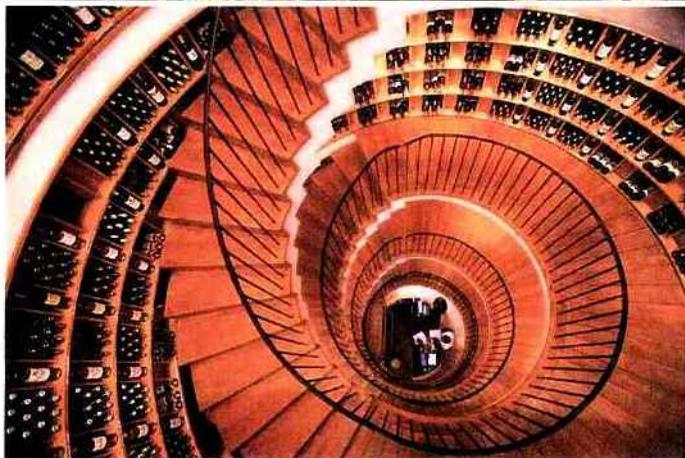




TRAVELS

C'EST
MAGNIFIQUE

From gastronomic riches to architectural splendors, the fairy-tale city of Bordeaux reflects France at its finest



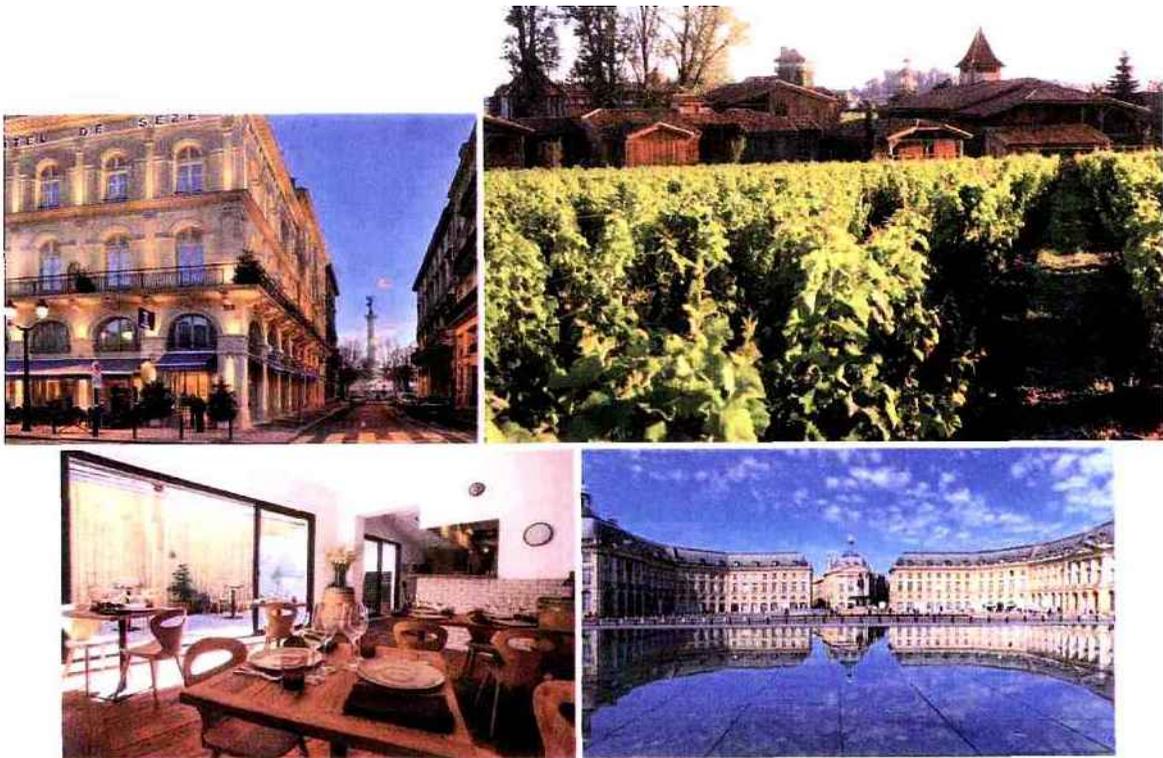
From top: A guest room at the recently opened hotel and restaurant La Grande Maison in Bordeaux, in southwestern France. A view across the city's elegant rooftops. A bottle-lined spiral staircase at one of Bordeaux's premier wine shops, L'Intendant.

