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Magazine



Nigel Slater

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Magazine

Labour U-turn on freebies

Starmer's top team will no longer accept donations — but new rule only applies to clothes

Steven Swinford Political Editor
Chris Smyth, Oliver Wright

Sir Keir Starmer and his top team will no longer accept donations for clothes after the prime minister bowed to pressure from senior colleagues.

The prime minister's allies admitted last night that there was a "perception" issue after he accepted clothing worth £16,000 and glasses worth £2,485 paid for by Lord Alli, a prominent Labour donor. Rachel Reeves, the chancellor,

admitted accepting £7,500 in donations for clothing that were registered as "support" for her office. Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister, accepted donations worth £3,550 from Alli that were declared as a "donation in kind for undertaking parliamentary duties".

The decision, which is only applicable to clothing and glasses, rather than hospitality and other similar donations, represents a significant reversal by Starmer on the eve of Labour's first conference since winning the election.

He had previously defended the £100,000 he had received in donations for clothing, gifts and hospitality, insisting that it was all properly declared. Cabinet ministers publicly supported him by saying that it was important that the prime minister should look his best on behalf of the British people.

Alli also bought clothes worth more than £5,000 and provided a personal shopper for Starmer's wife, Victoria.

The decision by Reeves and Rayner to declare the donations as generic gifts

rather than specifically clothing is likely to raise questions over Starmer's promise to lead a government of transparency.

One cabinet minister suggested that the No 10 operation, which has been embroiled in a briefing war this week, was to blame for failing to shut the row down. "He needs people who will make sure there's not a distraction around this kind of thing so he can focus on the big issues," the minister said. "There was nothing transactional about this and maybe he Continued on page 2

INSIDE TODAY



Our crash couples course

After 27 years of marriage

Weekend



Toyah Willcox

Strictly is what a woman my age needs

Weekend

The best places to stay in a vineyard

Weekend



Table talk Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister, joined the King at Dumfries House, Ayrshire, headquarters of Charles's charity foundation, to discuss youth violence



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Travel



'A string of giant silverbarked eucalyptus backs a dusting of soft, biscuit-coloured sand'

Lucy Ferrin visits the unspoilt Greek island of Kos

Château de Berne, Flayosc, Var



22 best French vineyard stays

From a charming gîte in Burgundy to a cool hotel in Champagne, wine expert **Nina Caplan** knows the loveliest spots to book

If France, to the rush of across the Channel, is synonymous with wine, life on a French vineyard appears to be *le enraciné*: waking up to hillsides decorated in greenery heavy with bunches of grapes and spending evenings sipping our own wines. That fantasy is well within reach, because staying on or near a wine estate offers all the fun with none of the graft of owning your own vineyard.

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 such as Corsica and Provence draw 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 chateau with



Hôtel Crillon le Brave, Vaucluse

a luxurious pool and spa, and even more for those who prefer a simple guest house with a good meal. 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. A French vineyard stay is a way to guarantee that what ends up in that glass will indeed be nice. And those bringing along non-drinkers have nothing to worry about, because these regions have plenty of other activities, from museums to beaches, that needn't involve alcohol.

Great stays next page

Villa La Coste Le Puy-Saint-Remy, Bouches du Rhône

Between Aix-en-Provence and the Luberon, sits an extraordinary estate, tucked up by the property magnate Patrick Mollard. Château La Coste is a whimsy with 300 acres of vine, the limestone Villa La Coste and the stone-filled Auberge. Between them, there have been and are still being produced from glass to Argentinian cuisine to a one-of-a-kind hotel. From 1920 and 1930, designed by a host of architects, they include an art center by Pablo Picasso, a spa by Jacques-André Boncompagni, and other spaces by Frank Gehry and Bruce Poon Li, with the high-profile architect to match. Alexander Calder, Andy Goldsworthy and Lucien Kravits are all represented. And when you visit for culture is what, there's the Institut de la Vigne, where there have been tastings from 1970.

Château La Coste only opens from 10:30 AM to 6:00 PM. For more info, visit www.villa-lacoste.com. For more info, visit www.villa-lacoste.com.



Domaine Turboureich, Haut-Rhin, Alsace

Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey, Lot-et-Garonne, Centre

Park of this last castle date from the 13th century, but the story that remains is 18th, when Louis XV began first planned vineyard. Today, the 40 acres of vine are produced by traditional means, with glassed cellars, and the château has been produced and restored to its original state from that time and another. But, although with 18000 bottles, which is limited to the local staff, there are more than 10000 bottles, which is limited to the local staff. There are more than 10000 bottles, which is limited to the local staff. There are more than 10000 bottles, which is limited to the local staff.



Château de Naxelles, Haute-Normandie, Île de France

Château de Naxelles, Haute-Normandie, Île de France

Less than two miles beyond Amiens, which has one of the great castles of the Liane Valley, is a 16th-century chateau that is now the village. Rooms are bright and airy, with a large central hall that is now the village. Rooms are bright and airy, with a large central hall that is now the village. Rooms are bright and airy, with a large central hall that is now the village.



Château de Saurat, Gironde, Nouvelle-Aquitaine

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Main body of text containing various articles and descriptions of chateaux and wine regions.

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

► 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 Baumat 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 (or "drunkenness").

Details Room-only doubles from £295 (chateauadelagaude.com). Fly or take the train to Marseilles

Maison Zugno Barretaine, Jura

The Jura is the birthplace of natural wine and many of the original stars of

this style can be found on the wine list at this charming nine-room hotel, which has a restaurant name-checked by the Michelin Guide. Products are local (some from the kitchen garden); plastic is banned. The wines come from round the corner, except when they come from round the other corner: Burgundy is 50 miles west. There's a large terrace, a pool, tennis court and spa, and an extra bedroom in the grounds surrounded by trees, with fabulous views. Tastings will start in 2025.

Details Room-only doubles from £180 (maison-zugno.com/en). Fly to Dijon or take the train to Dole

Le Clos du Grand Bois, Domaine Joseph Lafarge Ligny, Saône et Loire

The Lafarge family have been making wine in this southern part of Burgundy since the 1720s. Their sparkling is particularly good, although the region is better known for still whites. Accommodation ranges from classic rooms and gîtes to barrels big enough for a family — one that gets on well. An extra advantage is that Anthony Lafarge saves half his wine production to sell to guests (wine tastings from £250pp). The barrels are the most fun, even if washing facilities are in a sanitary block, and while there is no conventional restaurant, platters or a grill can be ordered, with excellent local products —



Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey Lique, Sommes, Gironde

and this is Burgundy, of course, halfway between Tournus and Mâcon, so there are restaurants everywhere.

Details Room-only doubles from £75 (josephlafarge.com). Fly or take the train to Dijon

Domaine de Peretti della Rocca Figari, Corse du Sud

The island of Corsica is famous for beaches, mountains and Napoleon but it deserves to be known for its wines too, and there can't be many better bases for exploring those than a wine estate. This one, near Figari in the south, has four charming rooms — straw lampshades, colourful linen, terraces with lovely views — and three two-bed *bergeries*, sheepshelters converted into peaceful

accommodation, with private pools. There are also treeshouses overlooking the vines and olive trees. The poolside restaurant specialises in local dishes and while it too has lovely views of the vines, there's also the option to eat among them, drinking the wines within a grape's throw of the fruit that made them (tour, wine tasting and platter from £34pp).

Details Room-only doubles from £130 (deperettidellarocca.com). Fly or take the train to Figari

Château de Pizay Bellevue en Beaujolais, Rhône

Beaujolais has ten named crus, the areas that make the region's most prestigious and delicious wines, and this hotel sits in the heart of Morgon, one of the best known. So, in between exploring the gardens laid out by the 17th-century landscape designer André Le Nôtre or playing tennis or billiards or lounging in the spa or heated pool, there is the option to visit prestigious vineyards. Then again, the estate has almost 200 acres of its own vines, plus a *certhèque* with things to sniff and read as well as taste and buy, a restaurant with a good wine list and a bar. Leaving the premises is strictly optional. A 45-minute tour of the "sensory experience" plus tasting from £17pp.

Details Room-only doubles from £143 (chateau-pizay.com). Fly or take the train to Lyons

Château de Bagnols Bagnols, Rhône

Beaujolais deserves more love: squeezed between the Rhône and Burgundy, it is underestimated both 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 just 17 miles away.

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

Château Cordeillan Bages Pauillac, Gironde

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 or take the train to Bordeaux

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

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