

EXPLORE | TRAVEL



IN GOOD TASTE

Art lovers and oenophiles find paraíso at Viña Vik, an all-inclusive Chilean wine retreat in South America's best terroir.

By Rima Suqi

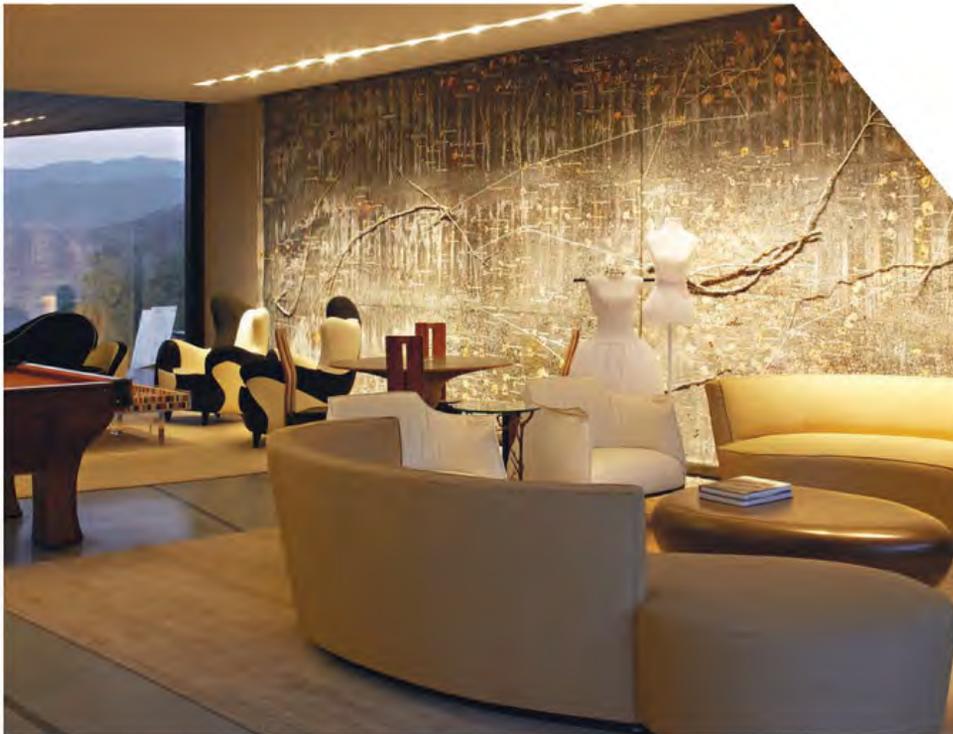
I can't help but feel as if I'm being watched. Perhaps it's the larger-than-life eyes painted on my headboard or the faces fronting every throw pillow in the room. I have only myself to blame. A few weeks before arriving at Viña Vik, a new all-inclusive wine retreat in Millahue, Chile, I was asked if I would rather live in a world styled by Fornasetti or inspired by Hermès. I looked around my apartment—a small stack of iconic orange boxes on a shelf, an À Cheval candle burning on a side table, a Medor watch, but also a 1967 Fornasetti plate commemorating Neiman Marcus' 60th anniversary hanging on one wall, and a Mano tray on another. And on the desk, a pencil cup

by the same illustrious Italian maker. A tough call and a coin flip. Heads. Winner: Fornasetti.

My Viña Vik suite, an homage to Piero Fornasetti, sourced much of its furniture (bedside tables and coffee table), accessories (Adam & Eve plates, aforementioned pillows) and bathroom tiles from the brand. The resort, designed by owners Alex and Carrie Vik, in association with architect Marcelo Daglio, boasts 22 suites, each with a completely different look and theme. It's a design philosophy that extends to every hotel the Viks own (including three luxury properties in Uruguay), making for a singular guest experience.



EYES ON THE PRIZE From top: A Piero Fornasetti-styled suite, which features objects and art closely associated with the designer and the company, exhibits the splendid natural vistas at Viña Vik; the Hermès-inspired suite evokes not only the brand's clean lines but also its stylish equestrian origins.



LOBBY LIFE From top: More communal living room than public space, Viña Vik's lobby is anchored by a Brunswick billiard table, while 360-degree Andes vistas and artworks like an Anselm Kiefer diptych vie for attention; the master bath from the Graffiti suite references wood grain in a boldly deconstructed sense.