Set like a pearl on the wide Garonne River in southwestern France, the city of Bordeaux has always been beguiling, if a bit aloof. Novelist Victor Hugo admiringly wrote, "Take Versailles, add Antwerp, and you have Bordeaux," capturing its distinctive profile as a hybrid of ornate architectural confection and brawny cosmopolitan port. With the December 2014 opening of **La Grande Maison**—a six-room inn with Napoléon III-style rooms and a buzzed-about restaurant by star chef Joël Robuchon—this bashful but beautiful town now finds itself in the spotlight as one of the most appealing getaways in all of Europe. The real surprise, though, is that it has remained so overlooked for so long.

"Bordeaux was a sleeping beauty," says esteemed winemaker **Bernard Magrez**, the owner of La Grande Maison and four Grands Crus Classés châteaux in the surrounding region, an area whose vineyards produce some of the world's most prestigious wines. In the mid-1990s the city undertook a massive 15-year renovation of its historic center, adding a tramway system and restoring its magnificent 18th-century limestone buildings, including the spectacular Place de la Bourse (the former stock exchange designed by the Louis XV architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel) and miles of elegant riverside façades. As a result of this revitalization project, in 2007 UNESCO designated the city a World Heritage Site.

"Bordeaux has an exceptional quality of life thanks to its climate and setting, but also because it has been modernized so successfully over the past 20 years," says Ariane de Rothschild, who runs the Château Clarke wine estate with her

FROM TOP: DEEPA; ELVA; GETTY IMAGES; HUGO; ELVA; GETTY IMAGES



husband, Baron Benjamin de Rothschild. "It has now emerged as one of the most popular cities in France among the French."

Once known as something of a gastronomic also-ran, Bordeaux has become a seriously good place to eat and, of course, drink. The city is in the midst of a restaurant boom as it attracts talented young chefs looking to hang their own shingles. A perfect example is the stylish bistro **Miles**, helmed by a gifted international quartet who met at the Ferrandi cooking school in Paris. "In the past, Bordeaux didn't offer much beyond the fancy places where the wine trade entertained," says Franco-Vietnamese chef Arnaud Lahaut, a Miles cofounder. "But as the city has become younger and more cosmopolitan, the restaurant scene is quickly changing." Other new hot spots include chef Tanguy Laviale's **Garopapilles**, which serves sophisticated French cuisine, such as roasted Pauillac lamb and an appetizer of smoked tuna and foie gras; the lively contemporary bistro **Le Chien de Pavlov** (try the crab-and-makrut-lime ravioli); and

Dan, a French-inflected Cantonese restaurant run by a Franco-Chinese couple recently arrived from Hong Kong. Next up in this suddenly food-mad city? A brasserie from chef Philippe Etchebest, who garnered two Michelin stars at the Hostellerie de Plaisance in nearby Saint-Émilion.

Currently, though, the city's toughest reservation is La Grande Maison's restaurant. "I chose Bordeaux for its superb ingredients—porcini, Pauillac lamb, locally caught fish," says chef Robuchon, "and because the city now has the clientele for an ambitious gastronomic table." The pair of dining rooms, outfitted with Baccarat-crystal chandeliers and tufted velvet banquettes, has instantly become the new HQ for the wine trade. Japanese-born head chef Tomonori Danzaki, one of Robuchon's top lieutenants, has been wowing le Tout-Bordeaux with dishes like beef fillet crowned with foie gras—a modern riff on tournedos Rossini—or crab aspic garnished with crabmeat and caviar.

Since La Grande Maison offers one of the finest wine lists in France, the best way

Clockwise from top left: The Hôtel de Séze, near the Place des Quinconces. Les Sources de Caudalès, a hotel and spa on the grounds of Château Smith Haut Lafitte, outside the city. The landmark Place de la Bourse. Indoor and outdoor dining at Garopapilles.

to enjoy a meal here is to also book one of the 18th-century limestone mansion's sumptuous guest rooms and, post-repast, stagger upstairs. Bordeaux decorator Frédérique Fournier did up the quarters with gracious furnishings by Moissonnier and floral fabrics by Braquenié and Pierre Frey. Visitors can tour the **Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez** across the street to see the wine impresario's impressive collection of modern art and photography; the recently renovated **Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux**, with canvases by Delacroix, Matisse, Braque, and Picasso, among others, is a gem, too.

