

# Bed down in the BORDEAUX VINEYARDS

**Kasia Dietz** heads to Graves and Sauternes in Gironde, where she enjoys fine wines and dreamy hotels



“COSY UP IN ONE OF THE ROOMS BEFORE DIPPING INTO THE THERMAL BATH, WHIRLPOOL SPA AND HAMMAM AT THE VINO THERAPIE SPA”



**Above and left:** Relax in the grounds of Les Sources de Caudalie; a statue in the garden at Les Sources de Caudalie

decorative columns and fountains when strolling through the surrounding park. Located in the commune of Léognan, this area is part of the prestigious Pessac-Léognan appellation and is home to several Crus Classés de Graves. The four properties that make up the Rodrigues-Lalande estates are a Franco-Portuguese family affair. To explore these and other notable wineries (where the wines will flow with ease), hop on a bike tour led by Arnaud Decroix, of Ateliers au Château.

## RESPITE FOR MIND AND BODY

A visit to the Graves region isn't complete without a tasting at Château Smith Haut Lafitte. This 67-hectare single-block terroir of Garonne gravel, owned and run by Florence and Daniel Cathiard, is considered the 'most Graves of the Graves'. A guided tour of the estate includes a tasting of the highly-acclaimed red and white blends using the seven Bordeaux grape varieties – all harvested by hand. Take note of the contemporary sculptures dotting the property: a new one is added annually to celebrate the harvest. If you can find the portal, enter the Forêt des Sens (Forest of the Senses), a ten-hectare open-air museum of poetic sculptures by local contemporary artists. Before returning to the vines, inhale the scents of the medicine garden's herbs and pause at the honey house.

In the very heart of the vineyards, Alice and Jérôme Tourbier opened 5-star hotel Les Sources de Caudalie in 1999 and have been honouring the fertile land ever since. It's the perfect spot to rest mind and body: cosy up in one of the 62 rooms and suites before dipping into the thermal bath, whirlpool spa and hammam at the Vinotherapie Spa. The earthy glow is real: Caudalie's organic products contain anti-ageing properties thanks to polyphenols in the grape seeds. Treat yourself to a 'Ritual of the Vines' treatment, which includes a Crushed Cabernet scrub and a rejuvenating massage and facial. The grape theme continues over dinner at the two-Michelin-starred La Grand Vigne, where Chef Nicolas Masse presents the best »

A visit to Bordeaux, France's wine capital, offers wine aficionados the chance to take a deep dive into the world of this earthy libation at the first-class museum Cité du Vin. Savoury sips can continue over dinner at Mondrian Bordeaux Les Carmes, the 19th-century wine cellar-turned-Philippe Starck-designed hotel, where celebrated Japanese chef Masaharu Morimoto features a selection of fine pours at his namesake restaurant. After exploring the cobbled charms of the historic Chartrons neighbourhood – the former wine merchants' district – head south for a rural adventure in the exceptional wine regions of Graves and Sauternes.

With century-old vineyards stretching along the northern part of the Graves region of Bordeaux in the heart of the Pessac-Léognan appellation, there's no better place to taste Grand Cru Classé than at Château Haut-Bailly. Following a tour of the gravel, sand and clay terrain, discover the state-of-the-art cellar hidden within the land, where barrels and stainless steel vats produce Château Haut-Bailly and Haut-Bailly II. Book the private chef's table for a gastronomic four-course tasting menu



showcasing chef Maxime Pommier's innovative cuisine paired with the 19th-century château's wines. If a cat nap is in order and the rooms at Château Haut-Bailly are booked, head to La Chartreuse Haut-Bailly, just 800m away. A friendly feline might even welcome you. With five intimate rooms, plush living and dining rooms dressed in art and antiques, and a wine tasting salon, it feels like home.

