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Director's Note



French cuisine is an amalgamation of a strong regional identity, an endless repertoire of dishes that reflect the local terroir and the French preference of showcasing local produce. It is no surprise then that the “Gastronomic meal of the French” and its rituals have earned a UNESCO classification on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. France’s world-renowned cuisine has been a continual pursuit of excellence from the traditional recipes of the *Mères Lyonnaises*—a slew of women chefs of the mid-1700s whose exemplary efforts put Lyon under the gastronomic spotlight—to the modern-day concept of bistronomy to incorporating sustainability practices. The farm-to-fork movement has gained steady momentum in France, and organic produce has found its rightful place in reformist French culinary practices. The creations of revered French chefs such as Paul Bocuse, Alain Ducasse, Alain Passard, Joël Robouchon and many others have contributed to the evolution of this cuisine, which has shown a remarkable flexibility to adaptation, inclusion, diversity and reinvention over the years.

We invite you to embark on a delectable journey across France’s iconic destinations and explore different facets of French cuisine and oenology through many sensory experiences. The gourmand road map covers the emblematic cities of Paris, Lyon, Nice and Dijon; the oenological and gastronomic heartland of Provence and Bordeaux, the glamorous and sophisticated St Tropez for a tryst with vegan ventures, and the mythical effervescence of Champagne!

Don’t just take our word for it. Read on as our food and wine connoisseurs and ambassadors share their passionate love affair with France through their epicurean experiences.

We hope that these flavourful insights and memoirs will work up an appetite for a sumptuous sojourn in France in the near future!

SHEETAL MUNSHAW

Director, Atout France India
France Tourism Development Agency



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The high tea at The Peninsula Paris features a diverse range of bite-size pastries.



Raise a toast to Parisian soirées at The Lido, the prestigious 75-year-old cabaret.

Gourmet Discoveries in Paris

Paris is like a box of macarons. There's a flavour for everyone. From the legendary foie gras to the various forms of crêpe and arguably the best hot chocolate in France, the city romances foodies like no other. **BY ROXANNE BAMBOAT**

Paris is a gourmand's delight. The French are so particular about the quality of their produce and the way every plate is presented that a bad meal is a rarity in Paris. There's plenty to pick from, depending on what you're in the mood to eat, but some dishes are iconic and must not be skipped. My favourite is their beautiful foie gras, or duck pâté, often served with a crisp toast. That rich creamy texture is a delight, and it's far too underrated if you ask me.

Escargots, which translates to snails, might seem outlandish, but it's actually a French delicacy that is nothing short of a symphony in the mouth. The meat is tender and seasoned with care in a mixture of parsley butter garlic and

generous amounts of wine, making it the perfect appetizer.

French onion soup might seem rather pedestrian when you talk about French cuisine, but this modest bowl of soup—packed with slivers of sweet onions, rich beef broth, and copious amounts of cheese—feels quite indulgent.

Crêpes are often slathered with Nutella and chocolate sauce, and make for great snacks or desserts. But I like mine topped with bananas, whipped cream, and a shot of brandy drizzled all over. You can get creative with your choice of toppings, and each café and street cart offers plenty of options.

Paris is home to some of the world's best pâtisseries. French pastries are an

absolute treat, but the most iconic is the famed macaron. One of the best culinary experiences I had on my last visit to Paris was an exquisite high tea at The Peninsula Paris. What made it exceptional was their selection of bite-size pastries, where each one outshone the other. The *pièce de résistance* was their signature macaron, a pink foie gras delight studded with crushed pistachio. It is arguably the best macaron I have ever had. Everything else at Ladurée and Pierre Hermé Paris, both renowned for their macarons, paled in comparison.

When you need your fix of chocolate, stop by the city's favourite café, Angelina Paris. Their hot chocolate is legendary, and their menu of pastries supremely tempting. These include the Mont Blanc, their signature pastry made from chestnuts.

Paris has much to offer, and this menu is just the tip of the iceberg. As they say, Paris holds the key to your heart (and stomach!)



Clockwise from left: Take a tuk-tuk ride of Épernay's vineyards; in Reims, dip the region's famous pink biscuit in your flute; there are five exciting circuits on the Champagne Tourist Route.

