



Urla – Discover Tuscan Beauty on the Aegean Coast



Urla, is one of the most talked about places in Turkey in recent years, with the New York Times describing the Urla vineyards, USCA and Urla as one of the 52 destinations that you've got to visit.

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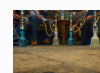
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Urla-Skala – Image by Buse Ünal (Tripsters)

What sets Urla apart from other town on Turkey's Aegean Coast? It lies just a horizon away from Izmir, located 35 kilometres southwest of the major city. Urla lies in an area that produces some of the regions finest wines, with vintage olive groves to garnish the setting and world class farming offering authentic regional fare.

Reorient Your Perspective – Urla's Historic Significance

Historically Urla is one of the 12 cities of ancient Ionia where wine was commercially produced as long ago as the 7th century BCE.

So, perhaps we should speak about Tuscany being the Italian Urla, instead. What's a novel experience and cultural trip without a perspective shake-up?

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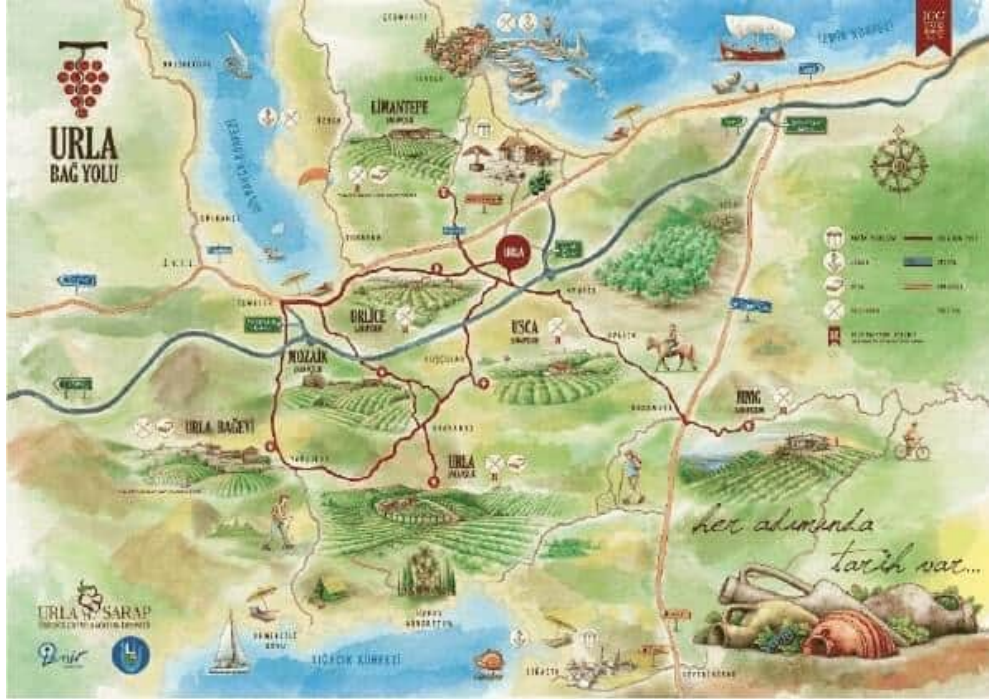
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Urla Wine Route – Map by Urla Bağ Derneği

Wine-making in the peninsula experienced a revival in the last decade. Years of unrest had resulted in many vineyards becoming 'dry', since they were owned by Muslim farmers who grew crops for food rather than wine.

Contemporary Visionaries Reviving Turkey's Wineries

A steady influx of new faces saw the potential in the region, wanted to escape city lives (who doesn't right?) and lead a life living on the land. There are some amongst us who turn dreams into reality – in this case, they transform reality for many.

Travellers such as Bilge and Reha Ögünlü, who were natives, but living in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the time, decided to relocate back to Urla, and take over Bilge's mother's vineyards and start making wine under the name "Urlıçe."



Urlice Vineyard – Image by Buse Ünal (Tripsters)

Can Ortabaş, an Izmir businessman, followed, establishing Urla Wines. He invested in gravity-flow techniques, stainless steel tanks and a combination of American and French oak barrels, introducing a previously unseen level of sophistication in wine-making in the area.





