

WORLD TRAVEL

March/April 2016

MAGAZINE

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The Insider
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INSPIRE ME

Notable Look at the Extraordinary



Sunny fields in Tuscany, Italy



Photograph by Jaro Pienza Shutterstock

HISTORY by the GLASS

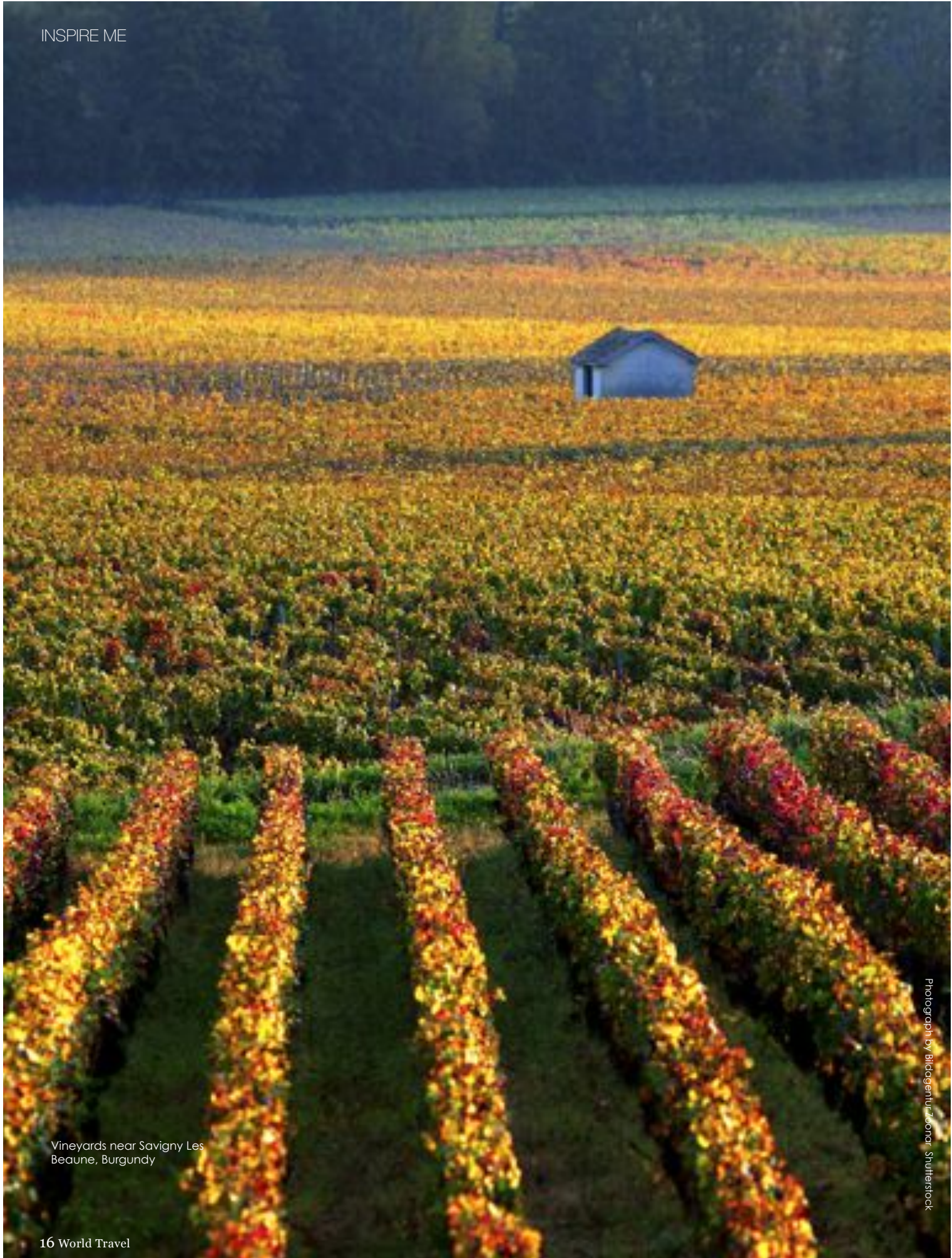
BY RACHEL OWNS

New wine destinations crop up from Auckland to Croatia to tiny places in South Africa and South America. Europe however remains a perennial favourite for connoisseurs who head there season after season. The birthplace of the art of wine making and the culture of wine drinking, Europe is without doubt the mecca for oenophiles the world over. We present some of the most popular wine destinations in Europe and the tours that visit vineyards from Bordeaux and Burgundy to Rhone, Provence and Tuscany.

