Mike Ball’s Guide to Wine Tasting

in the Napa Valley

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Welcome to the Napa Valley and ATM 2009!! I think I am safe in assuming that nearly all of us, including the European contingent, think WINE when we hear Napa Valley mentioned. Thus, to experience the best Napa has to offer you should experience wine. Probably the easiest way to do this is to take a wine-tasting excursion through the Valley.

I spent the 2007-2008 academic year on sabbatical at UC Berkeley, which is only about an hour away from Napa. While I spent many hours in intellectual pursuits, I did manage to get away now and then and explore various California wine regions. Based on that experience I have declared myself an expert and fully capable of writing this guide.

Wine tasting has become a big business in the California wine regions. Nearly all wineries of a reasonable size have wine tasting rooms open to the public. While some require an advance reservation, most do not. They typically open between 10 AM and 12 noon and close between 4 PM and 6 PM. The opening and closing times do vary quite a bit so if you are coming early or late, it is worth checking the times. Years ago wine tasting in Napa was complementary – it was a viewed as a way for the wineries to get exposure to their products and help sell (bottles of) wine. In fact, it is still complementary in some places – usually in the lesser known wine regions and wineries. However, virtually all wine tasting rooms in the Napa Valley charge a tasting fee – this typically varies between $10 and $20 for standard tasting and $15 to $40 for the reserve wines. For this fee you get a “taste” of between 4 and 8 wines.

THE WINES

While the great European wines are named after the region in which they are grown (Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rhine, Chianti, Rioja, etc.), in the U.S. and most other “new world” wine producing countries (Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, South Africa) wines are by and large named after the predominant grape used to make them.

Reds

*Cabernet Sauvignon:* this is one of the principal grapes used to make the great Bordeaux red wines. Napa produces the best Cabernet Sauvignons in California, which are certainly the greatest of California wines, fetching the highest praise from critics as well as the highest prices. These are typically full-bodied, rich wines.

*Merlot:* this is the other principal grape used to make red Bordeaux wines. It was relatively unknown in California until the 90’s and then grew in popularity and production. Recently, disparaging remarks in the movie Sideways have reduced its popularity. Nonetheless you will find some very good Merlots in Napa, although they don’t rival the best of the Cabernets.

*Pinot Noir:* this is the grape used to make the famous red Burgundies of France. For many years there were only a few Pinot Noir producers in California – over time they produced better and better wines and developed a level of notoriety. While the movie
Sideways cast a pall on Merlot demand, the infatuation of the main character with Pinot Noirs caused a huge surge in Pinot Noir demand. It is now the hot California wine. The Pinot Noir grape does not grow well in the heart of Napa, which gets intense sun throughout the day. It does well in the Carneros region that spans Southern Napa and Sonoma and also in the Russian River Valley of Sonoma, where fog off the Ocean provides a cooling influence. While Cabernet Sauvignons are very intense, full-bodied wines, Pinot Noirs are more subtle and elegant.

**Zinfandel:** it is nearly safe to say that this wine is unique to the US. It is not grown in any significant quantity elsewhere and its relationship to old world wines is not well understood. It has been grown in California since the 1800’s and, over the years, was used to make such blends as “Hearty Burgundy”. In the 70’s and 80’s its own unique character was recognized and it started to develop a following. A type of rose, “White Zinfandel” was made from it starting in the 80’s. These light, sometimes semi-sweet wines became very popular. However, starting in the late 90’s the traditional full-bodied red Zinfandels drew a bigger and bigger following and today they have developed a near cult status in some circles. Red Zinfandel can be quite distinctive, with berry, spicy flavors.

**Syrah:** this is one of the several grapes used to make French Rhone wines. A growing group of vintners, the so-called “Rhone Rangers”, are gaining notoriety for their Syrahs and other Rhone varietals. The Rhone Rangers generally come from other parts of California but I have found some excellent Syrahs in Napa and Sonoma.

You will likely find other reds as well, e.g. **Malbec** (one of the Bordeaux grapes), **Petite Sirah** (a Rhone grape), **Sangiovese** (the Chianti grape) as well as others. Many Napa wineries produce a special red blend (usually using Bordeaux varietals). The generic term for a wine made from a combination of Bordeaux grapes is **Meritage**. In some cases, these wines have achieved very high status and fetch very high prices. For example, one such red wine, the Joseph Phelps Insignia, is considered one of the most consistently outstanding wines of Napa, routinely selling for well over $100 per bottle.