Urla Vineyard – Image by Buse Ünal (Tripsters)

This collective endeavor was not without its naysayers (naysayers do know how to squash a vibe, don't they?). Many said that the strong winds from the sea and hot climate were too much to grow the varieties of grapes required to make the most flavoursome wines, but the keen growers found that the peninsula did, in fact, have a microclimate that resulted in heat during the day and cool conditions in the evening. As it happens, this is ideal for growing the grapes needed for Cabernet Sauvignon, and 'Urla Karası – Noir d'Urla' (a berry-coloured grape known for blending excellently with the Nero d'Avola, one of the most important red wine grapes in Sicily).



USCA Vineyard - Image by Buse Ünal (Tripsters)

Two couples, dentists and lawyers, decided to escape the rat-race and establish their brand, USCA – which is now one of the best known vineyards in the area.

All the growers shared a common goal to revive the ancient vines and to establish the region once again as a premier destination for fine wines. They worked together obtaining permits, sharing tips and experience in order to achieve their dreams. They've formed a collective, making the most of the land that they call home.

Urla – For the Sophisticated Palate and the Refined at Heart

With all of the delicious goods on offer it is no surprise that this area is a hit with travellers, including foodies, chefs, winemakers and lovers of fine wines and the owners of the local vineyards gathered some years ago to form the Urla Wine Route, with new boutique hotels and eateries still popping up along the way making the whole peninsula accessible to those who wish to sample the variety on offer.



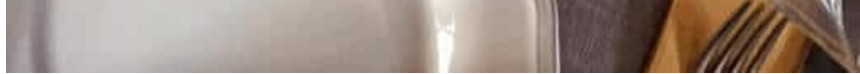
Narimor Boutique Hotel (left) and houses from the Greek era (right) – Images by Buse Ünal (Tripsters)

Aside from spectacular food and wine, the quiet, cultural tour de force that is Urla possesses many cultural highlights and is rich in descendants who have added to Turkey's artistic, literary and musical history. Some include the Nobel Prize winner poet laureate, Yorgo Seferis (Giorgos Seferis), who was born in the İskele (Skala) neighborhood of Urla and Tanju Okan, the heart of Turkish music, who spent his last years in Urla.

Ensnaring the Senses – Taste and So Much More

Whilst the countryside is very reminiscent of the Tuscan hills, Urla is packed with old stone houses, mosques from the 16th century, churches, and traditional Turkish baths in its narrow streets. You'll find a bustling and diverse community, with retired university professors, local artichoke farmers and vineyard owners mixing during early morning fish bazaars at the Skala (İskele). There are many shops offering local produce as well as artisanal crafts and a wide range of cuisine is offered including Turkish, Bosnian, Italian, and Mediterranean – paired, obviously with the region's wines and featuring the local delicacy – the artichoke. The importance of the vegetable has also put the area on the map as host to the International Artichoke Festival. While possibly quite a niche event, we dare say it's not to be missed.





HIC Modern Aegean Cuisine (left) and Vinolocale – Italian (right) – Images by Buse Ünal
(Tripsters)

Experience Unparalleled Magnificence – Your Way

It is a beautiful place to visit, offering something for everyone – foodies, families and those keen to take in Turkey's magnificent history and culture. Urla takes you off what might be called the beaten track, opening your eyes to an Aegean gem that's blossoming in its Mediterranean climate.

Get in touch with us at Tripsters to plan your personalised tour of Urla.



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kris mondy says:

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September 7, 2019 at 7th September, 2019

I am a wine lover and have been travelling to Turkey so many times and I am shocked that I didn't know about Urla and its beauty and even more important about the variety of vineyards and wines... my next destination will be Urla in 2020



Salem says:

Reply

September 10, 2019 at 10th September, 2019

I am a wine lover and have been travelled to Turkey many times over the years and I am shocked that I didn't know about Urla and its beauty and even more importantly about the variety of vineyards and wines... my next destination will be Urla in 2020

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