Bordeaux's Clarets and sweet white wines

Bordeaux's fascinating tryst with wine making has its origins in the mid 1st century when the Romans brought wine to the area and later with the Dutch monopolising the trade in the 17th century. Today, more than 120,000 hectares are dedicated to wine production, making it the largest wine growing area in France that produces every day table wine on one end of the spectrum and expensive and prestigious wines on the other. More than 8,500 producers or châteaux with 54 appellations of Bordeaux wine are engaged in wine making in the region with 89% of the wine being the red or "claret" and sweet white wines (most notably Sauternes), dry whites, rosé and sparkling wines (Crémant de Bordeaux) making up the remainder.

A dedicated clientele of wine lovers take the well organised luxury wine tours, getting to experience the entire process of wine making from close quarters. Some of the world's most famous chateaux beckon with First Growths like Chateaux Margaux, Latour, or Lafite Rothschild. Tour hosts represent high-level Bordeaux specialists and insiders who ensure you don't just taste the most recent vintage in the barrel and sample fine older vintages but also interact with passionate cellar masters and chateau owners. First class accommodation and sumptuous meals prepared by the



Vineyards near Savigny Les
Beaune, Burgundy

Photograph by Bildagentur Zoonor Shutterstock

region's best chefs at private estates or fabulous Michelin-starred restaurants are part of the tour.

Bordeaux Prestige tour: Luxury lodging at a private wine producing estate where a small and intimate group has exclusive use of the Chateau.

Bordeaux Harvest Tour: Provides exclusive behind-the-scenes programme to show how wine is made, from grapes to glass, followed by VIP tastings of First Growths such as Chateau Mouton Rothschild, luxury accommodations and spa in the heart of Bordeaux.

Most 6-day tours are organised in September-October and priced at USD 6200

Burgundy's Chardonnays and dry red wines

Burgundy wine - Bourgogne or vin de Bourgogne made in eastern France comes from the beautiful valleys and slopes west of the Saône, a tributary of the Rhône. The most famous wines or "Burgundies" as they are called are dry red wines made from Pinot noir grapes and white wines made from Chardonnay grapes. Burgundy has a higher number of appellations d'origine contrôlée (AOCs) than any other French region, and is often seen as the most terroir-conscious of the French wine regions. As you explore the world-famous Côte d'Or ("Golden Slopes") home to illustrious Grand Cru's such as Romanée Conti, Chambertin, and Montrachet, you will discover the subtle play between land, sun and vine that brings out the most noble and diverse expressions of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes.

Burgundy Grand Cru Tour: Taste Grand Crus of Burgundy, including the quintessential Romanée-Conti as you immerse yourself in the complex and fascinating world of Burgundy wine for lovers of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Small group tours: Burgundy Wine Tours provide exclusive VIP tastings at the region's best estates, including top Premier and Grand Crus in Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits. There are small group tours to Grand Crus; private Great Estates tours for Burgundy & Champagne and tours to Great Estates of Burgundy. *The 6-day tours are held in May-June and in October and priced @USD7,600.*

Paris, the hub of wine tours across France

Paris is the hub for many wine lovers who take day trips by train. This helps you see the countryside and also return to Paris to catch up with the museums and other bustling city activities. A night stay at any of Vineyards in Loire valley for sampling wine or champagne can be arranged by your local hotel or specialised wine tour organisers. And if you want to stay in Paris itself, then

there are walking tours alongside the river where you sample local wines at Parisian wine bars.

Taste of Paris & Beyond: A 5-day package tour will allow you to pair your visit to Paris with a 6-day town and country experience in the French wine region. Discover major landmarks and hidden gems of the City of Light, stay at a lovely 4* luxury boutique hotel on the Left or Right Bank and discover the beauty and splendour of wine touring.

