

Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

Vol. 9 September 2019

International Driving Permit

I've rented cars all around the world: New Zealand, Thailand, Turkey, Chile, Canada, France and of course the United States.

Renting a car in France is so easy that Sara and I rent one on every trip we make. While I love the French rail system, the convenience of a car in a region simply can't be beat. We rail to our travel area and then drive around. Car rentals in France are cheaper than rentals in the USA and the roads in France are excellent but some can be narrow. French drivers are considerate and the country is fairly easy to navigate; but gas in France is expensive at just under \$6 a gallon. The recent yellow vest protests were sparked by a proposed raise in the French gas tax.

A question I often get about car rental is if an International Driving Permit, sometimes called (incorrectly) an International Drivers License, is required to rent a car overseas. Of course, the answer is, maybe.

In France, no. In Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain, yes. But it is only required if you get stopped by the police. In its most simple form

an International Driving Permit is just a translation of your state issued drivers license. The permit doesn't replace your license, it just enhances it. You will still be required to present a state issued drivers license and your passport to rent a vehicle in a foreign country.

If you need an International Drivers Permit, because, for example, you are renting a car in Germany, how do you get one?

You follow [this link](#). Fill out the application, attach two signed passport photos, and bring it and \$20 to your closest AAA office. AAA, aka the American Automobile Association. They have been empowered by the United States Department of State to manage issuing International Driving Permits. Membership in AAA is not required to get a permit. The permit is issued on the spot. I called the Duluth AAA office and they said the process takes about 10 to 15 minutes. Sounds easy.

That said, I don't have an International Driving Permit but maybe I should get one so that when we extend our boat trips to Italy I can rent car...

Slowly Warming Wine

The last few mornings have had a cool crispness in the air. But the afternoon warms nicely and the day finishes with a slight lingering warmth that hints of the cool morning to come. I am really enjoying this weather.

This makes me think about wine serving temperature. What is the optimal serving temperature for wine? If you want a specific, on the button number, it's 55F degrees. But wine isn't a specific number sort of item.

Most of tasting is smelling and the aroma of wine is one of its greatest mysteries. How can a Sauvignon Blanc smell like grapefruit? How can a Cabernet Sauvignon smell like green pepper, or a Pinot Noir smell like cherries or a Riesling smell like diesel? It's because of the mysteries of terrior, fermentation, and aging. But if the wine is refrigerator cold its aromas are numb and as the wine warms it will express the subtle smells that make wine so fabulous.

So what should you do? Keep your wine in your basement, if you have one, chill your wine slightly, both red and white, and as the wine slowly warms savor aromas and enjoy the change.



TEQUILA

~ September 14th ~

[12 spots still available](#)

We will be sampling: Highland, Lowland, Blanco, Reposado, Anejo and Sotol

Practical Information:

Class starts @ 7:30pm ~ *sharp*
@ 2620 E. Superior Street.

Cost is \$15/pp.

Class size is limited to 20.

Light *hor d'oeuvres* after tasting.

R.S.V.P. required.

October 12th ~ *Liqueurs 1*
Part 1 of a 2 part class

SLIGHT CHANGE

Throughout the past eight spirits classes I've been trying to incorporate spirit specific liqueurs. For example, at the end of the Cognac class we tasted two different orange liqueurs made with Cognac.

Despite this inclusion there are a plethora of liqueurs on the market yet to be sampled and Sara convinced me that Liqueurs are more interesting than Aquavit.

So the October 12th Aquavit class has been changed to Liqueurs 1 to be followed by the last class of the year, on November 9th, Liqueurs 2.

ABSOLUTELY MAD

Sara and I met while working at a US research station in Antarctica. We worked in Antarctica from 1995 to 1999 and worked at two different spots on the continent. One of the stations we worked at was Palmer Station.

Palmer Station is only supplied by sea. We had no airfield, but the British Station at Rothera did, and they had ski equipped Twin Otter aircraft. They would fly over to Palmer, land on the top of the glacier behind our station, and drop off a couple barrels of fuel. This extended their aircraft's range and they used our glacier as a makeshift gas station.

Whenever they'd come over for fuel they would bring trading items. We'd exchange Palmer Station patches and t-shirts for British patches and t-shirts. Our cooks would make homemade cookies and the British would often share their wide selection of beers from the UK and send along a bottle of Scotch for us to add to our bar. We would reply with bottles of Tequila. It was all very fun and it brought us closer to our friends at the British base, 225 miles to our south.

Before one such aircraft refueling mission we were hailed on the radio from Rothera. They said they were bringing the usual stuff, beer, t-shirts and Scotch but had a special request from us, they said. "Please don't send anymore Tequila. It makes us absolutely mad!"

Of course the British use the word mad to mean crazy and as

Americans we would tend to agree. Tequila is powerful medicine and too much of it produces a nasty morning after.

But Tequila has come a long way in the last 20 years. No longer is it just the fire water of old. Oh sure, you can still buy Tequila that will make you "mad" but there are also many new fantastic aged sipping Tequilas. The spirit has benefited from the craft distillery movement and there are many new high quality Tequilas on the market.

This month's Tequila class is your opportunity to taste 6 different spirits and to test your assertions of the famous Mexican spirit.



Our Fall 2020 France canal boat cruises are all booked!

If you enjoy this newsletter please consider sharing it or inviting others to a spirits tasting class. If you aren't already subscribed, but would like to, send an email to david@savvynomad.com.



Here is a snapshot of Palmer Station and the Mars glacier in 1999.