When in Champagne...

There's a lot to do in this French region that lends its name to the wine synonymous with celebration all over the world.

BY PUSHA KOTHI - Atout France India

Did you know that authentic champagne comes only from the Champagne region in France? The region is home to prestigious brands and their captivating cellars, succulent gastronomy, a rich cultural heritage, and, of course, its eponymous nectar. Here is our essential checklist of spirited experiences in Champagne.

VINEYARD VISITS

Bubbly lovers can choose from five exciting circuits on the Champagne Tourist Route, all of which guarantee an up close and personal discovery of the drink through vineyards, authentic champagne villages, and encounters with wine-growers who reveal a few, if not all, secrets of champagne making.

The town of Épernay invites you to discover its vineyards differently. Choose from funky tuk-tuk rides to

vintage 2CV Citroëns. Hop aboard a bus that has you participating in a chocolate making workshop or attending a wine tasting all in the heart of verdant vineyards.

GOING UNDERGROUND

If Reims's cultural discoveries of its cathedral and emblematic monuments leave you parched, it's time to hit the cellars. Take a tour of renowned champagne brands, including Pommery, Ruinart, G.H. Mumm, and Taittinger, for a true tasting experience. Local tip: Dip Reims's famous speciality, the pink biscuit, in your flute of champagne to enjoy a mélange of flavours.

On Épernay's Avenue of Champagne, discover global brands such as Moët & Chandon, Perrier-Jouët, Mercier, and De Castellane rubbing shoulders with artisanal brands of equal repute such as Michel Gonet.

Pair cultural discoveries of Reims with tastings of famous champagne brands.



FOR OUR FOODIES

Reims invites you to try its local ham. Nutmeg, parsley and shallots are added to the ham, which is then cooked in stock and seasoned with breadcrumbs. You will find it being sold in a large rectangular block or small cylindrical cones. It pairs well with salad and can also be enjoyed as an apéritif—just the way the locals like it.

Chocolate lovers can gorge on Bouchons de Champagne's delectable dark chocolates, filled with liqueur and moulded in the form of champagne corks. We dare you to stop at one! There are also truffles that grow in the region and find their way to your plate. Truffles from Champagne are best used in their raw state to preserve their delicate hazelnut flavour.

Sample local cheese in the form of Chaource, a cow's milk cheese that has a delicious creamy and slightly crumbly texture. It makes a good pairing partner with champagne or even the delicate white wine Chablis.





De Vinis Illustribus offers wine lovers expert advice and a superb selection of vintages in the heart of Paris.

Top 10 Vintages To Try

Wine connoisseur and owner of the Parisian wine boutique De Vinis Illustribus, Lionel Michelin is a renowned expert on great wines. He uncorks his selection of 10 classic French vintages.

For French wines, the year, also called "vintage", is significant because the weather has a big influence on the ripeness of grapes. Each region has its own grape varietal, and the same year can be great in Bordeaux and bad in Burgundy. From the following vintages, you can select wines from pretty much any region.

1 1947: For me, this is probably the vintage of the 20th century! The weather was incredibly hot, the harvest was huge, and the wines outstanding. Yes, it is old, rare and expensive, but if you can drink a single glass of a well-aged 1947 wine, you will never forget it. You can choose a red or a white, a dry or a sweet, a Bordeaux or a Burgundy. My choice: Château Doisy-Vedrine in Sauternes.

2 1959: This vintage is regarded as one of the best ever produced in French wines. In 1959, the weather was sunny in February and March, and

if May was a little bit rainy, the sun came back by September. The harvest started at the end of September in good conditions, giving a small crop of high quality. The wines of this vintage are ageing perfectly despite their low acidity. They are deep, ripe and soft, with great fruit and a long finish. My choice: Corton Clos du Roy in Burgundy.

3 1982: It is probably in the top five vintages of the 20th century, especially for the wines of Bordeaux. The harvest was with warm weather, giving powerful wines sometimes called "California style" because of their richness and fruit-forward character. They were good at any stage of their lives: young, after 10 years, after 20 years, and still great today—39 years old. The wines contained high tannins, which have turned soft by now, but also great fruit that is still there. My choice: Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste in Pauillac.