**Whites**

**Chardonnay:** this is the grape used to make white Burgundy wines. Chardonnays come in many styles and are considered the best California white wines. The grape does well in a diverse set of climates and so nearly all California regions produce it. One style of Chardonnay is aged in stainless steel tanks, which produces citrusy, sometimes light wines. Another style is aged in oak barrels, which yields a fuller wine. A secondary malolactic fermentation is also sometimes used to make the wines smoother and less acidic – this also leads to a buttery flavor. The manner and degree to which all of these processes are used lead to each Chardonnay’s own unique style.

**Sauvignon Blanc:** this grape is grown in several regions in France – most notably it is a principal component of white Bordeaux. It also comes in many styles, although it generally is lighter and considered a less serious wine than Chardonnay (at least in the
US). At the same time, producers have been refining their approach to this grape and are making very interesting wines. A few wineries use the name *Fume Blanc* for this wine, presumably to denote a Sauvignon Blanc that has been aged in Oak.

These are the predominant whites although just about any winery you visit will most likely have one or two other whites such as *Viognier*, *Gewurzstraminer*, *Roussanne*, *Riesling*, and *Chenin Blanc* – just to name a few.

**Sparkling Wines**

Napa and Sonoma also produce some serious sparkling wines. In fact, starting in the 80’s some of the prominent French Champagne producers established “outposts” in California. These include *Domaine Chandon*, *Mumm Napa* and *Domaine Carneros*. At the same time there are some older home-grown sparkling wine producers, e.g. *Schramsberg* in Napa and *Iron Horse* in Sonoma. Occasionally, some of the wineries that focus on still wines will produce a sparkler or two.

The best of the California sparkling wines are produced using the traditional Methode Champenoise and use two of the primary Champagne grapes: Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Most producers also produce a *Blanc de Noir*, which is 100% Pinot Noir and a *Blanc de Blanc*, which is 100% Chardonnay.

Most of the sparkling wine producers do not offer traditional tastings – rather they allow you to purchase wines by the glass or ½ glass or integrate tasting with winery tours. That does not mean that aren’t worth a visit -- it’s just that it is a different type of experience, where you should expect to spend a leisurely hour or two in a beautiful setting, sipping a sparkling wine. Two that do have traditional tastings are Domaine Carneros and Iron Horse. The Iron Horse sparkling wines have been served many times at the White House and also were used to toast the consummation of the Reagan-Gorbachov disarmament talks. Iron Horse does offer a traditional tasting and is probably one of the most fun wineries to visit -- they have an outdoor tasting area located atop a hill overlooking the Russian River Valley. It is an hour’s drive from the city of Napa but if you decide to make the trek to the Russian River Valley in Sonoma, it is a required visit.
WINERIES AND WINE TOURS

Orientation

The city of Napa is at the Southern end of Napa Valley, which is long and narrow and generally oriented North-South. There are two primary North-South roads: St. Helena Hwy (Rte 29) on the western side and Silverado Trail on the eastern side. There are a few east-west cross roads as well as few winding roads that head west into the hills from Rte 29 and east into the hills from Silverado Trail. Most wineries are either located on Rte 29 or Silverado Trail with a few located on the cross roads or the roads into the hills. Rte 29 is much busier than the Silverado Trail and it passes through a few small towns. These towns can be quite interesting having a variety of shops and restaurants. On the Silverado Trail you will get more of a feeling of being out in the country. If you go west from the City of Napa you will enter the Carneros Region that spans both Napa and Sonoma. The main east-west road is Rte 12/121.

The wineries suggested below are ones that I like for one reason or another or that fit into a particular theme. It is hard to go wrong with any Napa winery. In fact, while I usually plan a program, I often will add an extra one that just happens to look good as I pass it on the road.

Note that I have not included a map or detailed directions – you can find many maps of the Valley in various promotional magazines.

Wineries Close to the City of Napa

If you don’t want to spend much time traveling around, you may want to choose from the following, which are within minutes of downtown Napa. These are all toward the eastern side of the Valley so you would start by proceeding up the Silverado Trail.

