

Stylish New Chilean Resorts

Closer to Santiago, the Chilean landscape turns Mediterranean, and the climate supports a world-class wine industry. A new resort opened in the Cachapoal Valley in November, and fondly recalling my stay at Lapostolle Residence three years ago, I seized the opportunity to return to the area. A two-and-a-half-hour drive south of Santiago, the titanium-roofed **Viña Vik** cuts a startling profile amid the acres of vineyards and orchards, as though a Frank Gehry-designed flying saucer had landed on a convenient hilltop. The hotel commands panoramas in every direction. We spent happy hours lounging beside the infinity pool and contemplating the valley, which ends in a range of low mountains green with vineyards and acacia trees.

Aside from taking in the views, we spent our time horseback riding through hilly vineyards and along the valley's lake, where we spotted flocks of cranes, ducks and southern lapwings. We also toured the dramatically designed winery, notable for its boulder-strewn roof rippling with water, which keeps the barrel room cool and humidified. It currently makes just one wine from the 1,000 acres of vineyards surrounding the hotel, a rich and well-structured blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenère, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Syrah. This retails for well over \$100, but it is the house red at the resort, poured generously at market-driven lunches and dinners. I considered having a treatment in the five-room spa, but I couldn't resist returning to a pool lounge to read my book and sip a cool glass of single-vineyard Sauvignon Blanc. Mountain biking and hiking are also available.

Museum-quality art can be found throughout the colorful lounges and the 22 accommodations, each of which is decorated in an individual style. Our room, "Chile," came with sisal-covered walls, and doors and a headboard made from cactus wood. The theme continued with cowhide Breuer-inspired chairs, a lenga-wood dresser and a desk lamp made from a Mapuche-style cow udder basket. I loved the freestanding egg-shaped beechwood tub, and even the surprisingly waterproof mud walls of the bath seemed charming. Floor-to-ceiling windows framed

a captivating scene of vineyards and rugged hills, but rooms overlooking the lake such as "Azulejo" and "Minimalist" have even more memorable outlooks. For more space, request Master Suite "Vik," "Fornasetti" or "Gablers Grisaille," which face the pond, or "H," facing the pool and valley. "Shogun" has exquisite Japanese décor but more limited views.

Perhaps because the hotel is so new, we experienced a few problems, notably on arrival. There was no porter, which obliged our driver to carry our bags up steps to the lounge. The young woman at check-in seemed frazzled, and after leading us to our room, she left in a rush without showing us how to operate the remote-controlled drapes or the climate control. We had no choices at lunch or dinner, aside from preferences expressed before we arrived. And the shower, uncontained by any barriers, inevitably covered half the floor with water. We enjoyed ourselves nevertheless, not least because the majority of the staff worked hard to make sure we felt at home. I recommend staying at both Viña Vik, where most of the activities are on-property, and the complementary Lapostolle Residence, which is better located for visiting wineries.

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LIKE The museum-quality contemporary art at every turn; the sensational views; the accommodating staff. **DISLIKE** The rushed welcome; the bath design; the lack of choices at dinner.

GOOD TO KNOW Guests with mobility difficulties will be happier elsewhere; the nearest off-property winery is an 80-minute drive. No television. SUITE, \$1,600. ALL INCLUSIVE: MASTER SUITE, \$2,100. HACIENDA VIK, MILLAHUE S/N, SAN VICENTE DE TAGUA TAGUA. TEL. (56) 9-9534-9437. VIKHOTELS.COM



Pool, "Fornasetti" suite, and winery at Viña Vik
PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARPER

