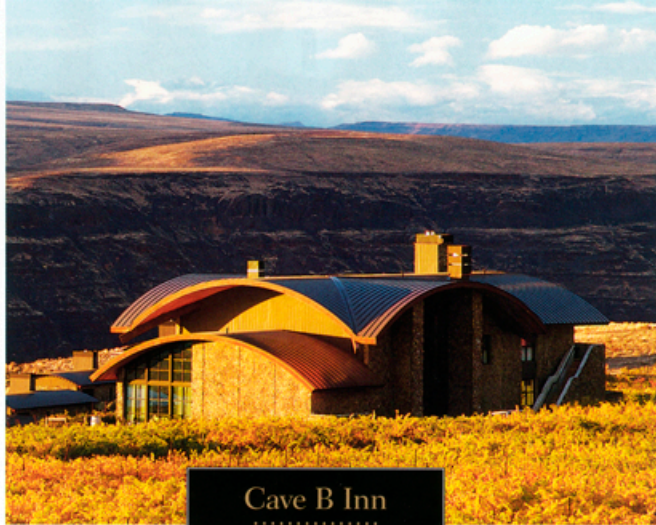


Grape Escapes

EVEN THE FRENCH SAY the best wines are created from vines that see the river," says SageCliffe winemaker Berle "Rusty" Figgins over dinner at the estate's Tendrils Restaurant. At SageCliffe, a 680-acre spread in central Washington's Columbia Valley, nearly everything sees the river, from the Sangiovese vines just beyond Tendrils' terrace to the property's Cave B Winery and each of the 30 guest rooms at the Cave B Inn.

SageCliffe is located two hours east of Seattle along Washington's scenic I-90. The highway traverses the forested Snoqualmie Pass before dropping into the Columbia Valley's rusted lowlands, where plateaus step down in staircase style toward the broad Columbia River 900 feet below. "We're perched on the edge of the Columbia gorge," says Vince Bryan III, son of Cave B founders Carol and Vince Bryan II. (The winery's name is a combination of their first names and last initial.) "People have said it's like being on the edge of the Grand Canyon."

The Bryans, whose vines are some of the oldest in Washington, began farming their SageCliffe parcel more than 25 years ago. "In 1978, when I was about 15, my family took a monthlong trip to France," recalls Bryan III, now SageCliffe's chief operating officer. "We visited Burgundy and Bordeaux, and the kids [Bryan III and his three sisters] kept wondering why we were



Cave B Inn
QUINCY, WASH.

stopping so often to take soil samples." When the family returned to Washington, the parents went to their real estate agent with specific requirements for slope and caliche deposits. "It took about a year, but [the agent] eventually showed them a property with all of the characteristics they were looking for," says Bryan III.

The SageCliffe property occupies the west slope of a north-south-flowing river, as do some of the best vineyards in France's Côtes du Rhône and Médoc. The area has proved conducive to Sangiovese and several other varietals, as well as to wine-loving guests, who stay in the main building or one of 15 stand-alone Cliffhousess at the two-year-old Cave B Inn.

Noted Seattle architect Tom Kundig designed the hotel's main lodge and Cliffhousess with rounded roofs, a reference to the mountain silhouettes in the distance. Inside the houses, double-sided fireplaces and pivoting plasma televisions momentarily distract from the views. Other diversions include a spa, a wine cave, and a chef's garden, and the Bryans plan to add a golf course and estate homes. "[The course] will be below the homes," says Bryan III, "and the homes will look onto the greens, the red basalt rock, and the blue of the river."

—JENNIFER HALL

Cave B Inn at SageCliffe, 509.785.2283, www.sagecliffe.com (\$150-\$550)



LOCATION: Within the Columbia Valley appellation in Quincy, Wash., two hours east of Seattle by car.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Thirty guest rooms, including 15 stand-alone Cliffhousess with either one or two bedrooms.

DINING: Chef Fernando Divina uses organic foods from the Ancient Lakes region at Tendrils Restaurant. SageCliffe also makes gourmet applesauce and hosts a tomato fair in August.

WINE: The estate produces wines under two labels, Cave B and SageCliffe. Standouts include the 2005 Cave B Syrah (blended with Viognier grapes) and the wild cherry-scented 2004 SageCliffe Cabernet Sauvignon. The Columbia Valley also is home to the Goose Ridge and Terra Blanca wineries, the latter of which recently opened a 40,000-square-foot, Tuscan-style tasting and events facility.