**Reynolds Family:** (3266 Silverado Trail; 707-258-2558; open: 10:00 – 4:30) This is a relatively small family-owned winery that has received various awards in recent years. I have found their wines to be excellent across the board. It is requested that you call ahead and make a reservation. NB: they have a very attractive picnic area.

**Monticello Vineyards:** (4242 Big Ranch Rd; 707-253-2802 ext 18; open: 10:00 – 4:30) This winery was founded by Virginians and named after the home of a rather famous Virginian (our third president). I happened to have a glass of their Cabernet in San Francisco and immediately said I need to visit this winery. They have a picnic area.
Trefethen: (1160 Oak Knoll Ave; 866-895-7696; open: 10:00 – 4:30) This is a family owned but relatively large winery whose wines are distributed fairly broadly in the US. They tend to focus on higher end wines and have a long history of producing consistently high quality wines.

Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars: (5766 Silverado Trail; 707.261.6441; open: 10:00 – 4:30) This is one of the historic Napa wineries. It produced the Cabernet that won the famous “Judgment of Paris” in the red wine category, beating out several top red Bourdeaux wines as well as other California wines. The descendant of the winning wine (produced from the same vineyard), is the S.L.V. Estate Cabernet Sauvignon. It retails for $125 per bottle. If you want to splurge on one tasting I would recommend paying the $40 for the reserve tasting, which include the S.L.V., the CAST 23 (a $195 bottle), the FAYE Estate Cabernet (a $95 bottle) and the Arcadia Vineyard Estate Chardonnay (a $50 bottle). I split this tasting with my wife and found that the pours were ample enough so that we could both enjoy these great wines. NB: do not confuse Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars with Stag’s Leap Winery. These are two distinct wineries, which for several years had a legal battle over who could use the Stag’s Leap name – as you can see the legal battle ended in a compromise.

Baldacci Family Vineyards: (6236 Silverado Trail; 707-944-9261; open: call) If you want to get the feel of a small family-owned Napa winery stop here. They have an intimate tasting room with a down-home feel. They also have outstanding wines. It is recommended that you call ahead for a reservation.

The Art and Wine Tour

A growing trend among wineries is to integrate art exhibits in some way into the winery or tasting room. Here are a few good choices. Note this tour gets you onto some of the back roads with a 15 minute drive off of Rte 29 into the hills to get to Hess and then a 15 minute drive on back roads from Hess to Artesa.

Cliff Lede: (corner of Yountville Cross & Silverado Trail; 800-428-2259; open 10:00 – 4:00) This is a new winery started with the purchase of the old S. Anderson property. The winery was founded by Cliff Lede, a Canadian businessman who spared no expense, investing the best consultants, wine-making equipment, etc. Almost instantly his wines received very high praise. The winery specializes in Cabernets (which are all excellent) but their Sauvignon Blanc is one of my favorites. An adjacent, attractive art gallery was recently opened.

Hess Collection: (4411 Redwood Rd; 707-255-1144; open 10:00 – 5:00) This winery is located up a long winding road off of Rte 29. It started based on a lease arrangement with the old Christian Brothers winery, which was one of the early producers of quality wines in Napa. Today, Hess produces a variety of acclaimed wines across a wide price range, which are available across the U.S. It also has a
large art gallery embedded within the winery – giving a double meaning to the name “Hess Collection”.

Artesa: (1345 Henry Rd; 707-254-2140; Open: 10:00 – 5:00) Located in the Southern Carneros region, Artesa is known for its Pinot Noirs. It has an impressive modern visitor center, with outdoor fountains and sculptures as well as an indoor art gallery. The gallery is kept well-stocked by Artesa’s artist in residence program.

Some other wineries with art displays: Folio Winemakers Studio, Hall Wines, Robert Mondavi Winery, St Supery Vineyards and Winery, Mumm Napa, Turnbull Winery, Markham Vineyards (see description below).

