



Eat, drink and be very merry

A train ride from Paris to the storybook town of Beaune, the epicenter of wine in the medieval region of Burgundy, unveils an enduring culture with a love for the good things in life

Text and photos: Krista Connor

Vincent Martin and his young son Gaspard wade through a tangle of brambles toward the low stone wall, momentarily lost in the sunset glare. They gracefully scale the wall and slip into the vineyard beyond, surrounded by pine forest; I follow along after a minor scuffle with thorns and admittedly, with much less ease.

WHIMSICAL ADVENTURES

Breaking and entering alongside my hotel proprietor certainly wasn't on my to-do list today, which up until now has consisted of more of the same thing: eating, drinking local wines and meandering through the medieval village of Beaune, currently out of sight downhill. But as everything seems to go in Burgundy, this adventure is merely whimsical. Martin is part of a family of winemakers and we're only trespassing in his father's vineyard. If we were really intruders, I don't doubt that we'd be greeted with a friendly bellow and a loaf of freshly-baked bread and, if lucky, a bottle of grand cru to share. That's just how it seems to be here—unhappiness is hard to come by.

Gaspard darts from plot to plot to show me their truffle plantation made up of 600 trees, and we pluck fresh raspberries from the vine. In time, the vineyard will yield 3,000 bottles of wine. I can't help but feel that everyone I meet here has a touch of creative genius, be they baker, winemaker, cook, market vendor, or, most likely, all of the above combined.



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WINE CENTER

I'm staying with my mom at La Terre d'Or, Martin's family-owned bed and breakfast. It's located on the hill midway between the family's forested land and a panoramic swath of vineyards sloping down to the walled village of Beaune, three hours southeast of Paris.

Surrounded by some of the world's most famous wine villages, Beaune takes the title of "Capital of Burgundy Wines," thanks to its pinot noir, chardonnay and limestone soil. Only a small dot on the map—the entire Burgundy region accounts for a quarter of one percent of wine production worldwide—Beaune is one of the most important wine centers in France. At La Terre d'Or alone, a revolving door of specialists and importers take up residence throughout the year. The openness of the countryside extends beyond the physical space. Here, where you'd think the competition between winemakers would be thickest there's an interconnectedness. I learn this, one afternoon from the back seat



Feldur Workshop is a family business created and operated by furrier Heiðar Sigurðsson and his wife Kristín Birgisdóttir. They specialize in the design and production of genuine high-quality fur garments and accessories.

The main ambition of the business is to produce beautiful designs from prime quality fur that are both classic and modern.

Feldur Workshop also provides mending services for fur coats and other fur articles. This service is a part of their desire to make their creations and fur products in general, items that will last a lifetime and even be passed on to the next generation.



Feldur Workshop is located at Snorrabraut 56 in downtown Reykjavik. The workshop is both a stylish and cosy, displaying some of the fur products they've designed, while others are handmade on site.



The highlight for many visitors is the opportunity to observe the master furrier himself.

If you are interested in seeing Feldur Workshop's products, we recommend a visit to the workshop on Snorrabraut 56. Alternatively, there are a number of stores in Iceland that carry a selection of their items which you also can see online at www.feldur.is.





France wine country

of a Land Rover that's jostling uphill through the region's ubiquitous rolling vineyards.

TERROIR AND CLIMAT

In most wine regions like Bordeaux, one winemaker would own a sprawling vineyard, but that's not necessarily the case here. Our guide, Robert Pygott, explains Burgundy's distinct tradition of climat. Here, there are more than 1,000 fragmented plots and each could be owned by a different winemaker, sometimes with histories dating to Roman antiquity. The method is intentional, not haphazard. Because terroir varies wildly here, one small plot with its own microclimate and geological condition could produce a wine unlike another just a few rows away.

LOCAL SURPRISES

Today with Pygott, co-owner of Burgundy Discovery which works closely with small, family-run vineyards that rarely receive casual visitors, we chat with the down-to-earth, unstuffy owners of Domaine Dujardin, Domaine Lejeune and Domaine Glantenay. Pygott says most of these local producers don't sell to stores or restaurants and definitely don't export. "No need to because they easily sell it all locally," says Pygott. It's almost a relief to hear the region is safely tucked away within itself in cyclic tradition.

At Domaine Dujardin, winemaker Ulrich Dujardin shows us his cellar, which was once used by 12th-century monks of the same profession. Dusty bottles and time-stained barrels line the walls as they may have almost a thousand years ago. Back at La Terre d'Or, Martin reveals a surprise of his own: Beneath the B&B, a dug-out grotto dates to the same time period. The Martins have expanded the cave, so in maneuvering down the basement steps you've wandered into a chilly cavern. One that houses hundreds of wine bottles. And there's a Jacuzzi.



GOOD THINGS COME IN PAIRS

A region so revered for its wine can only be matched by one thing: food. Each morning we're met at breakfast on the terrace by assistant manager Fabrizio Rastelletti who chats about our plans for the day and offers thoughtful suggestions while setting out coffee, cheese, croissants and charcuterie.



And then we head down the hill into Beaune, made up of a traditional architectural character so perfectly distressed, slightly lopsided, and partially unhinged, with café tables and chairs tumbling effortlessly onto sidewalks outside. The pace of life is slow. It's not unusual to spot a lone pedestrian stop at a restaurant, slowly drink a glass of Perrier and continue on out of sight. Foreign tourists, while plentiful, don't drain the town of its personality.

Like its counterpart, at its culinary core Beaune is steeped in tradition. Think bœuf or lamb shank bourguignon, coq au vin or escargots de Bourgogne. Mother-daughter duo Marjorie Taylor and Kendall Smith Franchini of cooking school The Cook's Atelier point out that this steadfast hold onto custom is actually what makes the region so special. "Burgundy is still very traditional, but more importantly, we have access to many small farms and artisan food producers," says Marjorie. "As cooks, we feel the connection to the farmer is the most important part of creating good food. In this age of homogenization and convenience, it's important to not take them for granted and to hang on to traditions such as these to preserve them for the future."

Based out of a shop close to the town center, the women have created their gathering place to share their love of food and wine. Each Saturday the pair guides guests through the iconic Beaune market to purchase from their favorite food producers. Then they spend the day teaching classic French cooking techniques. Their first cookbook—The Cook's Atelier—is out this April.

Later on, in the morning, as we are about to leave Beaune, La Terre d'Or's Rastelletti offers one last bit of irrefutable logic as we mourn our pending departure from these country breakfasts. "You want a real French breakfast all the time?" he asks. "What you do is find a French man, marry him and move to France so you can eat these delicious foods every single day."

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HOW TO GET THERE

Take the vintage regional train (TER) from Paris to Beaune for a scenic ride. High-speed trains (TGV) are faster though pricier.

WHERE TO STAY

La Terre d'Or
La Montagne, Rue Izembart, 21200 Beaune
laterredor.com

TOURS

La Terre d'Or
Exceptional, engaging tours through the eyes of lifelong locals; visit close-knit, hard-to-access wineries, along with nearby villages, estates and more. (For info, see above.)

Burgundy Discovery
Visit area vineyards, meet winemakers, and experience dining and exploring like a local.
Rue des Forges, 21350 St. Thibault, Beaune;
burgundydiscovery.com

The Cook's Atelier
Explore the iconic Beaune market and take a cooking class with ingredients from the morning's find.
43 Rue de Lorraine, 21200 Beaune;
thecoatsonline.com



Glorious wine and food, rolling vineyards and the magnificent slow pace of country living... sounds like a vacation in heaven to us.



WOW air offers cheap flights to Paris, France from USA and Canada, every day of the week all year round. During the summer months we also offer flights to Lyon, which is closer to Burgundy, 3 times a week.