

How Chile's 'Place of Gold' Became Home to the World's Most Ambitious Wine Retreat

CHILE | WINE | TRAVEL | SUSTAINABILITY

by HANNAH D. COOPER AUG 11, 2025



Alexander and Carrie Vik conducted a two-year science-driven search for the site where they could create the world's finest wine and see out their ambitious architectural dream. It's fair to say the entrepreneurial couple hit the jackpot with their setting in Chile's Millahue Valley, known as the "place of gold" in the Mapuche language. Parceled within the Cachapual Valley, this boutique wine region sits amid the rugged slopes of the Andean foothills and stages Chile's most luxurious hotel.

Although heralded for its avant-garde architecture, high-end accommodations, ultra-premium red blends, and superior gastronomy, VIK Chile Hotel and Winery wants to be remembered for its sustainability. Throughout my stay, team members chipped in with nuggets about radical eco initiatives used by the winery and hotel. It all starts with the grounds: only 808 acres of the 11,000 acres owned by the Viks are reserved for those biodynamic vineyards behind Chile's ultra-premium vintages. The rest of the compound is a natural reserve where native flora and fauna can thrive – and this tells you everything you need to know about the Viks' philosophy.

VIK Retreat: Chile's most luxurious wine hotel



The view from the author's suite, dubbed the Principe Hubertus Suite. Photo: Hannah D. Cooper



The interior of a suite at VIK Chile Hotel and Winery. Photo courtesy VIK Retreats

When VIK Hotel emerged from the hillside above the vineyards, its titanium roof glistened like a droplet of morning dew against the greenery. Twenty-two suites coil around a Zen garden with a pair of bonsai trees, planted as a metaphor for VIK's expression of sculpture, terroir, and balance. Designed by the Uruguayan architect Marcelo Daglio, much of VIK is open to the elements, with window walls immersing you in the scenery from all public areas and the private domains – the Cordillera is just about visible on the horizon. My stay, coinciding with the Southern Hemisphere's winter solstice, was bookended by the kind of sunset and sunrise no photo can do justice to.

All units are individually designed. Allocated the Principe Hubertus Suite, I was told how the decor was inspired by a close friend of the Viks – a Mexican skier from German nobility known for his flamboyant sense of style. The space was suitably eclectic yet utterly comfortable, and I relished a long soak in the lipstick-red tub after a long drive down from Viña del Mar. It was the views that would see me hurrying back; an uninterrupted sweep over the reserve was revealed to me in the morning when I rolled up the garage-style blinds.

Beyond the rooms, the hotel's "living room" is elegantly turned out with pieces from the owners' art collection. On the lower level, you'll find a games room as well as the hotel's infinity pool which drifts above the wilderness.

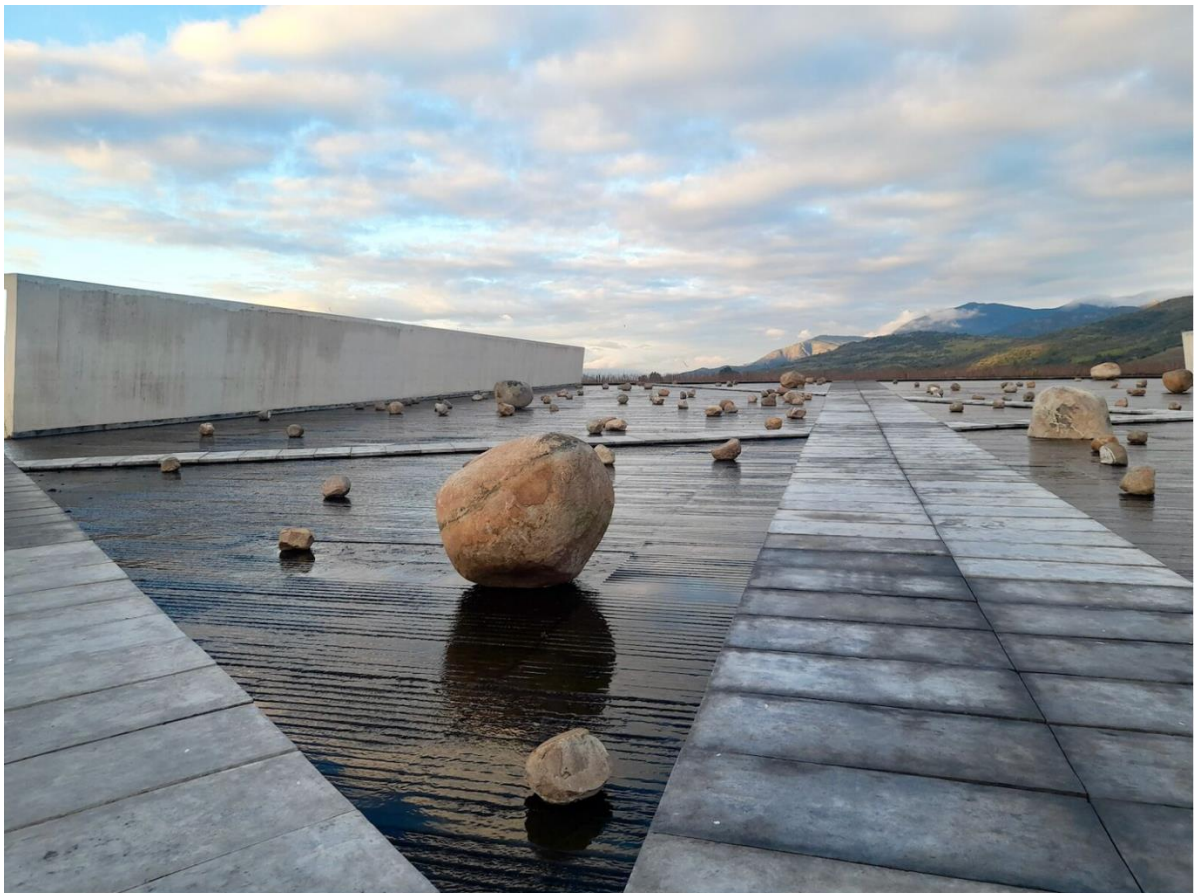
Touring VIK's state-of-the-art sustainable winery

