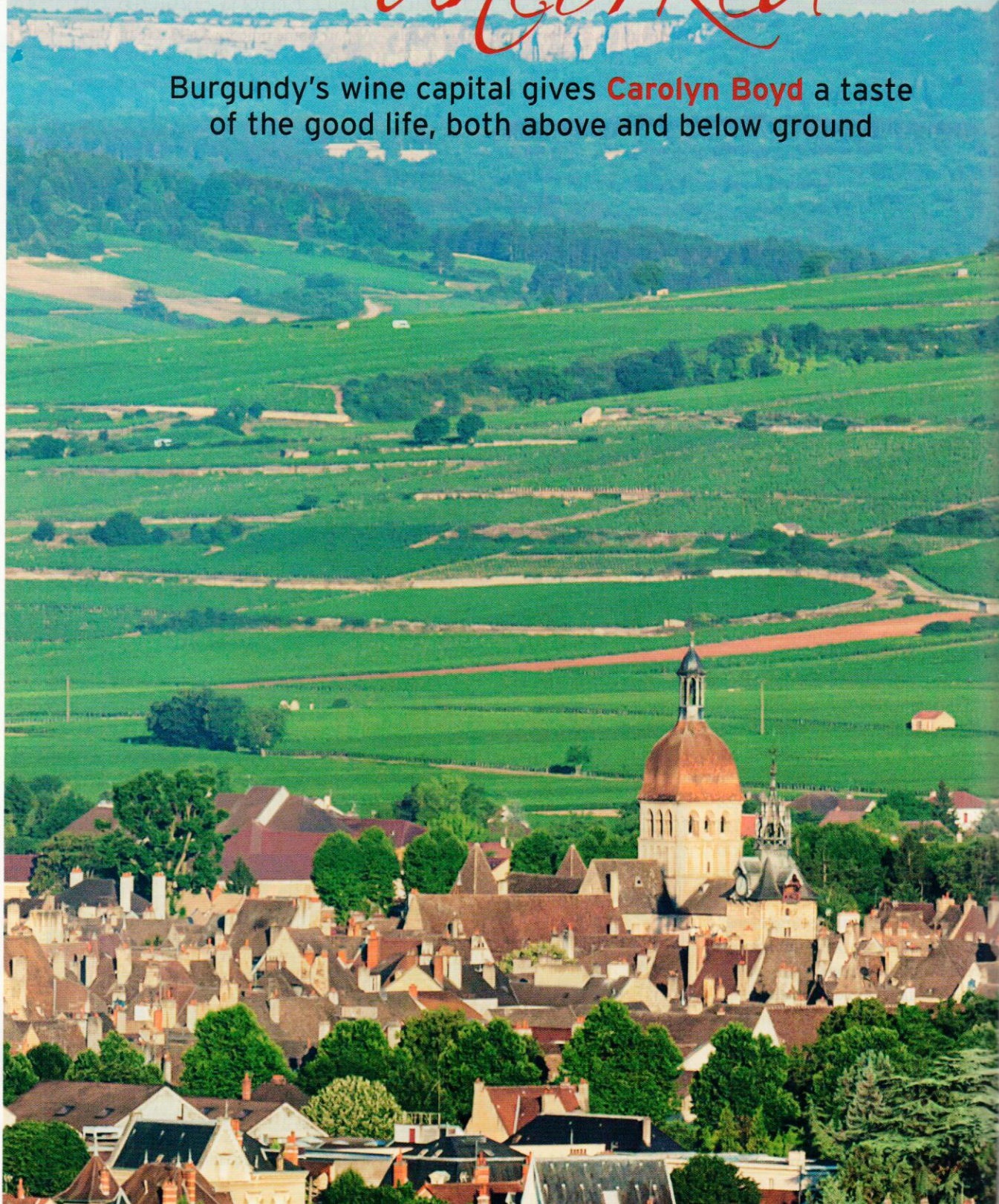


BEAUNE

Uncorked

Burgundy's wine capital gives **Carolyn Boyd** a taste of the good life, both above and below ground



In the gloomy light of the Joseph Drouhin wine cellars, which cover a hectare below the streets of Beaune, my guide Christophe Thomas points to a door covered in dust and cobwebs. “That’s where Maurice Drouhin escaped the Gestapo,” he tells me. “There are some spiral stairs, and this is the corridor that goes to the cellars of the Hospices de Beaune.” The dramatic story of Maurice Drouhin’s escape during World War II is among the most intriguing chapters in the long history of Maison Joseph Drouhin, one of the town’s most prestigious winemakers.

