a visit to the greenhouse and culinary institute.

Family history, local cuisine and good old fashioned rural hospitality intertwine to make **Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery** an idyllic experience. The hospitality and wine tasting centre is located in the 200-year-old Loyalist Georgian Woodruff House. It is one of Canada's top fifty most architecturally significant ancestral homes. Here you can linger on the porch of the authentically recreated, 1920's Lowrey farm packing shed, home to a delightful bistro featuring wood-fired artisan breads and uncomplicated, delicious country fare.