

Wine Tasting in the Rhone Wine Region



Highlights

Spend three days in the Rhone wine region learning all there is to know about wine tasting and the local grapes. Your hosts are a qualified wine tutor and a gourmet cook and the base for your stay, a converted Benedictine Priory. You won't want to leave!

The Rhone wine region lies in South Eastern France between the cities of Lyon and Avignon. The region is particularly famous for its production of red wines, the majority of which are labeled with the Cotes du Rhone appellation. Probably the most famous of these reds is Chateaufort du Pape, one of the more premium and high quality wines.

Your base for this wine tasting break is La Madelene, a beautiful converted Benedictine priory in the foothills of Mont Ventoux. With the limestone needle-like Dentelle Crags to the west, you have the perfect location for a relaxing (and educational) break.

During the course of the three days, your hosts will teach you all there is to be known about the wines of the region. Philip, having left his job in the world of advertising, has retrained and is now a qualified wine instructor whilst Jude takes care of the culinary side, serving up delicious food.

Your course begins with Philip tutoring you in the art of wine-tasting and identifying the different locally grown grapes in the on-site atelier. Over the next 2 days, you will visit several vineyards tasting some of the regions best Cotes du Rhones and Chateaufort du Pape. The final day sees you tasting dessert wine before heading back home (with several bottles in your backpack!)

Is it for me?

Holidays at La Madelene are not only for wine connoisseurs, but for beginners, you just need to like wine! So if you don't know your Syrah from your Grenache, don't worry, you will by the end of the tour!

Tours are suitable for couples and singles and older families. Clearly this is not a weekend to bring young children on. Firstly, they wouldn't be able to drink, secondly this is a peaceful retreat and both the guests and the hosts would like to keep it that way!

Accommodation

La Madelene was originally a Benedictine priory dating from the late 12th century. The Chateau was built on a mound of sandstone, and the arched chapel, which has been fashioned into the dining hall, is the largest relic of the era. In the recent past, the property has served as a farm, and home to French novelist Marie Cardinal. Today the property has undergone major renovations, and now has six double bedrooms, a swimming pool, lounging lawn and terrace area, and is surrounded entirely by fruit trees, creating a relaxing secluded stay for guests.

If the weather is nice, you will dine under the stars on the terrace, if it's cooler, you'll be in the chapel. Either way, you're in for a treat. Jude serves up delicious Provencal meals using fresh, locally sourced ingredients. A hearty breakfast of freshly baked goods from the local boulangerie will tee you up for a day's tasting! Lunches are usually salads, cured meats and local cheeses whilst dinners are lengthy affairs, five courses of gourmet

Prices from

821 GBP (4 days) per person.

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cooking with dishes such as poached cod or marinated lamb as a main course. All of this (apart perhaps from breakfast) accompanied by Philip's choice of wine. Included in the tour are meals out at two of our favourite restaurants usually lunch at Verger des Papes at Chateauneuf du pape and dinner at St.Hubert in Entrechaux.?

Included in the tour are meals out at two of your hosts' favourite restaurants usually lunch at Verger des Papes at Chateauneuf du pape and dinner at St.Hubert in Entrechaux.?

Itinerary

The itinerary for the 3 night tour looks like this;

Day 1: Arrive at La Madelene in the late afternoon/early evening, settle in, host will go over the upcoming itinerary, and serve drinks on the terrace. Dinner will be served in the dining room (the old chapel) and guests will taste two fine wines over dinner, perhaps a white Chateauneuf du Pape such as Nalys 2006 and a red such as Roger Sabon's cuvee Prestige 1999.

Day 2: After breakfast on the terrace a briefing on the Rhone valley will take place in the Atelier (workroom) followed by a tutored tasting, allowing guests to get accommodated with the major grape varieties of the region - Syrah, Grenache, Marsanne, Roussanne, Viognier. After a buffet lunch, guests will visit two of the best estates along the Dentelles de Monmirail escarpment, the first tasting at Louis Barruol's superb Chateau de Saint Cosme at Gigondas, the oldest estate of the appellation with a grand reputation, as well as Domaine Mourchon at Seguret , a renowned Cotes du Rhone village noted for their remarkable appellation.. Returning to La Madelène for aperitif on the terrace, followed by a four- course meal at one of the host's favorite restaurants.

Day 3: Guests scurry straight to the pride of southern Rhone: Chateauneuf du Pape, tasting at three of the great names in the area. First the Domaine Vatican where the Diffonty family cured wines from the very special Le Crau vineyards. The second visit might be Domaine Pegau , with traditional wines made by the appellation's premier female wine maker Laurence Feraud, or Domaine Solitude, where guests are treated to a tasting in their private tasting room. Lunch is held at Verger des Papes just below the ruins of the old papal summer palace, concluding the day with a tasting at Chateau La Nerthe with it's stunning 18th century chateau and ancient cellars. Return to La Madelène in time to recharge, swim and prepare for aperitif on the terrace before a four-course dinner, accompanied of course by some delectable bottles of Gigondas and Chateauneuf du Pape, perhaps a 2003 Goubert Cuvee Florence and a 2000 Beaucastel.

Day 4: After breakfast guests will drive along the scenic road past Suzette high up in the Dentelles for the final Domaine visit - to Domaines de Bernadines, which produces one of the best Beaumes de Venise dessert wine as well as many tasty dry Muscats and fine Rosé. The tour concludes around noon, returning to La Madelene, where guests will then pack their belongings, and depart the chateau.

Details

Getting there

Guests can arrive by air, train, or car. By air, guests can travel to Nimes (100km), Marseilles (110km) or Avignon (40km) airports for groups of less than 4 people, you will need to drive or get a taxi from the airport. Transfers can be arranged for larger groups. By train, in the summer months you can get the Eurostar direct to Avignon.

Price includes

Accommodation, all breakfasts, lunches and meals taken at La Madelène or meals at restaurants mentioned in the detailed itineraries, tutored tastings and briefings at La Madelène, and guided tours of all domaines. The only cash needed is for souvenirs and wine purchases!

Price based on two people sharing a room.

Available

Jan—Oct

Typical Duration

4 days

Comfort level

Refined (boutique or luxury accommodation and food)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed