

Jane MacQuitty Best of Bordeaux



Bordeaux is the wine capital of the world, with more great wine made there than anywhere else. It is hardly surprising, then, that my top three vineyards to stay at, with great wines to match, are all in the area.

Château Troplong-Mondot, St Émilion

On the rural right bank of the Garonne River, admire the rolling countryside and one of the world's prettiest wine villages, the medieval hilltop town of St Émilion. Château Troplong-Mondot sits atop the limestone-rich Mondot hill, with wonderful views of the St Émilion countryside. With 33 hectares of mostly plump, seductive merlot, topped up with cabernets franc and sauvignon, unlike the more austere left-bank clarets, Troplong-Mondot combines power, elegance and, alas, very high prices. Call in advance so that you can revel in a dinner for two in your very own St Émilion idyll using the estate's fresh eggs, vegetables and fruit, plus perhaps a bottle of Troplong-Mondot's voluptuous and more reasonably priced 2004 vintage. Four comfy, stylish rooms.

Details Doubles with breakfast from £126-£335 (00 33 5 57 55 32 05, chateau-troplong-mondot.com)

Les Sources de Caudalie, Martillac

Flush, comfort-first wine tourists keen on good food and great wine will enjoy the luxurious hotel-restaurant-spa Les Sources de Caudalie owned by Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte. It is surrounded by vineyards dotted with sculptures: Barry

Flanagan's giant hare is my favourite. Indulge in vinotherapy inside and out with the wacky, signature "Massage Vigneron", followed by lunch at La Table du Lavoir, the old grape-pickers' wash-house, enhanced by the estate's lesser, but mouthwatering, grapefruit zest-styled 2009 Château Cantelys Bordeaux Blanc. Close with a swanky dinner at La Grande Vigne and a grand claret, such as the smoky, gamey, 2000 Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte, or even the venerable 1878 vintage for £3,436 a pop.

Details Doubles with breakfast from £172 (00 33 5 57 83 83 83, www.sources-caudalie.com)

Château Cordeillan-Bages, Pauillac

Go up the Médoc, passing the city of Bordeaux and endless rows of famous flat, gravelly, green vineyards on either side of the road, until you reach claret country's sleepy heart: the commune of



Pauillac, home to three great first growths: Lafite, Latour and Mouton. Just 1,000 cases of Cordeillan-Bages are made every year at this pretty 18th-century country mansion, complete with stylish contemporary dining room and bedrooms. So, if you don't want to drink Cordeillan-Bages claret at its bold, innovative Michelin two-star restaurant on the same site (though the beefy 1995 Cordeillan claret gets my vote) you could cheat and order Château Lynch-Bages, its Pauillac fifth-growth sister instead, particularly the handsome, cedary 2004.

Details Doubles with breakfast from £214 (00 33 5 56 59 24 24, www.cordeillanbages.com)