

Travelling in Priorat country

7 Mar 2005 by JR

Purple pager Jon Hicke of Vancouver has sent the following invaluable guidance:

Following a trip to Spain in sep 04, I finally got around to finishing up some travel tips for visiting Priorat. Your tasting notes on many [2001 Priorats](#) came in very handy. I had cut and pasted the info into my PalmPilot for quick and portable reference for some wine shopping.

Our first stop en route to Gratallops was the tourist bureau in Falset (Oficina de Turismo Falset Avenida Catalunya, nº 6 - 43730 Falset, Tarragona Email: mpi@priorat.altanet.org Tel: + 34 977 831 023). Staff there were extremely helpful with restaurant suggestions, detailed wine maps of the area and listings of wineries open for tours. Visitors to the area should be cautioned however that tours for individuals or groups should be planned well in advance - two days to one week in advance seemed to be the rule.

Practically next door to the tourist office, we came across a more than decent wine shop called Aguilo Vinateria (www.aguilo-prioratwines.com) selling regional wines. In addition to sporting a much larger selection of Priorat wines than [Lavinia's](#) flashy 800 sq m store in Barcelona, the shop sold plenty of wines from neighbouring Montsant as well.

While earlier e-mails to Clos Mogador and Alvaro Palacio had gone unanswered (Priorat seems to somewhat Burgundian for the average wine tourist in this respect), we managed to get a tour of Clos de L'Obac that afternoon, owing to the fact that unbeknown to us we were having lunch in Restaurant Cellers de Gratallops which the producers of Clos de l'Obac, Costers del Siurana (www.costersdelsiurana.com) happened to own. Following a two-hour tour, which included an impressive tasting as well as a visit to the vineyards by jeep, no less, I must say I felt thoroughly honoured by the time and attention given to us by the son of owner Carles Pastrana a mere week before their 2004 harvest.

I can't vouch that Gratallops seemed entirely sleepy [as I have earlier claimed, JR]. There seemed to be new investments by old and new producers either on a quest to maintain high standards or ride the coat-tails of the success and rarity of these DOQ wines. One producer we spoke to lamented the sudden appearance of vines between olive trees on questionable areas as a very obvious attempt to join the party.

Finally, I heartily agree with your reassessment of the [2001 Clos Mogador](#), which we were fortunate enough to order at La Vinateria del Call (C/ Sant Domenech del Call 9 tel 93 302 60 92) in Barcelona. A fine wine to be sure. My only regret is drinking it well before its prime, a common restaurant dilemma you face when only the most recent vintage is on offer, but you know you'll likely never come across the bottle again.

Other references (in Catalan only):

Falset web portal: www.falset.net

Priorat portal: www.priorat.org