



Bordeaux *The weekender*

The quality of food in this world heritage city in southwestern France now matches the quality of its famous wines, so it's a gastronomist's heaven, says Laura Ivill

STAY In pride of place in this grand 18th-century city is the aptly named Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux & Spa. It is sited across the central piazza – now quiet with trams not traffic – from the Grand Theatre, built by the same architect in 1780. Guests Audrey Tautou, Cameron Diaz and Grace Jones will have soaked up the view. For a country stay in the vineyards only 20 minutes away, Les Sources de Caudalie is a five-star rural retreat, a ‘hamlet’ with a Michelin-star restaurant and spa, built from scratch by Alice and Jérôme Tourbier at Château Smith Haut Lafitte still owned by her parents. Using only recycled farm buildings, the setting is an amusing bucolic landscape with a boathouse and pond where swans glide. The Bird Island suite (a favourite of John Galliano) has been redesigned this spring by French fashion prodigy Maxime Simoëns – hotly tipped by Christian Dior as the next wunderkind.

EAT Les Sources has two restaurants with roaring log fires, both overseen by head chef Nicolas Masse, who takes Saturday



ABOVE AND THIS PICTURE
The façade of the Grand Hotel de Bordeaux & Spa and its Royal Suite



LEFT AND RIGHT
The Bird Island suite at Les Sources de Caudalie



PHOTOS: MATTHIEU CELLARD, GETTY IMAGES

morning cooking classes (a great gift idea for a partner). After sampling one of the Château's outstanding Grand Cru Classé wines at the bar, visit La Table du Lavoir for dinner. It's the more rustic of the two, with flagstone floor, recycled rafters, shabby-chic furniture and sophisticated bistro food. The Michelin-star restaurant, La Grand Vigne, has a terrace overlooking the lake (and an impressive cheese trolley). In the city, the Grand Hôtel's winter garden is a sociable yet intimate salon for an aperitif. Book ahead for dinner in its Michelin-starred Pressoir d'Argent, or for a relaxed lunch, head next door to the Comptoir Cuisine (*comptoircuisine.com*), a vibrant Bordeaux landmark.

VISIT Bordeaux's 21st-century regeneration ('Bordeaux nouveau') extends to much more than cleaning up the soot-covered limestone buildings and greening the transport. Gastronomy is booming to complement the famous wines. The cobbled Rue Porte-de-la-Monnaie is the home of hearty cuisine Bordelais, and its must-visit eatery is La Tupina (*latupina.com*), with hanging meats, open oven and warren of cosy nooks. So successful has it been that it has spawned a wine bar, eat-in grocery shop and cafe on the street, too. When it comes to wine itself, the Bar a Vin (next to the Grand Theatre) is the place to go to sample great vintages by the glass, yet it's all very affordable. Locals come here (there's an outdoor terrace) to sip and natter (*baravin.bordeaux.com*).

DO Get your walking shoes on as pedestrian-friendly Bordeaux is best explored on foot. Book an hour's tour of the Unesco city at the tourist information near the Grand Theatre (*bordeaux-tourisme.com*). They also have an app tour you can download on your tablet, and offer best-value vineyard visits – a day with gourmet lunch for around €95, or a half day for €28. For bespoke vineyard tours, Hamish Wakes-Miller of Bella Wine Tours can open doors to the mighty names of Chateau Latour, Lafite



THIS PHOTO The Grand Theatre
BELOW Bordeaux is a UNESCO heritage site



Auberge La Table du Lavoir



BELOW Chateau Latour
RIGHT Superdry has set up shop in the city



Rothschild, Palmer Cheval Blanc and the like (*bellawines.co.uk*). He is vastly knowledgeable and great company. The city is very proud of its new riverfront boulevard. Traffic still runs along the embankment but where a bleak car park once stood, now landscaping of banana plants, hanging lanterns and its iconic Water Mirror sculpture bring people down to the river.

BUY Despite its age, Bordeaux is teeming with young people (there's a university), which means hip international brands (Superdry, Veja) are setting up shop here. On Saturdays locals swarm along St Catherine Street, a two-km shopping boulevard. For browsing, wander along the St Pierre quarter of narrow streets and medieval lanes, where jolly cafe tables, chairs and chalk boards invite you to stop for a dozen oysters. The wine shop Cousin et Compagnie is a neighbourhood pit-stop, but if you want to ship back the best, treat yourself to the ultimate souvenir – a case of Château Smith Haut Lafite 2007 (€769).

*Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux & Spa: doubles from €525 per night B&B.
Les Sources de Caudalie: doubles from €250 B&B (sources-caudalie.com).
British Airways flies to Bordeaux from London Gatwick, from £77 return (ba.com), or try Easyjet.*