



FALLING IN LOVE WITH BEAUNE, ONE GLASS OF BOURGOGNE AT A TIME

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As we boarded the train headed to the capital of the Burgundy region, I didn't know what to expect other than copious tastings of a wine I had favored long before moving to Paris. As with any weekend sojourn in my adopted country, a thrilling anticipation accompanied me as my companion and I arrived and entered the ramparts distinguishing Beaune's old town. I eagerly inhaled the medieval air, curiously eyeing every shuttered window and wooden door until reaching our own. A fusion of two 16th-century mansions that entertained the likes of King Henry XIV, our hotel welcomed us with the same royal treatment. Settling into a room elegantly outfitted in palatial furnishings and larger than most Parisian apartments, I happily forgot what century it was. Was all of Beaune this charming? It appeared so. The first taste of Bourgogne was savored at one of the town's gastronomic locales, where each plate was complemented by a glass of red or white. Could this be the start of a romance I pondered, sipping on my Grand Cru. I did have a long track record with falling in love with places.

Saturday morning found us mingling with the locals over baskets of fresh produce at the weekly farmer's market. Red and white umbrellas with a backdrop of pastel stone facades made it feel like a film set. Were we the extras? Happily taking on the role, we made our way around the fruit stalls, ending with a cheese tasting and a peek into the covered fish market. The next scene

found us admiring the ornate Hospices de Beaune, once upon a time a hospital for the poor. Dating back to 1443, this architectural marvel composed of vibrant tiles, grand Gothic chimneys and a vast open courtyard, now serves as an illustrious museum where we again lost track of time. Every room brought me back to a time long gone, but clearly not forgotten. I could already picture the film that was being shot, at least in my mind.

History once again beckoned, around the corner at Château de Beaune. Built by King Louis XI in the 15th-century, this ancient castle holds its own grape-infused treasures. It is now home to Bouchard Père & Fils, one of the most historic wine estates in the region, where we tasted a series of incredible wines - some more than 100 years old! How many bottles could we smuggle back to Paris, I wondered...

While the town of Beaune seduced us with its tangle of cobbled streets, each leading to a setting more scenic than the last, acres of leafy vines awaited. With our guide in tow, we drove past picturesque villages, stretches of vineyards fading into the distance as we searched for lesser known producers. Domaine Jacques Prieur proved just that with their appellations of Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits in production since planting their vines in 1868. Lessons in viticulture continued with a stop at one of Burgundy's smallest wineries where the producer himself was

leading the tasting. Life lessons also flowed freely as he shared stories of life amidst the vines. What could be better paired with local wine than local wisdom.

Returning to our temporary home with its cozy fireplace, I wondered whether it was the effect of the wine, or if I had indeed fallen for this picture-perfect medieval town. Undeniably, it was the natural beauty, historic prestige, and boundless allure of Beaune that captured my heart. The region's legendary wine came a close second.