...CONTINUED Here, design immersion begins immediately upon entering the hotel's entryway, where one arrives after the two-hour drive from the Santiago airport. The main building, which features a floating, swirly, sculptural, Frank Gehry-inspired bronzed titanium roof, designed by Alex and Carrie and fabricated over the course of two years by a company rumored to have worked on the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, sets the overall tone. I look around further—perched on a hill, the hotel offers 360-degree panoramas of the 11,000-acre property and the Andes Mountains beyond. It's an awe-inspiring view, with versions of the same vistas awaiting in every room, thanks to floor-to-ceiling windows.

One enters not into just a lobby but a large public living room divided into various seating areas, with a Brunswick pool table (that once lived in the basement of the Viks' stateside home) at the center. Art is everywhere, notably an Anselm Kiefer diptych from *The Secret Life Of Plants* series, and a piece by the late Roberto Matta, a well-known Chilean surrealist painter. But while Viña Vik is full of works of art, none of them are labeled. If you know, you know. If you don't, the staff is

happy to enlighten you. There's no attitude: It's all about the thoughtfully curated mashup that, furniturewise, runs democratic, from West Elm and Restoration Hardware to Nakashima and Vladimir Kagan.

The Viks realize that rooms this visually stimulating demand that guests predetermine their preference. Some might opt for more than 50 shades of gray in Alvaro Gabler's grisaille room over, say, the graffiti of Diego Roa in another suite. Those whose tastes tend toward Marcela Correa's conceptual mattress-cum-headboard might find the photography of Prince Hubertus of Hohenlohe-Langenburg in another suite a tad tame. Despite differences in taste, everyone will agree that there's nothing boring about the place. The Viks are providing a visual version of Red Bull in a world where those less inclined to experiment are too timid to try anything beyond ginger beer.

To this end, they chose Smiljan Radic to design their nearby winery. Radic was a relative unknown at the project's inception, but that changed after he debuted his design of the prestigious Serpentine Pavilion in London last summer, which was completed around the same time CONTINUED...





IN VINO VERITAS Clockwise from top left: Smiljan Radic designed the resort's vast winery facility, set amid rows of cabernet sauvignon, carmenere, syrah, cabernet franc and merlot vines; the elegantly sparse spa reception area—even treatments skew toward the grape, often relying on grape seed oil, grape extracts and even pieces of the fruit itself; an oenophile-appeal mural in the Graffiti suite.



CHILE OUT Soak in the sun and views from the resort's infinity pool at the end of your design- and wine-fueled day.

...CONTINUED as the winery. Clearly the Viks were onto something, a turn of fortune they hope extends to the wines they are now producing. The couple spent two years searching for the best terroir in South America, including 12 expansive valleys, before settling on this acreage on the eastern side of the Cordillera de la Costa mountains. They tapped Patrick Valette, a Chilean-born Frenchman from an old Bordeaux family, as chief oenologist and planted the cabernet sauvignon, carmenere, syrah, cabernet franc and merlot grapes that make up VIK wines.

Guests can choose to ride horses or bicycles to the winery for a tasting. The resort also offers the opportunity to dine alfresco in the vineyard, surrounded by rows of grapes, while enjoying barbecue (literally every type of meat you can think of) cooked over an open flame and, of course, plenty of VIK wine. Dining on property affords beautiful views too, as well as a menu that changes with every single meal. The focus is on fresh, local, seasonal and mostly organic produce, and can include housemade smoked salmon, bacon and duck prosciutto, and ice cream and sorbet. A thoughtful touch: A gluten-free and vegetarian option is offered at every seating.

The wine theme continues at the spa, which offers several grape-themed treatments, such as the VIK Experience, which includes a scrub, made in-house with grape seeds and actual pieces of grape; a wrap in grape seed extract, and a massage with grape seed lemongrass oil.



There are, however, less modest protocols here than in American spas, so those uncomfortable without a towel draping during a massage or wrap should speak up. That said, therapists are quick to accommodate. A post-treatment dip in the retreat's infinity pool, just as the setting sun sets the sky aflame, is a gorgeous reminder of the meaning of "Millahue" in the Mapuche language: "land of gold." *\$1,200 per suite per night (includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, soft drinks and a glass of VIK wine with dinner).* vinavik.com; vik.cl ■