Thorough testing indicated that the Millahue Valley's microclimates and complex soils would support low-intervention, terroir-driven viticulture. Once confirmed, it was over to the Chilean architect Smiljan Radic to create a structure that would turn heads while having minimal impact on the natural habitat. Whereas VIK Retreat floats above the greenery, the winery hovers over a sloped water plaza which doubles as a regulating system for the wine cellars below – thus reducing energy consumption.

My guide went on to explain how VIK is the first and only winery in Chile making its own French oak barrels, consciously sourced from the estate's native trees. Headed up by Cristián Vallejo, the winemaking team even found a use for the shavings produced during planing – smoking charcuterie in the restaurant. The winery also creates its own yeasts from flowers, thus avoiding the need for artificial additives.



Photo courtesy VIK Retreats



Art and architecture highlight a stunning property. Photo: Hannah D. Cooper

Venturing to the tasting room is a thrill; hefty wooden doors slide apart to reveal a shadowy passageway cut into the cellars – it's all very Indiana Jones. Displays illustrate the terroirs of VIK's vineyards with Eduardo Cardozo's eye-catching bronze mural expressing the geology of the grounds. When it was finally time to try the goods, my tasting introduced me to eight vintages across the flagship VIK, A, Milla Calla, and La Piu Belle. Dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon and Carmenère grapes, these potent red blends are high in acidity with tannins balanced by the Andes' influence. The experience was unhurried and my Sommelier shared an endless supply of stories from behind the scenes to help me understand and differentiate between the portfolios.

My tasting culminated with a toast of Chile's only bona fide cuvée. In order to meet appellation standards, VIK's La Piu Belle Champagne is produced, aged, and bottled in Aÿ, France, before being shipped over to savor on the grounds of South America's twice-crowned "Leading Wine Region Hotel."

Farm-to-table gastronomy at VIK Chile



There are three dining destinations at VIK Chile: Milla Milla, VIK Zero, and The Pavilion. I enjoyed a five-course dinner at the hotel restaurant, Milla Milla, which started with an adorable appetizer of sweet baby carrots buried in a ground hazelnut crumble. This was followed by a garlicky ceviche and a main plate of lamb cooked three ways. Naturally, a glass of wine accompanied each serving and my server delighted me with the origins of each dish.

As I learned, the majority of the vegetables, fruits, and botanicals served at Milla Milla come from the property's organic garden. Guests of the hotel are invited on a complimentary tour of the plot, where the emphasis is on sustainable growing methods and sampling the crop. Passing through citrus groves and ducking beneath walnut trees, my guide explained the rotation methodology and how grape pips are used for composting. I was encouraged to graze on tangy sprouts and pluck kale from winter vegetable patches before sitting down to sip the freshest mint tea.

Outdoor activities in Chile's Millahue Valley



Many guests come to VIK purely to taste the wine, drink up the scenery from the pool, and unwind with a treatment at the Wine Spa. For those looking for adventure, there is horseback riding through the vineyards, hiking excursions in the natural reserve, and heliskiing in the Andes. I opted for a horse trek, riding "Gaucho-style" with one hand free to grasp handfuls of grapes from the vines. Mountain bikes are available for exploring the reserve or idling down to VIK Winery. Seeing as it's an uphill journey back, guests can hail a ride in the on-demand jeeps.

Speaking of transport, VIK is a two-hour drive south of Santiago. Located in the O'Higgins Region of Chile, it's a touch further afield than the busier Maipo and Casablanca's wine regions – but utterly worth it for an off-the-beaten-track experience and luxurious vintages. Those looking to make an entrance can inquire about a transfer by private helicopter. 🚁