4 1989: The weather conditions in this year were outstanding. Early spring gave the perfect flowering, then a very hot summer arrived with frequent but short rain showers. The harvest started very early—the earliest since 1893—on September 1, with perfect conditions. This is why the wines of 1989 are still impressive today: they had a great balance between structure, fruit and acidity to last at least 30 years. My choice: Château La Dominique in Saint-Émilion.

5 1990: Wine lovers know that the same château can be outstanding in 1990 and weak in 1991. The weather is different each year, and focussing on the vintage is the right way to choose a French wine. The 1990 vintage was great everywhere: dense, fruity and a style that can match the taste of any wine lover. Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rhône, Loire, Alsace—you can try any wine of this vintage. If you love a sweet wine like Sauternes, do not hesitate! My choice: Château Magdelaine in Saint-Émilion.

6 1996: This is the vintage to look for if you are a big fan of the 'left bank' in Bordeaux. It refers to wines with a majority of Cabernet Sauvignon, a varietal that does not ripen perfectly every year. A huge harvest gave seductive wines with plenty of fruit and a long finish. If you want both quantity



A tasting dinner in the cellar of De Vinis Illustribus.

and quality, look for a Burgundy made of Pinot Noir. My choice: Château Calon-Ségur in Saint-Estèphe.

7 2005: If you are a big fan of the elegant, smooth wines made of Pinot Noir, this is the perfect vintage. An early harvest—September 10—for the wines of Burgundy gave ripe fruits with great balance, a long finish and a deep and sweet taste. As great as 1959 or 1990, this vintage made wines that will last decades. Those who love strong wines to pair with spicy food should focus on Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2005. Most of the wines are closed today and need more time to give their best. My choice: Clos des Papes in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

8 2009: The big difference between 2005 and 2009 is that if you do not have time to wait for a French wine to be at its peak, 2009 is the vintage for you. This one is for those who do not care about technical explanations but want something soft with a lot of fruit, low tannins and a long finish. Specialists say that the warm weather gave wines lacking a bit of balance, but they are so, so good, and give immediate pleasure. My choice: Hermitage "La Chapelle" in Rhône Valley.

9 2010: This vintage is considered as a "classical" one for French wines. It means that the wines have structure, acidity and fruit. But the structure is strong, the acidity is high, and the fruit is phenomenal. They are still closed and need time to soften their tannins. In a couple of years, they will give amazing wines. If you have some time, wait. But if you want to taste them now, decant for one hour and you will enjoy a great "classical". My choice: Château Bellefont-Belcier in Saint-Émilion.

10 2015: Among the 10 vintages of my choice, this is probably, along with 2009, the easiest to approach because it is fresh, elegant and easy to understand. It is also the best vintage since 2010, with a style that is less complex but really good. The wines have a good balance and an immediate fruit that lingers and lingers. They have a high degree of alcohol, and for the wines of the south of France like Châteauneuf-du-Pape, they are gorgeous. My choice: Domaine Saint-Préfert in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.



The 1990 vintage is a no-brainer for sweet wines like Sauternes.



Reasons to Plan A Dijon Escapade

If you're wondering why Dijon should be one of your #travelgoals this year, here are eight reasons why you should plan a holiday to this city, which offers you more than just its mustard!

#1 Iconic encounters at the Palace of the Dukes of Burgundy

The capital of the Dukes of Burgundy is home to a majestic palace in the heart of its historical town centre. Renovated during the 17th century, the Palace of the Dukes and Estates of Burgundy is still one of the most visited monuments in the city.

#2 A brush with culture at the Fine Arts Museum of Dijon

Occupying the western wings of the Dukes' Palace, the Fine Arts Museum of Dijon has undergone major restoration over the last 10 years and offers 1,500 pieces on display. The museography has been completely redesigned, and a few contemporary extensions have been added to enhance the visitor experience.

#3 Making a wish and having it come true at the Owl of Dijon

Dijon's local celebrity is the owl of the Notre-Dame church. You'll find the statuette clinging to a buttress of the chapel. Stroke it with your left hand, and your wish will be granted!