The “Judgment of Paris Tour” (see the entire Valley)

In 1976, a British wine shop owner in Paris conducted a “fun” wine tasting on the occasion of the American bicentennial to introduce the French wine establishment to American wines. Included were several California Cabernets and Chardonnays. To provide a point of comparison, he also included a selection of top Bordeaux red wines and some white Burgundies. It was a blind tasting and to the surprise of all, American wines were ranked highest in both the red and white categories. This event had a monumental impact on the way the world perceived American wines and provided a jolt to California winemakers. Experience this piece of history by visiting Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars, whose Cabernet was ranked the best red, Chateau Montelena, whose Chardonnay was ranked the top white and Grgich Hills, whose founder, Mike Grgich, was the winemaker at Chateau Montelena at the time. By the way, this event was already the subject matter of a book and one recent movie (Bottle Shock); another, more accurate movie, is rumored to be in the making.

This wine tour will also take you up and down the entire valley, as Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars is near the Southern end on Silverado Trail, Chateau Monetlena is just off Silverado Trail at the Northern end in the town of Calistoga and Grgich Hill about a third of the way back down on Rte 29. Make sure you have enough time if you take this tour – it is about a 30 minute drive from Stags Leap Wine Cellars to Chateau Montelena and another 20 minutes from there to Grgich Hills.

Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars: See description above.
**Chateau Montelena:** (1429 Tubbs Lane; 707-942-5105; open 9:30 – 4:00) If the name of this winery might seem French, wait until you see it main building and taste its wines. The current owners bought the property in the early 70’s, produced the winning white at the Judgment of Paris and subsequently went on to become one of California’s premier wine producers. Although it produced the winning Chardonnay in 1976, it is known for producing great Cabernets very much in the style of French Bordeauxs.

**Grgich Hills:** (1829 St. Helena Hwy; (800) 532-3057; open: 9:30 – 4:30) After making the winning Chateau Montelena Chardonnay, Mike Grgich fulfilled in life-long dream of opening his own winery, with investment help from members of the Hills Brothers Coffee family. At 85 years old, Mike Grgich still runs the winery and is truly a larger-than-life figure. Very importantly: he has not lost his touch, the wines – both red and white - are outstanding.

**The Great-but-not-so-expensive Wines You Can Get Back Home Tour**

**Rutherford Wine Company (Rutherford Ranch):** (1680 Silverado Trail; 707.968.3200; open: 10:00 – 4:30) I have participated in blind Cabernet tastings in which the Rutherford Ranch Napa Valley Cabernet, which sells for about $12, has beaten many other more expensive wines. Of course, they also produce more expensive Cabernets sourced Rutherford sub-appellation known for its Cabernets.

**Louis M Martini:** (254 South St. Helena Hwy: 707-968-3361; open: 10:00 – 6:00) This is one of the old Napa wineries that was started just after prohibition. It produced some of the early great Cabernets and produces several now at a range of prices sourced both from Napa and Sonoma. Robert Parker gave their 2006 Sonoma Cabernet, which sells for just over $10 a 90 point rating, which is quite amazing for a wine in that price range.

**Markham:** (2812 St. Helena Hwy North; (707) 963.5292 x42; open: 11:00 – 5:00) This winery is the descendant of a winery founded in the 1800’s by Bordeaux immigrant Jean Laurent. It produces several wines across a broad cost range that are widely available in the US. An added note: the winery has an art gallery that is currently featuring a collection photographs used on the covers of Rolling Stone Magazine.
The Chardonnay Lovers Tour  (aka: the aviator’s tour)

This tour is for Chardonnay lovers – but also it quite appropriate for ATM participants. The first winery on the tour was started by two aerospace engineers – in fact, there were rumors the ZD stands for “zero-defect”, but this is not true. Rombauer was started by a retired Braniff pilot. These wineries should serve as an inspiration for anyone who wants to apply their aviation knowledge to winemaking.

**ZD:**  (8888 Silverado Trail; (800) 487-7757; open: 10:00 – 4:30) These wines have been served at the White House in three different administrations. Most Napa wineries talk first about their Cabernet’s – at ZD, you hear about the Chardonnays first. I visited the winery with no prior information as to which wines might be good and came away thinking that I had just tasted a great Chardonnay.

**Grgich Hills:** see description above; no aviator here – but some great Chardonnays.

**Rombauer:** (3522 Silverado Trail; (800) 622-2206; open: 10:00 – 5:00) If there is a great American Chardonnay, it is Rombauer. It is consistently one of the most ordered wines in restaurants and has been rated the top Chardonnay in the country. I should note, however, that I went there to taste the Chardonnay and came away very impressed with the reds as well. Moreover, it is a very done-to-earth, friendly family owned business.