Rosé wines in Rhone & Provence

Provence (Provençal) wine comes from the French wine-producing region of Provence in southeast France. Throughout the region's history, viticulture and winemaking have been influenced by the cultures that have been present in Provence, which include the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Gauls, Catalans and Savoyards. Today, the region is known predominantly for its rosé wine, though white wine is also produced in small quantities throughout the region with the Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) region of Cassis specialising in white wine production. Wine Tours in the Rhone Valley and Provence boast some of the most spectacularly beautiful vineyards in France. Vines cover the landscape as far as the eye can see, punctuated by olive groves and lavender fields. Following the wide Rhone River south from Lyon, vineyards are perched perilously on impossibly steep slopes, giving this part of the valley a distinctive and dramatic look. The Northern Rhone is where Syrah and Viognier make prestigious wines such as Côte Rôtie, Hermitage, and Condrieu. Your tastings will include the best négociants such as Chapoutier and Guigal, and the top boutique producers, Cuilleron, Clape or Gérin. Enjoy luxury accommodations with Michelin-starred dining on the banks of the Rhone or in the charming city of Vienne with its amazing Roman ruins.

Rhone Valley Barge Tours: Barge cruises along the majestic Rhone, en route to grand cities and dramatic landscapes of Provence. The 4-12 guest charter deluxe barges are equipped with all modern amenities of a deluxe hotel. Excursions lead to the wine region of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the delightful towns of Avignon and Arles.

Provence Wine Tour Packages: Short, value-priced, pre-packaged private Provence wine tours feature the region's top estates, best 4-star hotels and finest restaurants.

Custom Provence Wine Tours: Go for customised Rhone Valley wine tours or Provence wine tours. Custom tours include VIP tastings at top wine estates, fascinating local sightseeing, visit to the finest hotels or chateaux and gourmet restaurants.



Leafy town square with fountain in a picturesque village in Provence, France



Photographs by Jennifer Fotolia

Red, white and sparkling wines in Loire Valley

The Loire Valley wine region includes the French wine regions situated along the Loire River from the Muscadet region near the city of Nantes on the Atlantic coast to the region of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé just southeast of the city of Orléans in north central France. In between are the regions of Anjou, Saumur, Bourgueil, Chinon, and Vouvray. The Loire Valley itself follows the river through the Loire province to the river's origins in the Cévennes but the majority of the wine production takes place in the regions noted above. Known for its majestic royal chateaux and great red and white wines, the Loire Valley is a favourite destination for wine lovers visiting France. Visiting the royal castles such as Chenonceau, Chaumont or the impressive Chambord Castle is like taking a walk back into the greatest moments of France's history. From the fairytale-like Azay le Rideau to the imposing Chateau d'Angers with its medieval Tapestry of the Apocalypse and the magical gardens of Villandry, there is a castle for every taste and fantasy. Visit Clos Lucé, Leonardo da Vinci's final home.

Loire Valley Wine Tours: Visit France's most romantic castles and taste great wines (red, white, sparkling) and add wine country touring combining it with a visit to Paris or elsewhere in France.

Loire Valley Tour Packages: Short, value-priced, pre-packaged private Loire Valley wine tours that feature the region's top estates, best 4-star hotels and finest restaurants.

Custom Loire Valley Tours: Go for a customised Loire Valley wine tour and the highest level of personal service with VIP tastings at top wine estates, fascinating local sightseeing and the finest hotels or chateaux and gourmet restaurants.

Dessert wines in Tuscany

Tuscan wine (Italian Toscana) is Italian wine from the Tuscany region. Located in central Italy along the Tyrrhenian coast, Tuscany is home to some of the world's most notable wine regions. Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano are primarily made with Sangiovese grape whereas the Vernaccia grape is the basis of the white Vernaccia di San Gimignano. Tuscany is also known for the dessert wine Vin Santo, made from a variety of the region's grapes. Tuscany has thirty-three Denominazioni di origine controllata (DOC) and nine Denominazioni di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG). In the 1970s a new class of wines known in the trade as "Super Tuscans" emerged.✚

Book these experiences at Wine-tours-france.com