As Christophe, the firm’s export director, explains to me in the semi-darkness of the ancient cellars, Maurice Drouhin was heavily involved in the Resistance. When the Gestapo came for him in the early hours of that morning in 1944, he had already escaped into the cellars which led to the Hospices de Beaune, the town’s famous hospital. There, the nuns hid him for two months, until the town was liberated by the Allies in early September.

It just so happened, however, that the months of his absence were the most crucial in the winemaking calendar. “His wife had no clue how to run a winery, so she got a bit scared because she couldn’t meet him,” explains Christophe. “She went every day to pray, and the Mother Superior would go as well, and they would pass notes [between each other] and ask questions and get responses to what was needed in the winery. Maurice would write things like: ‘Don’t forget to buy barrels’.”

A visit to the Hospices de Beaune shows how the town’s charitable spirit dates back centuries

The story goes that after the war, Maurice was so grateful for the nuns’ help that he handed the Hospices de Beaune a lucrative gift. “He gave a massive amount of Beaune Premier Cru [vineyards] to thank them for saving his life. So every year, we buy back most of the production.”

In the depths of the cellars, Christophe points out the barrels – marked ‘Maurice Drouhin’ – which were bought in the last auction. The sale, which dates from 1859 and takes place over a long weekend in November, is one of the most prestigious in the French wine calendar. Proceeds go to the modern hospital and various charities – in 2016, the auction raised €8.4 million (around \$8.9 million). A visit to the Hospices de Beaune themselves, housed in the magnificent Hôtel-Dieu, puts the history in context and shows how the town’s charitable spirit dates back centuries. ➤➤

The town of Beaune and the vineyards of the Côte d’Or

With its multi-coloured tiled roof, the Hôtel-Dieu is the town's most iconic building. When you bear in mind the architecture of modern hospitals, it is hard to believe that the flamboyant Gothic building was intended as a hospital and not a palace. It was founded in 1443 by Chancellor of Burgundy Nicolas Rolin to care for the poor and sick as the country recovered from the Hundred Years War and the plague.

The *Grande Salle des Pôvres* must have had a soothing effect in itself, with its beautiful ceiling and 30 red, velvet-curtained beds. The museum tells how Rolin and his wife Guigone de Salins established the hospital, appointing a religious order to care for the patients. The stories of 15th-century remedies are fascinating, while the kitchen and apothecary show how early medicine drew on nutrition and herbs to treat the patients. Later, it became possible for people to 'buy' their care, which led the hospital to become the wealthy operation that it remains today. "It's probably the most profitable hospital in France," laughs Christophe when he tells me about it in the Drouhin cellars.

In the wine-tasting that follows the cellar visit, he tells me more about the famous vineyards that generate the area's wealth. The vineyards are divided into 'climats', parcels of land that were inscribed into Unesco's World Heritage list last summer. The 'terroir' changes so significantly over a relatively small distance that the wines resulting from the

vineyards offer a specific character and are highly sought after. Indeed, the world's most expensive wine comes from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, the Côte de Nuits between Dijon and Beaune, where red pinot noir is the main grape variety.

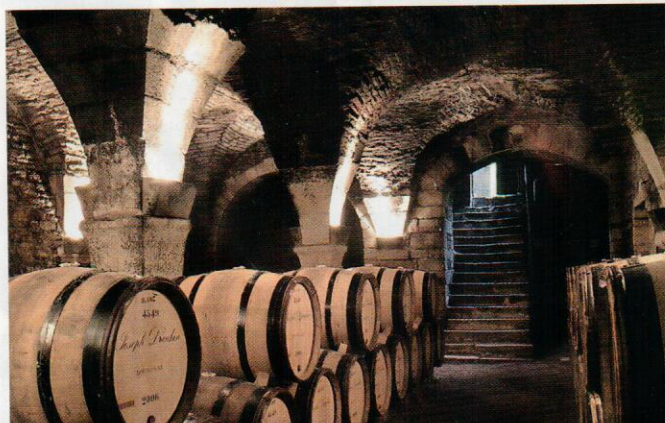
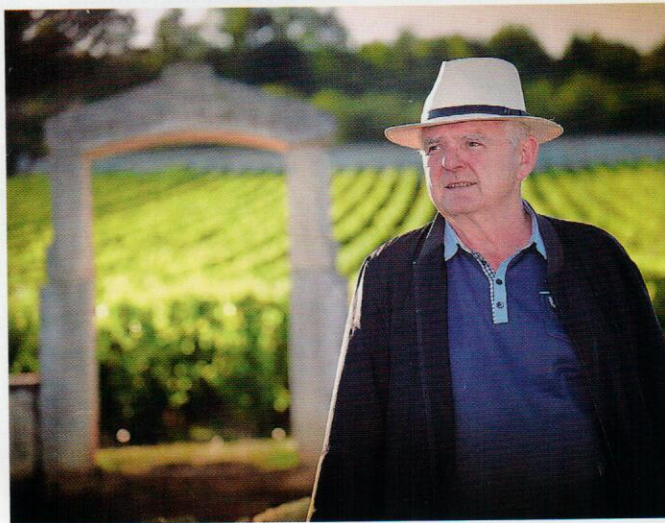
Closer to Beaune, however, there are a number of vineyards that specialise in white grapes and so I venture south of the town to one such area – the village of Puligny-Montrachet. Here, Olivier Leflaive continues his family's winemaking business that dates from 1635, making him the 18th generation to do so. He owns 18.5 hectares of vineyards but also buys in grapes to make his 82 different wines.

Jaw-dropping complexity

I meet him in his hotel-restaurant and as we walk to his winery, he explains how complex the winemaking process is in the Côte d'Or. "We have 1,247 different soils [each one constitutes the 'climat' or parcel], and each one has a different taste and name of wine," says Olivier as my jaw drops at the sheer scale and complexity of the wines here. "Every parcel is different, because of the soil; every vintage is different because of the weather; and every winemaker has his own technique."

A quick tour of the winery shows how carefully they treat the different wines, making sure to keep them separate. Later, in the restaurant, I get a better understanding of what Olivier means about 'terroir'.

BELOW, CLOCKWISE: Puligny-Montrachet vigneron Olivier Leflaive; A packed audience at the annual Hospices de Beaune wine auction; Maison Joseph Drouhin's Caves de la Collégiale in Beaune; **FACING PAGE:** Joseph Drouhin vineyards





On each table, there is a large glass jar (with a candle perched on the lid) which contains a pile of soil. An unorthodox table decoration perhaps, but when you look around the room and see the colours, textures and compositions of the soil in each of the jars, and realise that all 1,247 ‘*climats*’ would appear slightly different (all within a 50-kilometre stretch of land), the mind boggles.

“I have nine jars, I think, but I could have 82!” says Olivier. “A vine is the same everywhere, but the only difference between the wines is the soil. When you’re on the hill, the root can be 40 or 50 metres down because the vines are trying to find the water table again. When you’re on the flat part, they are one metre. The best wines are on the hill. Why? Because the root has to go very deep. Here, we have clay and limestone; clay gives the wine richness, but limestone gives the wine finesse, elegance and complexity, and the land on the hills is also limestone.”

Lunch at the restaurant brings together six of his wines with a simple but delicious menu, and the sommelier Ingrid talks me through them two by two, each course being matched to a *Premier Cru* and a *Grand Cru* vintage. The courses include a chicken dish, which is a nod to the region’s other great export: Dijon mustard.

Once back in Beaune, among the wine boutiques, bars and restaurants, a rather unusual museum is

dedicated to this condiment. Although a mustard museum wouldn’t ordinarily appeal, La Moutarderie Edmond Fallot presents the local delicacy in a fascinating way. You learn about its history in the region, and even get the chance to grind some seeds and create your own mustard. The shop, meanwhile, has beautiful jars that are ideal as gifts or souvenirs.

Of course, a trip to Burgundy wouldn’t be complete without taking a few bottles of the local wine home, and while the Joseph Drouhin and Olivier Leflaive wines were beautiful, the prices weren’t quite appropriate for Saturday night quaffing. I venture, therefore, to the Cook’s Atelier, a beautiful kitchen and wine shop run by mother-and-daughter team Marjorie Taylor and Kendall ➤

SAME
PLACE,
DIFFERENT
PACE

Tour the vineyards by bike

The vineyards around Beaune make for perfect cycling country and visiting by bike also allows for more wine tastings than if you are driving. The tourist office website lists bike hire companies and offers itineraries, which take you through the vineyards and pretty wine villages such as Santenay, Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet. You can also book cycling tours through bourgogne-evasion.fr. Alternatively, organise a stay with the Hungry Cyclist (thehungrycyclist.com), which offers fantastic food and wine holidays by bike in the area.

BEAUNE

Smith Franchini, who also offers cookery classes and culinary tours of Beaune. Wines are selected according to their tastes, rather than a loyalty to a particular *négociant* or *domaine*, and at reasonable prices, there is plenty of independently chosen wines to take home for easy drinking.

Chatting to the American expats gives me an appetite to return, but more for Beaune's gastronomy: "There's a great food scene here and people are passionate about local producers," says Marjorie, who ran a restaurant and cookery school in Arizona before upping sticks to join Kendall in France. They show me the upper floors of the bright and welcoming space, where they run the cookery school and offer lunch after the tours.

