RED MOUNTAIN

The Red Mountain AVA is a very small, hot, windy appellation. Plantings are dominated by red varieties.

Located in south-central Washington, Red Mountain is a sub-appellation of Yakima Valley, with both wholly contained within the larger Columbia Valley.

Located near the small town of Benton City, Red Mountain's name is somewhat of a misnomer as it is neither red nor mountainous, with elevations ranging from 500 feet to 1,500 feet. Red Mountain is, in fact, an anticline of the Yakima Fold Belt, a series of geologic folds that define a number of viticultural regions in eastern Washington. The area takes on a reddish hue in springtime as the cheatgrass changes color.

At 4,040 total acres (1,630 ha), Red Mountain is one of Washington's smallest appellations. It is also one of the state's warmest, with broad, southwest-facing slopes that soak up the summer sun. Due to warm temperatures, red grape varieties dominate, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon, which makes up 60% of plantings. It is also a very dry region compared to other parts of the Columbia Valley.

The nearby Yakima River moderates temperatures and provides continual airflow, guarding against frost that can be problematic in nearby areas. Nighttime temperatures drop precipitously—often as much as 40 degrees fahrenheit —helping preserve the acid levels in the grapes. This proximity to the Yakima River also provides persistent wind.

Red Mountain's soil is made up of sandy loam and gravel with a high alkalinity (high pH) and a rich calcium carbonate content. A lack of soil nutrients along with the high pH reduces the vigor of the vines, resulting in significantly smaller berry sizes compared to varietal norms. This, along with prevailing winds, also leads to higher tannin levels in many of the wines compared to other regions.

More than 15 wineries are located in the Red Mountain AVA. However, a very large number of wineries located in other areas source fruit from Red Mountain vineyards.

FAST FACTS

Location: South-central Washington
Established: 2001
Total Size: 4,040 acres
Top Varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah
Soils: Sandy loam and gravel
Average Annual Precipitation: 5 inches

Two Things to Know:
1. Red Mountain is one of Washington's warmest and driest appellations.
2. It is dominated by red varieties, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon



