

TP'S BEAUJOLAIS WINE TOUR

Mk 3

The 10 crus plus Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages in 3 days

The aim of the tour is to introduce you to some of the delicious wines produced in Beaujolais and also to visit one of the most scenically gorgeous regions in all of France.

Day 1

Arrival at Lyon Airport (St Exupery) or Lyon Part Dieu railway station where you will be met and picked up by minibus for the 1 hour transfer to Le Perreon. Alternatively you can drive down. It is about a 7 hour journey from Calais including stops. Check in at 'Les Volets Bleus' (Chambres d'Hotes, Confort 3 Epis). Chill out, visit the village, the recently restored church, 'La Cloche' a rugby pub run by Pascal and his very pretty wife Carolyn from Sevenoaks in Kent (so ordering a beer shouldn't be a problem!). Perhaps a stroll through the vines followed by a delicious dinner at 'Les Volets Bleus' prepared by your hostess Fabienne and an introduction to one or two of the local 'crus' by her partner Eric.

Day 2

After a leisurely breakfast we will visit Clochemerle (Vaux en Beaujolais) 1 km away. Gabriel Chevalier's immortal story about the erection of a 'pissoir' and the characters involved was based upon this little village. We will visit the museum dedicated to Chevalier, admire and even take pictures of the famous 'pissoir' followed by a brief tour of the village and perhaps a restorative 'canon' in the 'Caveau de Clochemerle'.

We will then return to Le Perreon and visit Le Domaine Longere. This 16 hectare estate run by Bernard, Jean-Luc and his delightful wife Regine has been in the Longere family for 5 generations. Jean-Luc will explain his organic methods and take us through the various stages of wine production. They make Beaujolais Villages rouge, rose and a deliciously fruity Beaujolais blanc. They also make a 'Vin des Roches' a degraded partly oaked rouge made from 70 year old vines (frequently starred in the Guide Hachette). A dry 'cremant' and a sparkling rose 'a l'ancienne' complete the picture. We will have the opportunity of tasting them all in their magnificent vaulted cellar, accompanied by a 'Machon Beaujolais'. This charcuterie, cheese and bread meal is a perfect accompaniment to Beaujolais wines.

Suitably refreshed we will take our minibus for the short drive (5 kms) into Brouilly country (the most Southerly and largest of the 'crus'). We will drive up Mont Brouilly (a volcano now thankfully extinct) where the Cote de Brouilly wine comes from. After admiring the breathtaking views from the chapel at the summit we will descend to 'Le château Thivin'. This 'bijou' of a château nestling on the South facing slopes of Mont Brouilly is owned and run by Claude and Evelyne Geoffray, recently joined by their 5th generation son. They have earned a reputation for making some of the finest

Cote de Brouilly you'll find anywhere. Indeed their oaked 'Cuvee Zacherie Geoffray' although expensive for a Beaujolais in my opinion knocks spots of equivalently priced Burgundies. We will have a tour of the estate including the awe inspiring cellarage under the château. This will be followed by a degustation of their wide range of wines. We will then move on to 'Le Domaine de Reverdon'. This 7.5 hectare estate on South Eastern slopes facing Mont Brouilly has been run by a super couple, Philippe and Elisabeth Pitaud since 2002. Philippe one of the new younger generation of vigneron's philosophy is simple. He makes the wine that his customers like. Two citations in the Guide Hachette and one gold, one silver and a bronze award at Macon in the last 3 years prove that he must be doing it right. Here we will have a tour of the domaine followed by a tasting of Philippes' different Brouillys. We will conclude with one of Elisabeth's superb dinners accompanied by more excellent Brouilly and perhaps rounded off with some of Philippe's locally produced 'eau de vie' affectionately known in the UK as rocket fuel! We will then return to Les Volets Bleus for a well earned night's sleep.

Day 3

After a pleasant and not too early breakfast we will head off on 'La Route des Vins' Through Brouilly, Regnie and Villie Morgon to Chiroubles (the highest cru at 600 metres). Here we will visit Le Domaine de la Grosse Pierre. This 13 hectare estate with stunning views (on a clear day you can see Mont Blanc 100 miles away) has been in the Passot family for more than 60 years. Alain and his charming wife Veronique produce some delectable chiroubles much appreciated in London and Paris. They also make award winning Fleurie and Morgon. We will of course be able to sample them all after a tour of the estate.

Then onto Fleurie for lunch at probably the most famous restaurant in all of Beaujolais, 'Le Cep'. Chantal Chagny runs this superb establishment. She lost her chef/partner in 1990. At the time the restaurant was blessed with two Michelin Guide stars. After her loss she decided to change the menu and concentrate on regional dishes. So she marched into the Michelin headquarters in Paris and asked them to remove one of her stars. Totally gobsmacked they did as she wished and she has never looked back. If anything the restaurant is doing even better with one star than it was with two! After what I'm sure will be a lunch to remember helped down with perhaps a Regnie and a Julienas we will rejoin our minibus for the short journey to Chenas.

Here we will stop at the 'Domaine du Pourpre'. This 13 hectare estate is owned by Bernard Meziat a keen local 'chasseur'. We will sample his various Chenas and Moulin a Vents. Bernard's wines appear regularly in the Guide Hachette. However his 'Coup de Grace' was his 2006 Chenas which won the Bachuus award at Macon. The grand jury take all the gold medal winners and present this special award to the best of the lot. We will then return to Le Perreon for a well earned shower, snooze or whatever. Suitably refreshed we will take the minibus to St Etienne des Oullieres (3kms away by the time you've said the name you're there). We will have dinner at 'La Terrasse des Quatre Saisons' a charming restaurant run by Sebastien and his very attractive English wife Maureen. Here we will have a splendid dinner accompanied

by the one cru we have yet to try, appropriately enough for our farewell dinner 'St Amour'. To finish perhaps a glass of 'cremant' made with the gamay grape (interesting and rare). We will then return to Les Volets Bleus for a good night's sleep.

Day 4

Return to England. If time allows a visit to the beautiful city of Lyon en route. Or perhaps a visit to Georges Duboeuf's 'Hameau' at Romaneche Thorins. His vinification plant built in 2002 has to be seen to be believed.

So there you have it the 10 Beaujolais Crus plus Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages rouge, rose and blanc in 3 days.

The 10 crus are:

Brouilly
Cote de Brouilly
Regnie
Morgon
Fleurie
Chiroubles
Chenas
Moulin a Vent
Julienas
St Amour

As an American drily once put it 'if you don't like a good Beaujolais you don't like wine, period'.

Remember you can use the spittoons when trying the wines. Georges Duboeuf known locally as 'Le Roi du Beaujolais' is reputed to taste up to 300 different wines in a day. If he didn't use a spittoon he'd spend most of it horizontal!

The Beaujolais region lies between the valley of the Saone to the East and the foothills of the Massif central to the West. It stretches from Macon in the North to the outskirts of Lyon to the South. A region 50 kms long by about 15 kms wide. It has about 20,000 hectares of vines which annually produce about 1,000,000 hectolitres (1 hectolitre = 100 litres) of wine. 99% of the vines are 'Gamay noir au jus blanc' and 1% are Chardonnay producing the Blanc.

Do not feel obliged to buy any of the wines we sample. Although the viticulteurs are only too happy to sell their wares. They love to show off their wines and the tour price includes 'les degustations'.

If you do wish to buy wine there are several possibilities. Most viticulteurs accept credit cards, although some are still learning how to use their machines! If you come by car you'll have no problems with transportation. However if you come by train or

plane there are two or three solutions. We can arrange shipment to England, but you will have to pay transport and UK taxes. Some of the wines can be purchased from UK wine merchants. Alternatively we can arrange to transport your wine to Calais or Boulogne. Then you can pop over on a day trip, have a decent lunch and pick up it up at French prices. Or if you trust me I can store your wine in my cellar for collection on your next trip to Beaujolais. One thing is certain having visited the region once you will be determined to come again! To give you an idea on prices at the vineyards, Beaujolais and Beaujolais Villages is normally between 3€ and 5€ a bottle. The crus start at around 6€ and can go up to around 12 € for an aged oaked wine. Whites and cremants are normally priced between 5€ and 7€.

A few facts about me:

On leaving school I spent a year working in a French printing factory in Nantes. I fell in love with the country and the people (literally I married one!). I spent a fair bit of my professional life travelling to France and was able to appreciate the best things in life in both countries. Fortunately we lived in Kent and East Sussex so I got to know the English Channel quite well. It is said that at one time I got to know more about individual P&O Ferries than P&O knew themselves! I always promised my lovely wife Pascale that one day when I retired we would come back and live in 'La Belle'. Three children and five grandchildren later here we are. Why retire to Beaujolais? My answer to the locals is 'I didn't want to die of thirst!' The truth is 'by chance'. It is said that Alsace and Beaujolais are the two most beautiful wine growing regions in all of France. It is true. But all too often Beaujolais is by-passed on the mad 'Autoroute du Soleil' rush to the South. So we moved here in 2005, that fabulous summer when the locals were all salivating over the quality of the grapes. I knew little about the region and even less about the wines. Beaujolais Nouveau, yes a little, but nothing about the 'crus'. Indeed if asked I would probably have said that Brouilly, Morgon and Fleurie came from Burgundy not Beaujolais. Over the last four years I have got to learn a lot more about this beautiful but often understated region and the delightful people who live here. The 'viticulteurs' are a stoic race. They have seen feast and famine. The late 70's and 80's when the World went mad over Beaujolais Nouveau. They couldn't produce enough of the stuff and were shoeing the charolais from their meadows alongside the Saone and planting vines in this often unsuitable 'terroir'. Nowadays there is a Worldwide glut of wine exacerbated by increasing production from New World countries such as Chile and Australia. So the poor Beaujolais vigneron is finding it more and more difficult to sell his wine. The infamous negociants are often buying wine from the 'producteurs' at prices well below the cost of production. Understandable if the wine was poor. But it's not, it's excellent and very reasonably priced. It is for this reason that I decided to do my little bit to try to help this region, its often maligned wine and its lovely people.

Voilà, there you have it. 12 different Beaujolais wines in 3 days.

Cheers

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