The Carneros Tour

Carneros is the wine region spanning the Southern parts of Napa and Sonoma. This region is cooler than the heart of Napa Valley and consequently Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays thrive best here. This tour will give you an opportunity to see a bit of both Napa and Sonoma Counties.

**Domaine Carneros:** (1240 Duhig Rd ;800 716-BRUT (2788); open: 10:00 – 6:00) The French Champagne house Taittenger owns and operates this winery, which specializes in sparkling wines. You can sip a selection of sparkling wines from the terrace of the winery’s impressive chateau on a hill overlooking the vineyards.

**Bouchaine:** (1075 Buchli Station Rd; 707-252-9065; open: 10:30 – 4:00) This family-owned winery has a laid-back, informal tasting room that makes for a very enjoyable visit. The Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays exhibit the classic Carneros style.

**Buena Vista:** (18000 Old Winery Rd; 800.926.1266; open 10:00 – 5:00) This Sonoma County winery was founded in 1857 and is California’s oldest premium winery. The tasting room is housed in a historic winery building. It has an adjacent picnic area. I found not only its Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays to be excellent but also its Syrah.
Ravenswood: (18701 Gehricke Rd; 888-669-4679; 10:00 – 4:30) You know any winery whose motto is “No Wimpy Wines” will be fun to visit. Ravenswood specializes in robust full-bodied reds, most notably Zinfandels. If you want to taste several variants of this uniquely American wine as well as a few other robust reds you must visit this winery.

If you continue a bit farther west, you will enter the town of Sonoma and can relax in their town square before returning to Napa.

TIPS ON TASTING AND MANAGING YOUR DAY

Visitors to wine tasting rooms typically dress informally – it is recommended that you definitely wear comfortable shoes – remember wineries are actually farms so it is not unusual to see dirt or gravel paths. Do not wear heavy perfumes or shaving lotions. A big part of experiencing wine is its smell. Do not ruin the experience for others by bringing in overpowering odors.

As far as the actual tasting goes, start by swirling the wine in its glass, observing its color and intensity and smelling it. After that, take a taste. For most, three small tastes is what it takes to get a good feel for the wine (see discussion below about dumping the rest out). In carrying out all of these steps, remember to take your time and enjoy the experience. Feel free to ask questions of the winery’s staff -- they are trained to interact well with novices as well as wine professionals. In virtually every wine excursion we took, my wife and I remember at least one really interesting conversation we had with a winery staff person or a fellow taster.

How many wineries to visit in a day?? – for many three or four is about right but it is certainly possible to visit more and enjoy yourself. First remember that the objective is to taste wine not to drink wine. All wineries have “dump buckets”. These allow you to pour out wine from one taste before you move onto the next. Do not be afraid to use these liberally. If you don’t like a wine at all dump after an initial taste. Usually it takes three sips to really get a good feel for the wine – once you do this, then dump. Of course, if the wine is truly exceptional you probably will not want to dump at all! Professional tasters not only dump but they also spit, i.e. they swirl the wine in their mouth, taste it and then spit it out into the dump bucket or a paper cup. This is certainly quite OK – although I have never adopted this practice myself. If a winery offers you tastes of several wines, you need not taste all of them. Just taste the ones you are most interested in or find most appealing. It is also good to eat before setting out, to drink plenty of water in between tastings and also to snack in between. A particularly, appealing approach is to go to a
couple of wineries before lunch, then *have a picnic at one of the many, sometimes bucolic winery picnic areas* and then do a few more after lunch.

**Share tastings:** it is perfectly OK to share a tasting with another person. My wife and I probably do this more often then not. It saves on the tasting fees and reduces the temptation to over-consume.

**Getting around:** certainly the easiest way is *by car*, but the driver must obviously be very cautious about how much he or she consumes. A good approach might be for the driver to share one or two tastes of the best wines at a particular stop.

There are many companies that offer *limo or van services* that will take a group on a wine tasting tour. This is certainly a very appealing approach to managing your tour. I have never used these so I cannot recommend any – I am sure the hotel staff will be able recommend several.

