



TEXT BY GERI KOEPEL

most famous chateaux in the world; they have to be selective," says sommelier-conseil Lauriann Greene-Sollin, who co-owns the tour company with her husband, Jean-Pierre Sollin.

Her Florida-based tour company organizes three types of Bordeaux tours as well as tours to other acclaimed wine regions in Europe.

#### GROUP TOURS

Limited to 12 people, Bordeaux Prestige tours in May and June allow participants to visit and taste at all five first-growth Bordeaux chateaux, Chateau d'Yquem in Sauternes and wineries in Saint-Emillion for six days and five nights. Guests stay at Chateau Pichon-Longueville-Baron, a private residence with seven rooms and its own chef. The cost is \$5,595 per person.

September's Great Estates of Bordeaux itinerary, also six days and five nights, includes some first-growths, other classified growths and tiny "garage wine" producers making highly rated boutique or cult wines. For \$5,295 per person, guests stay in luxury hotels.

#### PRIVATE TOURS

These prepackaged tours for as few as two guests offer a more intimate, VIP experience at top chateaux and some flexibility with choice of hotel and wineries. As with group tours, Greene-Sollin takes clients to the best local restaurants, including those favored by area winemakers.

Choose two days, one night or three days, two nights. The cost is \$1,845 per person for two days.

## Add legs to your wine knowledge by visiting one of France's most important wine regions

Bordeaux wines are hot right now, with the 2005 vintage garnering raves from critics.

And, yes, it's nice to be able to get your hands on that bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild for the cellar. But to truly understand any wine, it's best to get a glimpse of it on its home turf.

French Wine Explorers offers an insider's look at the top Bordeaux chateaux, with tours that include entry to the most elite wineries in this famed region.

Many of the chateaux it visits allow only a certain number of prearranged appointments by trusted operators. "These are the

#### CUSTOM TOURS

The sky is the limit here — literally. If guests want to combine wine tours with hot-air-balloon excursions, French Wine Explorers can arrange it.

"We can get as extravagant as people want," Greene-Sollin says. Looking to add bicycle rides, cooking classes or cheese tastings? It can be done. One family spent \$50,000 on a five-day trip, including chauffeur service and a post-meal fireworks display for the father's 50th birthday.

Clients can combine regions with custom tours. For instance, they can also visit Champagne and Burgundy in France; Tuscany in Italy; Spain; or Portugal. Custom tours require reservations, and the more elaborate the request, the more advance notice required. The price starts at \$1,000 per person, per day, with a \$1,000 retainer fee.

Visit [wine-tours-france.com](http://wine-tours-france.com) or call 877-261-1500.