

The definitive guide to



Bringing your Wine Home



*Y*ou know the scene: you're outside at a small table, glass of wine in your hand. It's a flawless day. From your spot on a gorgeous stone patio, the valley spreads out below you, green and lush with rows and rows of grapes ripening on the vines. A little bit of heaven right there.

You bring the glass to your lips, take a sip, and you know it instantly: this is exactly the wine you've been looking for. You've finally found it. The flavors, the color, the aromas, even the texture – it's perfect.

Now: how do you get it home with you? Is one bottle enough, or are you going to go for a whole case? (I always say: go for the case! Carpe Vinum – Seize the wine!)

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Here's everything you need to know about transporting wine – legally, safely, and affordably.



First, the easiest option: ask the person serving the wine whether it is exported to your home state. If they distribute, get the distributor's name. Then, if you have a good wine contact back home, snap a photo of the wine label and email it to the wine shop you frequent. You never know – they might have it in stock, and you just didn't know it, or they might be able to special order it for you to be ready upon your return.

If you don't have a wine shop in your hometown, a wonderful wine merchant who ships around the United States is [John Allen of Vino-A Wine Shop](#). He is extremely knowledgeable, and if that wine is brought into the US, he will hunt down the distributor and find that bottle for you. Remember: the ability to ship to your home depends entirely on the regulations of your state. You will need to abide by your own state's regulations.

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If there is no distribution to your state and you have to transport the wine yourself, there are a few great options to bring that beloved bottle home with you:

1. **Pack it in your luggage.** You can pack a few bottles in your suitcase, provided it is hard-sided and you pad the bottles well with clothes.

To choose a suitcase that best fits your needs, consider:

- The type of ground you'll be rolling on. Four wheels are great for smooth surfaces, 2 wheels fare better on cobblestones.
- Exterior material. Polyester is cheap and light, but won't last long and definitely won't protect fragile items. Nylon is more durable, but again, won't protect breakable things (like wine bottles, hint hint). Polycarbonate is strong, durable, and won't cave in.
- Size. When it comes to luggage, bigger is not always better. Pack the basics – chances are, wherever you're headed, there will be a place to buy an extra sweater or flip-flops if you need them. Besides being a hassle to haul around, large and heavy suitcases now often go over the weight limit, so you wind up paying extra fees. I recommend keeping your bag to between 24"-27".



Pro-tip: Remember to pack lightly if you plan to transport wine home, as each bottle weighs about 3 pounds.

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2. If you don't want to chance it with glass bottles wrapped in your favorite cashmere sweater, try some expert wine-transporting accessories.



- [Neoprene Two Bottle Wine Protector & Carrier](#) (\$24.99). This is the best I have found for transporting a couple of bottles – affordable, durable, shock-absorbent, and super easy to carry.
- [Wine Cradle](#) (\$15.00USD). If you're sampling in Europe, this product can be delivered directly to your hotel room before you leave! It's compact and re-useable.

- [Styrofoam carriers](#). If you're visiting Australia, you can even pick these up at the post office. Prices vary, but they are cheap and offer a convenient, reliable way to ship home.
- [Wine Check luggage](#) (\$75-130). If you are a true enthusiast who regularly buys and transports many bottles per trip, then this can be an ideal solution. This specialized wine carrier, which features wheels and a handy strap, can carry up to 12-15 bottle of wine in its replaceable polystyrene and cardboard insert. With the bottles packed, the full baggage still meets the airline's check-bag weight limit of 50 pounds. When the insert is removed, it's fold-able, which makes it great for storage, and bringing over for your next wine trip.

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3. **Shipping wine** can save you the trouble of traveling with and carrying wine — but it could take a month or more to be delivered. Your wine will be subject to US taxes and duty.

To give you an example of shipping cost, 12 bottles of wine shipped from Bordeaux to the US costs around \$300.00. So, figure out just how great that wine is, whether you can get it in the states and if so, are you saving enough by purchasing it at the winery and then paying the shipping costs. Sometimes it IS worth it.



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What about security, customs, and duty fees?

US Customs allow one liter per person to enter duty free. After that, you may have to pay duty, which is literally pennies on the bottle.

If you are bringing in a reasonable amount for your own consumption and you declare it on your customs entry form, the likelihood is you probably won't even be assessed any additional duty. But, always be forthright and declare it. If the customs agent does decide to waste the time filling out all the paperwork, duty is generally 3% of value and the IRS excise tax is generally between 21-31 cents per 750ML bottle of wine, 75 cents for Champagne.

The customs website says a “usual amount” will be allowed and that customs officials can determine if it appears the wine is for commercial purpose. I have known of people bringing back over a case and not having to pay any duty but it also depends on the customs agent and the mood. So my recommendation – for this, but also for all of life – is: smile a lot. It'll get you farther than you think.

You may also want to make sure you check with your airline on their regulations regarding wine travel, as some airlines are very strict. Your wine will be assessed at your port of entry, where it will be decided if it is subject to duty and Federal excise taxes.

Pro-Tip: I also highly recommend you familiarize yourself with your own state's regulations. These regulations usually apply to residents of a state, but things always change, so double check the regulations of your port of entry rather than watching your cherished bottles get taken away.

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Bypass the immigration line! You've purchased the correct type of luggage, and you have all your wine bottles safely packed in your suitcase. Now comes the dreaded long immigration and security lines upon re-entry to the United States. Ugh.

If you hate lines as much as I do, I have awesome news for you! Welcome [GLOBAL ENTRY](#), a US Customs and Border Protection program that allows expedited entry to pre-approved, low risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. It involves three fairly painless steps:

1. Fill out a fairly lengthy application
2. pay \$100 and if your application passes the initial phase,
3. Attend an in-person interview screening at a participating airport

If approved, you are granted a Global Entry ID.

At airports, Global Entry participants proceed to special "Global Entry" kiosk, present their machine-readable passport or US permanent resident card, place their fingertips on the scanner for verification, and make a customs declaration. Remember, this is where you need to be truthful about just how much wine you have. The kiosk issues the traveler a transaction receipt and directs the traveler to baggage claim and the exit. Now that makes traveling abroad easy!

In addition, people who are approved via the Global Entry program can also participate in TSA Pre-Check which allows you to skip regular TSA security lines at participating airports and go through an expedited line. This means you don't have to remove shoes, belts, jewelry, open laptops, or do any of the other things that take up time in line. You just breeze on through.

These two programs make traveling through airports so much easier and are well worth the investment.

Pro Tip: If you have the Amex Platinum, Mercedes-Benz Platinum, or Business Platinum (or Centurion) cards, the \$100 fee is refunded to you as a statement credit.

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One last thought on the real value of that bottle of wine

Let's face it: there is the slight chance, once you get that bottle of wine home, that it just won't taste quite the same. After all, sipping it in your kitchen is not quite the same as sipping on a deck in Barossa Valley overlooking the vineyards and kangaroos, or sailing along the Rhone River passing quaint century old villages.

But here's the thing: wine is something to be enjoyed with friends. It's meant to be remembered and appreciated. It's meant to be a full sensory experience – including the amazing memories of your time abroad. Let the flavors and smells bring you back, and remember why you went through the work of hauling it halfway around to the world to enjoy it once again in the comfort of home.

To your great adventures and all the ways you can Carpe Vinum!



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