

These are the best vineyard hotels to visit in France

We've picked out 25 of the loveliest spots for tastings, delicious food, and unbeatable views in this wine lover's paradise – with no drive home afterwards



[Nina Caplan](#) | Thursday September 19 2024, 12.01am, The Times

If France, to the *rosbifs* across the Channel, is synonymous with wine, life on a French vineyard appears to be *la vie en rose*: waking up to hillsides decorated in greenery heavy with bunches of grapes and spending evenings sipping our own wines. That's a fantasy — running a vineyard is really hard work. But the fantasy is well within reach, because staying on or near a wine estate offers all the fun with none of the graft.

Here are those lovely rows of vines, seen from a comfortable bedroom, and there are the wines in the tasting room or on the table, accompanied by an excellent meal. The winemakers or their neighbours are always happy to show an enthusiast around their cellars and their products — and there are no wine regions in France that don't also feature talented chefs working hard to provide suitable accompaniments to what's in the bottle.

There are wineries all over France, as far north as Champagne and as south as you can get without falling into the Mediterranean. But, while places like Corsica and Provence drew tourists for the landscape and the beaches, who then discovered the wines, the great regions tended not to welcome visitors at all. How things have changed. Now it's possible to find a range of accommodation and wine-themed activities in Champagne, Bordeaux and even Burgundy.

There are plenty of places to delight wine enthusiasts who want a château with a luxurious pool and spa, and even more for those who prefer a simple guest house — perhaps with a table d'hôte, a good meal served without fuss at a communal table often accompanied by the host's own wines. For those looking for something more unusual, France has discovered the joys of quirkier accommodation: treehouses overlooking the vines, luxury pods or large barrels with beds.

Any of these, depending on desire and budget, can form the perfect base for exploring a wine region, whether it's a place that is familiar from bottles opened back home or a new discovery. As for those who just like a nice glass or two, a French vineyard stay is a way to guarantee that what ends up in that glass will indeed be nice. And those bringing along undersized non-drinkers have nothing to worry about, because these regions have plenty of other activities, from museums to beaches, that needn't involve alcohol.

5. Château de Bagnols, Bagnols, Rhône



This 13th-century castle has been immaculately restored

Beaujolais deserves more love: squeezed between the Rhône and Burgundy, it is underestimated as a wine and as a beautiful wine region. This 13th-century castle, with the largest gothic fireplace in France, was immaculately restored by Helen Hamlyn, the wife of the late publishing magnate Lord Hamlyn, to a modern version of medieval finery. It is now a member of the Relais & Châteaux group and makes a great base for exploring Beaujolais — an adventure that can start with a hike through the vineyards just beyond its ramparts. There's a fine-dining restaurant and a café in the inner courtyard, a spa and wine-tastings (price on demand). The staff can organise all sorts of local tours, by car, bike or on foot, and the delicious delights of Lyons are 17 miles away.

Details Room-only doubles from £284 (chateaudebagnols.com/en)

[Book a stay](#)

9. Château Cordeillan Bages, Pauillac, Gironde



The wine list runs to 1,800 top-tier bottles at this vineyard

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Despite the appellation's many prestigious classed growths (premier cru, deuxième cru etc), there weren't many tourists showing up in Pauillac until Jean-Michel Cazes took over the family estate in the early 1970s. By the time he died in 2023, aged 88, he had renovated the entire village of Bages, including his châteaux Lynch-Bages and Ormes de Pez, and founded this beautiful 28-room Relais & Châteaux hotel, with its heated pool, works of art and designer furniture. The restaurant, Café Lavinal, is a few steps away in the village, but don't let the word café fool you: the products are local, the dishes delicious and the wine list runs to 1,800 top-tier bottles (wine tastings from £63.50pp).

Details Room-only doubles from £210 (cordeillanbages.com/en). Fly to Bordeaux

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15. Château de Valmer, La Croix Valmer, Var

This 15-acre organic wine estate and 44-room Relais & Châteaux hotel is just outside the charming village of La Croix Valmer and only eight minutes' walk from a private beach (where they have a second hotel), although the pool and well-appointed spa are even closer. In addition to the comfortable accommodation in what used to be a *bastide*, or country house, there are a couple of spectacular treehouses and a two-bedroom villa. The restaurant has a Michelin star, helped no doubt by access to a kitchen garden full of organic vegetables — and, of course, its rosé wine (wine tastings complimentary). There are complimentary wine tastings from Wednesday to Sunday (2pm-7pm) — and while it's hard to remember in this peaceful spot shaded by palm trees, just down the road is the glamour of St Tropez.

Details B&B doubles from £310 (chateauvalmer.com/en). Fly to Nice

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20. Château de la Gaude, Aix en Provence, Bouches du Rhône



Château de la Gaude is an elegantly converted 18th-century country house

The great 19th-century artist Paul Cézanne painted Mont St Victoire many times, and gazing at it from this Relais & Châteaux hotel in the beautiful Provençal countryside just outside Aix en Provence, it's easy to understand why. Château de la Gaude is an elegantly converted 18th-century *bastide*, or country house, dotted with artworks and surrounded by vines — it's still a working winery (wine tasting from £21pp). There are seven lovely bedrooms that have retained their period features, and another seven in the former farmhouse across the courtyard, plus a converted winemaker's hut and a couple of well-designed standalone rooms. The spa is very smart and the chef Matthieu Dupuis Baumal takes time out from preparing Michelin-starred dishes to make tapas that accompany wines by the glass in the cellar, which on Mondays and Thursdays becomes a bar called L'Ivresse (which means drunkenness).

Details Room-only doubles from £295 (chateaudelagaude.com). Fly to Marseilles

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