

Wine tasting IN BEAUNE

Words by Tonia Buxton



My wonderful husband finally got himself organised and arranged for a trip away for us, I'm the one that normally does all of that so I was surprised and thrilled when he told me he had done it. He organised a tour of the Burgundy wine region, where the world's most expensive wines come from, and just happen to be his favourite too Pinot Noir, mines a full bodied Malbec, but don't tell the French.

We arrived at the beautiful Hostellerie Le Cèdre, set in stunning grounds, and of course the first thing we did was have a glass of wine. The hotel is walking distance from the centre of the pretty and quaint town so we decided to go for a walk, there were lots of lovely shops but without a doubt my favourite was the Frommagery, full of local cheese, olive oils and spices. On the hotel's recommendation, we had lunch at Caves Madeleine. We had the 'menu fix' which is like a 3 course dish of the day, and is something I would advise everyone to do when in France, it normally means that you are getting something freshly prepared, using seasonal ingredients from the region. It was lovely, rustic and full of locals which is always the best place to eat.

We then walked to the first of our wine tastings, it was at Joseph Drouhin, a large winery set right in the middle of town. If you are there it is worth a visit and they have a wonderful cellar, but I prefer the smaller family run wineries.

The next day we met Simon from Heritour Voyage (@heritourvoyagefr) and he is what made our holiday so special, he was our very own driver and guide, through his contacts we met and visited some of the most wonderful wineries and vineyards of the region over our two day stay. He is a complete historian with in-depth knowledge about the history, terrain, culture and gossip, that surround this amazing wine region.

We learnt that 25 of the 33 Grand Cru vineyards of the region were there in front of our eyes on a strip of land that was 1.5km wide and 10 km long. We visited Morey-Saint-Denis, where Salma Hayek's husband bought a small vineyard/winery for 300 million euros!! These wines are highly sought and you really have to develop a great pallet and nose to be able to differentiate between a Regional (the cheapest), Commune, Single vineyard, Premier Cru and Grand Cru, as the grapes for them are all grown on the same patch of land, just a bit lower or higher than the other. We did a lot of swilling, aerating and tasting, still not sure I quite have what it takes to be a sommelier, but I had fun learning.

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Whilst in Beaune we were lucky enough to meet some amazing wine producers, I loved all their stories, some family run, handed down and evolving through the generations like Domaine Captain-Gagnerot (@capitaingagnerot) and some that were spiritually called to the land like Pascal Marchand, the Rock star/poet of winemaking at Marchand-Tawse (@marchand_tawse) a film has been made about his journey called Grand Cru.

We also got to eat and drink some wonderful food and wines, I loved that a sommelier would wine match my dishes, only problem with that is if we were having a 4 course meal, that was 4 glasses of wine too! Some of my favourites were, lunch at La Rôtisserie Du Chambertin which also has a Michelin starred restaurant attached. I just loved Le Bistro Du Bord De L'eau at Hostellerie de Levernois, which I will one day go back and stay there, as the grounds are just so stunning. I had the best liver salad at Ma Cuisine, a little bistro in town. We did also visit some classic style very formal restaurants like Loiseau des Vignes, which serve nouvelle cuisine but I prefer the more authentic experience and food.

Of course you can't visit all these wonderful vineyards and not buy wine, though I know I need to develop some patience as some of the wines we bought need 5-10 years to mature, thankfully we also purchased some ready to drink now.

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