"In the morning, we go to the market, where the local producers gather, so you get to meet the cheesemaker or the organic farmer. Then we come back to the atelier and talk about the menu, and how to figure that out from what we have," Marjorie explains. "It's usually seven courses, with wine pairings. We've dubbed it the long French lunch!"

The experience sounds divine, and so with sensational food on offer, some friendly instructors to tell me how to cook it and thousands more wine vintages to taste, I can tell it won't be long before I'm back in Beaune. 🍷



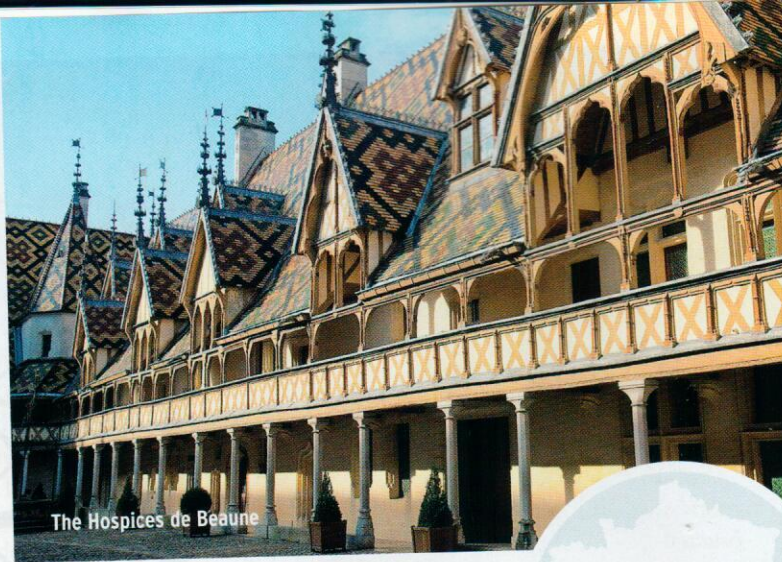
ABOVE: The Edmond Fallot mustard museum in Beaune

MORE ONLINE

Discover more about Beaune and our other favourite wine-producing towns in France

[www.completefrance.com/
language-culture/food-and-drink](http://www.completefrance.com/language-culture/food-and-drink)

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Francofile

Enjoy the flavours of Burgundy in and around Beaune

GETTING THERE

By rail: Carolyn travelled with Rail Europe. The trip from Paris Gare de Lyon to Beaune via Dijon (2hr) costs from \$78 return (tel: (US) 800 622 8600, (Can) 800 361 RAIL (7245), raileurope.com.)

By road: Beaune is a 3hr drive from Paris via the A6 autoroute.

Tel: (Fr) 3 80 22 30 68
brasserie-lemonge.com
Pleasant brasserie in the town centre, under new ownership. Good menu and excellent service.

La Dilettante

11 Rue du Faubourg Bretonnière
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 21 48 59
Charming wine bar and *épicerie fine*.

WHERE TO STAY

Le Cep

27 Rue Maufoux
21206 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 22 35 48
hotel-cep-beaune.com
Town centre hotel with excellent restaurant. Rooms from €157.

Le Montrachet

10 Place du Pasquier de la Fontaine
21190 Puligny-Montrachet
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 21 30 06
[chateauxhotels.com/
le-montrachet-319](http://chateauxhotels.com/le-montrachet-319)
Comfortable hotel with Michelin-starred restaurant and wonderful terrace and garden. Rooms from €157.

Les Caves Madeleine

8 Rue du Faubourg Madeleine
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 22 93 30
Cosy restaurant serving excellent wine and local produce.

La Table d'Olivier Leflaive

Place du Monument
21190 Puligny-Montrachet
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 21 37 65
olivier-leflaive.com

WHERE TO VISIT

Hospices de Beaune (Hôtel-Dieu)

Rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu

21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 24 45 00
hospices-de-beaune.com

Maison Joseph Drouhin

1 Cour du Parlement
(GPS address: Place du Général Leclerc)
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 24 84 05
drouhin-oenothèque.com

La Moutarderie Edmond Fallot

31 Rue du Faubourg Bretonnière
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 22 10 02
fallot.com

The Cook's Atelier

43 Rue de Lorraine
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 6 84 83 16 18
thecooksatelier.com

Collégiale Notre-Dame

Place Général Leclerc
21200 Beaune
Tel: (Fr) 3 80 24 77 95
Beautiful Romanesque church with Gothic additions.

WHERE TO EAT

Le Monge
7 Place Monge
21200 Beaune

TOURIST INFORMATION: Beaune and Pays
Beaunois tourist office, tel: (Fr) 3 80 26 21 30,
beaune-tourism.com; Burgundy tourist board,
burgundy-tourism.com