A quick corkscrew away, wine producer Bérengère Quellien offers a stellar selection of organically-farmed wines at family-run Château Lusseau. Her single varietal 100% Merlot wine, La Bérue Déglinguée, with its whimsical labels revealing the character 'Bérue', is worth the stop. Nearby, the candy-coloured neo-Palladian Château Pont Saint-Martin is an intimate bed and breakfast in the middle of the vineyards, which has transformed its ancient cellars into suites, with access to a whirlpool spa and outdoor swimming pool. Notice the sphinx on the façade and the

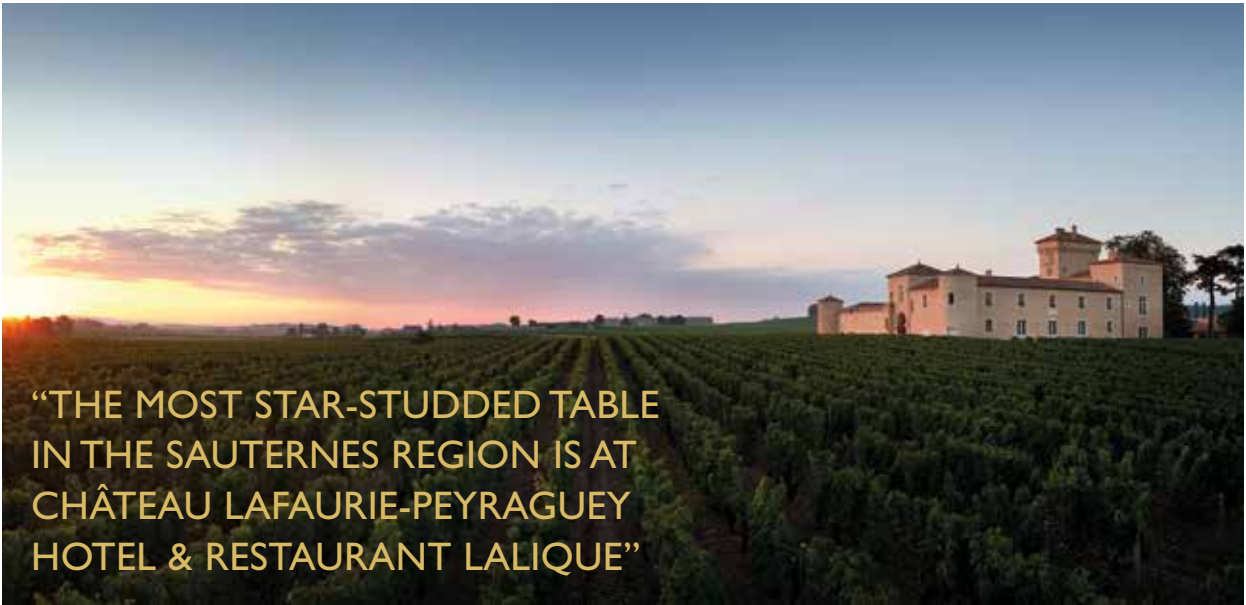
**Left page:** There's no better place to taste Grand Cru Classé than at Château Haut-Bailly; inside Haut-Bailly's state-of-the-art 'hidden' cellar





of the terroir, paired with wines from neighbouring Château Smith Haut Lafitte. Another table to book awaits at the country chic restaurant La Table du Lavoir.

Further southeast from Graves, you'll find the sweet Sauternes appellation (composed of five communes – Sauternes, Bommes, Fargues, Preignac and Barsac), which tempts with notes of orange marmalade, honey and dried fruit. A composition of Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and often Muscadelle grapes, this nectarous wine can be paired with dishes from foie gras to poultry, or enjoyed as an apéritif or with dessert. Drive or bicycle to Château de Cérons to better understand how these regional wines should be served. Set in the heart of the stone-walled village of Cérons within the Graves and Sauternes regions, this family-owned estate, led by Caroline and Xavier Perromat, is a 300-year-old home dedicated to producing and savouring wine. The summer sun is ideal for a French-style picnic on the estate, while during winter months, a rotisserie lunch and dinner inside the château includes suckling pigs and Landais chickens. Each



Clockwise from below: La Salle Mauresque at Hôtel Grand Barrail; Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey is more than 400 years old; Château de Cérons within the Graves and Sauternes regions; Château Lafaurie Peyraguey; the fairy-tale Hôtel Grand Barrail



Visitors enjoy an ombre et lumière show at Château de Cérons

meal and tasting consists of the four wines of Château de Cérons – white, red, sweet and orange. The film *Gabriel and the Drop of Water*, directed by Romain Dussaulx, is projected onto the walls of the centuries-old barrel cellar, poetically depicting the journey of a drop of water from the Pyrenees to a glass of Cérons wine.

