



*Chateau Lascombes is located within the Margaux appellation.*



*The Arc d'Triomphe in Paris is wrapped in silver cloth made from recycled materials.*

## Bordeaux – Part 1

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2021, our group of 15 gathered in Paris to begin a much-anticipated trip to Bordeaux—for all of us, our first international venture since COVID 19. Although all were vaccinated, we felt somewhat vulnerable going into the unknown. The net we saw was our concerns were unfounded. The French were taking the COVID situation more seriously than the U.S., and we felt safer than at home. In addition, there were far fewer visitors in France than usual at this time of year, so we fought fewer crowds and were more welcomed than usual.

We overnighted in Paris at the Hotel Napoleon located near the Arc de Triomphe. The most unusual thing in Paris at this time involved the covering of the Arc de Triomphe in 25,000 square meters of silver cloth made of recycled materials. This genre of the late artist Christo was very beautiful and had the effect of softening the stone of the monument.

After a fine dinner, we left the next day for Bordeaux on the TGV (Très Grand Vitesse) or high-speed train (near 200 mph). The only surprise

was that the baggage handlers at the train station were on strike, so we sent the baggage by private truck and brought food and wine on board as the train's restaurant was closed. At mid-afternoon we arrived in Bordeaux, met our guide, and checked in to our home for a week. It was Les Sources de Caudalie, the most fantastic hotel in the area and situated on the property of the great Château Smith Haut Lafitte.

We had a superb dinner at our hotel in La Table du Lavoir accompanied by three great wines, Château Carbonnieux 2018, Château Petit-Village 2015, and Domaine de Chevalier 2015. After a long sleep and excellent breakfast, we left for Bordeaux City to visit the Cité du Vin (Wine Museum) and to taste some exciting wines from around the world.

After touring Cité du Vin, we left for Château Lascombes in the Margaux appellation. Following an interesting tour, we had an excellent lunch featuring several vintages of Château Lascombes' best wines. The highlights were the 2009 and 2010 vintages—both excellent examples of the Margaux



*The wine cellar at Château Siran located in the Margaux appellation.*

appellation from outstanding vintages.

We next visited Château Siran, also a Margaux appellation, where we had a very interesting tour and tasting of three wines with the owner Édouard Miaillhe. Coincidentally, Château Siran was just ranked the 2021 number one wine by The Wine Enthusiast magazine. This wine tasted so good on property and my purchase of it today will ensure many more recalls of this experience.

On our way back to the hotel we had a private tasting and tour at Château Smith Haut Lafitte. We had several vintages of both the Smith Haut Lafitte Rouge and Blanc and fell in love with the 2016 white and 2015 red. We also tasted their acquisition from Pomerol, the Château Beaugard 2010, which was also very fine. We dined on our

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The wine tour group stayed at the hotel located at Château Smith Haut Lafitte.

property in the two-star Guide Michelin restaurant, Le Grand Vigne, and had a wonderful meal along with memorable wines.

The next day we started with a walking tour of the picturesque and famous village of Saint-Émilion. Merlot and Cabernet Franc are the two most important grapes used to produce wine in Saint-Émilion. After visiting shops, church and crypt, and the very beautiful Château Grand Franc, we had lunch at Château Canon in La Tarassee Rouge. After a great meal with wonderful Château Canon wines, we went to visit Château Clinet in Pomerol. This château has produced some of Bordeaux' highest rated wines (1989, 2009, 2018, and 2020). We tasted the 2015 second label (Ronan) as well as the 2015 and 2017 Chateau Clinet. The latter two wines were very approachable for their youth and the luscious fruit and tannins were well balanced. We returned to our hotel, freshened up, and went back to Bordeaux city to dine at Gordon Ramsey's two-star Guide Michelin restaurant Le Pressoir D' Argent. We had many courses with very appropriate wines with each offering. The dining room is an exact replica of a famous room in the Opera House directly across the street. All in all, it was fabulous food and wine, but we were at our limits by the end.

The next day we returned to the Right Bank

of Bordeaux beginning at the famous Pomerol vineyard of Château La Conseillante. After a tour of the cellars, we had the 2020 (150th anniversary) after one year in barrel. This wine was already very good for such a young and incomplete wine and will surely be a world-class wine upon release in two years. We had a very nice lunch with appropriate wines at La Table de Catusseau then went to visit my friend Christian Moueix at Château La Fleur-Pétrus. Regardless of our level of wine knowledge, I know we are all richer people from the two hours he spent with us about his life experiences in the wine industry. We tasted several of his great world-class wines.

After bidding Christian farewell, we arrived at Château Cheval Blanc. We toured the new winery and tasted the 2012 wine. We finished the tour by going upstairs to the roof which is planted with bushes, shrubs, and trees—truly a striking architectural statement.

After a brief stop to change for dinner, we went to the Michelin star restaurant Le Pavillon des Boulevards which was very good. Starting with copious amounts of Champagne, we enjoyed great food with Château Maucoil Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc 2019 and Château Haut-Bailly 2014. A Votre Sante! 



Autumn, Pat, Jim, and Tyson Bryant visited the vineyard at Château La Conseillante.



Jim Bryant and Christian Moueix at Château La Fleur-Pétrus.



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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