

ITINERARY FOR TREADING THE GRAPE



Wine is probably the greatest drink developed by mankind! It is easy to buy a bottle of wine but if you learn how to appreciate the contents you will find you get so much more value for money! This week develops your appreciation for this quintessential drink in stunning scenery. Mini Constant, Master of Wine, joins us throughout the week so any questions you have wanted to ask about wine can be answered and you could start growing a cellar! And of course we wander through the most beautiful vines and see some dramatic chateaux and meet some fascinating wine makers!

Day 1 ARRIVAL and MOISSAC

You will be met at Toulouse airport by James and driven to Moissac for lunch. After lunch we shall walk around the abbey which was the sister church to Cluny the great Benedictine abbey of the C8th. This is an C11th masterpiece so a lovely way to start the idea of being in France! We shall continue in the vehicle to Chateau La Leotardie. This is a beautiful and very comfortable eighteenth century chateau. It sits within the chestnut woods of the lovely lush Dordogne. Its rooms are spacious and full of character. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite. Wifi is available. Dinner will be with James and cooked by Sylvie and washed down with a well-aged Bordeaux. All wines at the chateau have been carefully selected from James's cellar.

Day 2 WELCOME and FLINT CHIP TOOLS

Your first French breakfast at the table laden with croissants and fruit and hot coffee before we set off on foot down to the village of St Georges du Monclard. This is a pretty village with an unusual chateau. We will have a break and then return to the chateau for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon we shall drive for a visit to Terre Vielle. This chateau is in the Pecharmant area making delicious reds close to Bordeaux in style and claiming to be one of the oldest vineyards in France. This is because when Monsieur Morand-Monteil started to tend to this vineyard they found hundreds of flint chip tools dating back to various pre-historic periods. We shall talk to Monsiuer Morand-Monteil and see how they make their delicious Pecharmant red. Return to the chateau by car for time to relax before our first tasting with Mini where we shall introduce you to wines of south west France. We are spoiled for the variety of wines we get in this area of France. Dinner at the chateau. Walk 7km

Day 3 SAUSSIGNAC and TOUR des GENDRES

We set off in the morning to Saussignac. This little appellation makes some of the most beautiful sweet white wines one of which was compared to 70% Yquem and 30% Climens (the two greatest

sweet white wine producers in France). Saussignac is one of my favourite wines and we shall visit one of my favourite makers! Firstly a little walk! We then visit Chateau Miaudoux run by the Cuisset family who make some excellent dry white and then those delicious nectar sweet 'moelleux' and 'liquoreux' wines. After tasting and enjoying we shall walk on to a picnic in the vines. Time to relax if the sun is on our backs before we drive to one of the great chateaux of the area run by Luc de Conti. Chateau Tour des Gendres has been producing one of the great world class Sauvignon Blancs and many other wonderful wines. We will discuss the use of wider shorter vats and 'pigeage' and the merits of fermenting wine in terracotta amphorae ... a practice going back thousands of years and to Georgian tradition ... before a tasting and driving back to the chateau. Dinner at the chateau. *Walk: 8km*

Day 4 MARKET DAY

After breakfast we set off for the lovely market of Issigeac. This is an old medieval village and we shall wander around picking up some good ideas for a picnic back at the chateau. Lunch at the chateau therefore. In the afternoon an optional visit to Rosette ... a tiny appellation just outside Bergerac making a very light and interesting sweet white wine or for those wanting to walk we can set off and walk to a charming chapel to work up an appetite for dinner! A wine tasting in the evening with Mini working on wines around France in general before dinner in the chateau.

Walk: 6km

Day 5 MONTAIGNE and MONTRAVEL

In the morning we start off by car to the chateau of Michel de Montaigne. If one can have a favourite philosopher Montaigne would be mine. His essays are astounding and relate so much to the details of his everyday life but with such great insight and humour into what he is thinking of each particular day, some five hundred years ago. A visit therefore round the chateau where he wrote and lived before driving to Chateau Lauferie in the Montravel region. We shall walk towards our picnic spot on a high point of the area before descending to meet the Dubard family who are producing the best wine in this area of calcareous clay soil on the south bank of the Dordogne river.. A chat and some tastings before we return to the chateau. Dinner at one of my favourite restaurants in Bergerac.

Walk: 6km



Day 6 CAVES and GARDEN

After breakfast we shall drive to Montignac to see the prehistoric cave at Lascaux. This is probably one of the most important caves in prehistory that humans have found so far! A must see. We shall then drive to Marqueyssac to see the wonderful gardens here. Lunch at Marqueyssac. Return to La Leotardie.

Day 7 DRIVING, WALKING and LUXURY

We leave the chateau to drive to Cahors. On the way we shall pass through the pretty bastide of Villereal where they make delicious pastries and on passed the bastide of Monflanquin before arriving at one of my favourite restaurants near where I live. Lunch at Le Caillau before a good walk in the Quercy region and then drive to Chateau Mercues for our last night. Chateau Mercues is a relais chateau and the former residence of the prince bishops of Cahors. It sits dramatically on a cliff perched above the river Lot. Dinner at the chateau in their one star Michelin restaurant. Walk 8km

Day 8 AU REVOIR

Drive to Toulouse airport after breakfast.



NOTE: Itinerary subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.

Please note also that it is very advisable to come down by car as you can take cases of wine home with you. You will not regret it! It is exceptionally good value. Bottles that may be costing you as little as 8 euros taste like double the price. Also some rare presentation wines that would be delicious for connoisseurs.