### STAR-STUDDED TABLES

Art meets exceptional vintages at nearby Château Gravas, where sixth-generation winemakers Florence and Michel Bernard present their elegant Sauternes wine in a carafe evoking a perfume bottle. The bouquet in their 2022 Sauternes vintage recalls candied fruits and white flowers, a perfect reflection of the mineral-rich land.

The most star-studded table in the Sauternes region is at Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey Hotel & Restaurant Lalique, which opened in 2018 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey. This perfect blend of wine, crystal, gastronomy and hospitality makes a sparkling setting for a



two-Michelin-star dining experience, paired with the region's and estate's exceptional wines, including a Sauternes Premier Grand Cru. Feast on a four- or five-course tasting menu crafted by chef Jérôme Schilling beneath a spectacular glass ceiling adorned with 120 golden crystal leaves – a bespoke Lalique creation inspired by the iconic Champs-Élysées collection. The only fitting ending includes a Sauternes and citrus soufflé, followed by a nightcap if you book an Art Deco-style room at the adjoining 5-star hotel.

If your palate leans towards wines with fruity and spicy notes, look no further than the celebrated vintages of the Saint-Émilion region, just one hour north of Sauternes. A 1902 masterpiece by architect Louis-Marie Cordonnier, Château Grand Barrail Hôtel was completely restored in 2023. Its elegant golden mouldings and vibrant stained-glass windows recall the romance of a bygone era. With 46 opulent rooms and suites set within the grounds, it's time to live your imperial dreams while sipping world-class cuvées. Château Grand Barrail Hôtel offers electric bike expeditions through the iconic estates of Saint-Émilion and Pomerol, with a stop at the medieval town of Saint-Émilion, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Along the route, sip on the first biodynamic Grand Cru Classé at Château Fonroque before returning to the castle for a spa treatment and an epicurean meal. **FT**

## BORDEAUX ESSENTIALS

### GETTING THERE

Fly direct to Bordeaux from several UK airports. From Paris, the TGV from Gare Montparnasse takes less than three hours. It's best to rent a car to explore the neighbouring vineyards, or book a taxi/Uber.

### WHERE TO STAY

**Mondrian Bordeaux Les Carmes** is a recently opened five-star address in the Chartrons neighbourhood of Bordeaux ([www.mondrianhotels.com/bordeaux-les-carmes](http://www.mondrianhotels.com/bordeaux-les-carmes)). To best discover Graves, book a room at charming bed & breakfasts **La Chartreuse Haut-Bailly** ([www.haut-bailly.com/en/guest-rooms](http://www.haut-bailly.com/en/guest-rooms)) or **Château Pont Saint-Martin** ([www.domaines-rodriques-lalande.fr](http://www.domaines-rodriques-lalande.fr)) or splurge at five-star hotel and spa **Les Sources de Caudalie** ([www.sources-hotels.com/bordeaux](http://www.sources-hotels.com/bordeaux)). Set in the heart of Sauternes, dine on two-Michelin-star cuisine while sleeping in style at **Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey Hotel & Restaurant Lalique** ([www.lafauriepeyragueylalique.com](http://www.lafauriepeyragueylalique.com)). Explore Saint-Émilion by bike from the recently refurbished five-star **Château Grand Barrail Hôtel** ([www.grand-barrail.com](http://www.grand-barrail.com)).

### FESTIVALS IN THE VINEYARDS

During these three fun and festive weekends almost all the châteaux and vineyards are open to visits, with plenty of activities and concerts. October 18-19 in **Graves appellation** November 8-10 in **Sauternes and Barsac appellations** December 6-7 in **Pessac-Léognan appellation**

### CONTACTS

**Bordeaux Tourism**  
[www.bordeaux-tourisme.com](http://www.bordeaux-tourisme.com)

**Graves and Sauternes Tourism**  
[www.bordeaux-graves-sauternes.com](http://www.bordeaux-graves-sauternes.com)

**Saint-Émilion Tourism**  
[www.saint-emilion-tourisme.com](http://www.saint-emilion-tourisme.com)