Still, La Grande Maison isn't the only first-rate hotel in town. Another lovely new option is the **Hôtel de Séze**, a 55-room property in an 18th-century building that tweaks bourgeois Bordelais taste by employing jewel tones and bold fabrics. →

COURTESY: PHOTOFEST; LEFT: CHRISTOPHE LAMET; MIDDLE: CELIA BARD; RIGHT: TULLIO PEREGRINO; GAROPAPILLES: VINCENT NOLLAT



The many storied wine châteaux just outside the city, meanwhile, merit a day trip or even an overnight stay. One of the strongest draws, a 20-minute drive from town and set on the estate of Château Smith Haut Lafitte, is **Les Sources de Caudalie**, a stylish hotel with a Michelin-starred restaurant and a spa featuring Caudalie's grape-derived products. The hotel is a family affair; It's operated by Alice and Jérôme Tourbier, the daughter and son-in-law of the estate's owners, Florence and Daniel Cathiard (Alice's sister, Mathilde Thomas, is the founder of the Caudalie brand). The Tourbiers have just added 12 new suites, appointed in a rustic-chic style inspired by fishermen's huts at nearby Cap Ferret, as well as an indoor pool and a wine bar serving the estate's top vintages. "It's sort of surprising, but wine bars are pretty new here," says Jérôme, "even though drinking by the glass is a great way to discover the region's superb wines."

Of course, wine remains one of Bordeaux's biggest attractions, and fortunately some excellent wine bars have set up shop

in the city as well. Among the best are **Le Wine Bar**, **Aux Quatre Coins du Vin**, **L'Oenolimit**, and **Wine More Time**, all pouring remarkable vintages by the glass. To pick up a special bottle, head to **L'Intendant**, an outstanding shop with a friendly staff who can recommend finds worth hauling home. And for visitors seeking old treasures that don't come in liquid form, the semi-annual **Brocante des Quinconces** antiques fair is one of France's finest provincial antiques markets, next taking place in late April.

The new vintage of Bordeaux will be even easier to savor in coming years. The dramatically designed **Cité des Civilisations du Vin**, a multimedia exposition center devoted to the history, geography, and art of wine, opens in 2016, and the following year, a new high-speed TGV train line will reduce the travel time between Paris and Bordeaux from three hours to two. Right now, though, the city is in one of those delectable sweet spots, where it's utterly compelling but the crowds haven't descended—yet. —ALEXANDER LOBRANO

BORDEAUX DETAILS

CULTURAL SITES

Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez
16 rue de l'ivoire +33-5-56-81-72-77;
institut-bernard-magrez.com
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux
20 cours d'Albret +33-5-56-10-20-56;
musba-bordeaux.fr

SHOPS

Brocantes des Quinconces
Place des Quinconces +33-6-89-99-
20-88; bordeauxquinconces.com
L'Intendant
2 allée de Tourny +33-5-56-48-01-29;
www.intendant.com

RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Aux Quatre Coins du Vin
8 rue de la Devise +33-5-57-34-37-29;
aux4coinsduvin.com
Le Chien de Pavlov
45-47 rue de la Devise +33-5-56-48-
26-71; lechiendepavlov.com
Dan
6 rue du Cancera +33-5-40-05-76-91;
danbordeaux.com
Garopapilles
62 rue de l'Abbé de l'Épée +33-9-72-
45-55-36; garopapilles.com
Miles
33 rue du Cancera +33-5-56-81-15-
24; restaurantmiles.com
L'Oenolimit
2 rue des Ayres +33-5-57-88-34-19
Le Wine Bar
19 rue des Bahutiers +33-6-76-00-50-
54; lewinebar-bordeaux.com
Wine More Time
8 rue Saint-James +33-5-56-52-85-61;
winemoretime.blogspot.com

HOTELS

La Grande Maison
10 rue Labottière +33-5-35-38-
16-16; rooms from \$50/night;
lagrandemaison-bordeaux.com
Hôtel de Seze
73 allée de Tourny +33-5-56-14-16-
16; rooms from \$175/night;
hotel-de-seze.com
Les Sources de Caudalie
chemin de Smith Haut Lafitte, Martillac,
+33-5-57-83-83-83; rooms from
\$315/night; sources-caudalie.com

Clockwise from top left: The Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, featuring its namesake wine magnate's personal art and photography collection; Magrez (left) and chef Joël Robuchon, the masterminds behind La Grande Maison; Sidewalk seating at Le Wine Bar.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PIERRE ANDRE GUZDZETTY; MAGRES: DEEVE; ENBORHOUT; GARDI