**Tours and Special Tastings:** many wineries offer tours. These can be quite interesting and educational. They are usually scheduled at a specific time and require a reservation. For the typical tasting, you just walk into the tasting room, find a space at the tasting bar and a staff member will describe the various options to you and guide you through the process. Some wineries offer special tasting “experiences”. These usually take place in private rooms, require a reservation and are more costly. I have not participated in any of these but they sound quite attractive and usually have an educational component to them. Also, usually they involve tasting some of the best wines the winery has to offer.

**Discounts:** as mentioned in the beginning tasting fees generally run between $10 and $20 for standard tastings (and even higher for reserve tastings). Look around for special coupons – probably the most typical is a two-for-one tasting, i.e. you get two tastings for the price of one. These can be found in promotional magazines and guides that are found at hotels, shops, wineries, etc. Also, look for such coupons on the winery web sites. If you happen to go to Sonoma County, a very attractive deal is offered to Visa Signature card holders. There is a very long list of wineries that give complementary tastings to Visa Signature card holders. In many cases, there is also a discount on wines purchased.

**BUYING AND SHIPPING WINE**

Before I came to California, I typically bought wines that cost around $10 per bottle and occasionally splurged on a $20 bottle. As you tour the Napa wineries you will find that wines start around $18 and go up from there. It is rare visit a Napa winery and find a Cabernet for less than $40. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, wineries typically only offer their higher end wines at the winery. For example, Hess has a
popular Cabernet that sells for around $10 per bottle but it is no where to be seen at the winery. The popular, less expensive Hess Cabernet is made from grapes sourced outside of Napa – not the more highly prized Napa grapes. The second reason is that the price charged at the winery is the suggested retail price, which is typically the highest price you will ever see the wine sell for. Most of us try to buy wines on sale or from discount retailers. These prices will always be less than the price you pay at a winery. At the same time, I certainly have found bottles at retailers that sell for the same price as at a winery. I have even seen, on a few occasions, prices at retailers that are actually higher than the winery price. Thus, in no sense is the winery price out of line – it is simply what it claims to be -- the (undiscounted) suggested retail price. One thing to keep in mind when considering the prices: many of the smaller Napa wineries do not distribute outside the state of California. Further, the larger ones will typically offer certain small lot wines only at the winery or to special customers. It is special bottles like these that you might want to splurge on.

There are a few ways to get a better deal on wines at the winery. First, nearly all wineries offer a case discount (typically between 10 and 20%). Second, occasionally you will find special discounts on certain wines and collections of bottles. Keep your eye out for these – the nice thing about visiting a winery is that you typically can taste the wine before you buy it. Some wineries will rebate your tasting fee if you purchase wine. I should say that, while this is very typical in certain California wine regions, it has become somewhat rare in Napa.

Finally, the one other method for getting a discount (and much more) is to join a wine club. Nearly all California wineries have a wine club. The policies vary, but the arrangement typically involves the club member agreeing to receive about 6 wine shipments per year – each shipment might contain between 2 and 4 bottles. The winery decides which bottles are shipped. The prices on all such shipments are discounted usually between 15 and 25% (of course, you must pay for shipping). Further, club members receive a discount on all other purchases, usually including any purchase made at the time of joining the club. One thing to keep in mind is that there is usually no penalty for quitting, e.g. you can join and then quit after receiving say 2 shipments.

Shipping wine within the US is a challenging issue in itself. Interstate shipping of alcohol products is governed by state laws and it seems like every state has a different version. These laws typically go back to the repeal of prohibition and, thus, reflect a time with different moral attitudes and priorities. Unfortunately, vested interests have prevented many states from changing these old laws and taking a more enlightened approach. The bottom line is that it is illegal to have wine shipped to many states (including my home state of Maryland). Thus, before asking to have wine shipped home you will have to check with the winery regarding whether it is possible at all. Another approach is to take the wine with you on your flight home. It is now possible to get case (or ½ case) shipper containers to protect the bottles so that you can actually check your case of wine as luggage. Most wineries will provide you with such a shipping box, sometimes free of charge (especially if you buy a case). I have done this many times and it works extremely well. You should take the case with you to the airport unsealed so that it can be inspected
– baggage agents will tape it shut and put it through the normal baggage handling. This certainly can also be done for flight out of the country, however, I have no idea as to issues related to import duties and restrictions.