#4 Soaking in panoramic views of Dijon's skyline

Take the 316-step trek up to the top of the Philip the Good Tower, which stretches above the Palace of Dukes for a bird's-eye view of the city. The



Place de la Libération is the most popular public square in Dijon.

terrace of the tower is a perfect place for a drink or two in the summer.

#5 Say santé to Burgundy's wine

Make the most of your Dijon getaway with a visit to the Burgundy vineyard. With Wine Thursdays, you get a chance to taste the fine wines of Burgundy in an atypical venue in the city centre that will be revealed at the last minute.

#6 Lazy brunches in Dijon's market halls

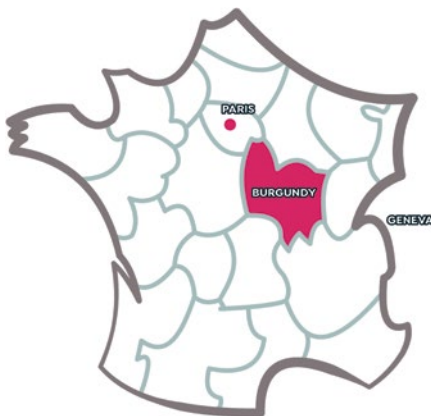
If you're here for the weekend, enjoy a brunch at the market halls where you'll discover the culinary delights of Burgundy. Every Sunday, a different chef concocts a brunch menu in a lively, festive atmosphere.

#7 Making your own mustard... and eating it too!

Mustard is an indispensable element for those who like their cuisine with a touch of piquant. Alongside the peppercorn, it is one of the oldest used plant in preparing cuisine. Learn more about the recipe, and create your own mustard. Masterchef in the making?

#8 Lounging by the Lake Kir

Every summer, Lake Kir transforms itself into a beach resort, replete with beach huts, fine sand, and palm trees. It's just like being at the seaside... You can even go sailing or rowing, or rent a stand-up paddle! The perfect place to relax and unwind...



Contact us:
Dijon Métropole Tourism Office
11 rue des Forges • 21000 Dijon
Tel. +33 (0)892 700 558; 0.35€/mn
info@otdijon.com
www.destinationdijon.com



The facade of Hôtel Le Cep, which unites two private mansions and their 16th-century courtyards.

Raise a Toast to the High Life

From Michelin-starred meals to local fine wine and wellness journeys, Hôtel Le Cep is your haven of luxury in Burgundy.

Famous for its vineyards and medieval architecture, Burgundy is a *bon vivant's* delight. In the charming town of Beaune, once the residence of the Dukes of Burgundy, Hôtel Le Cep ticks all the boxes for a stay *par excellence*. Located in the heart of the medieval town, this five-star property is a stone's throw from the famous Hospices de Beaune or Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune and the Basilica Notre-Dame. Part of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Hôtel Le Cep has been the recipient of many awards.

Saint Félix, the atmospheric wine cellar at the hotel.



DISCOVERING THE HOTEL

Hôtel Le Cep receives its guests with its courteous staff and warm ambience, and envelops them in its magical ambience. Its unparalleled hospitality makes every guest feel special.

The hotel's charm lies in its two merged private mansions and their historic 16th-century courtyards. In the summertime, one can enjoy a lazy breakfast in the hotel courtyard that dates back to 1547.

Choose from an inventory of 62 rooms, including 32 suites. Each room has a unique decor, and is adorned with

carefully selected antique furniture. Opt for one of its 15 stunning Nectar Suites, and the joy of your stay will be akin to enjoying a great glass of a Grand Cru wine, after which they are named.

The House of the Ramparts

Relish Burgundian hospitality in a new way, in this 183-square-metre privacy haven. The immediate proximity to Hôtel Le Cep's facilities allows for a bespoke five-star hotel service, for friends or family, while maintaining the independence and the cosiness of a charming townhouse for the guests.

Unparalleled Culinary Experience

Begin your gastronomic journey with a meal at the Michelin-starred Loiseau des Vignes restaurant of the Bernard Loiseau group. Raise a toast to local wine at the hotel bar, which is open round the clock. Oenophiles are sure to make their way to the hotel's wine cellar, Saint Félix, which promises a unique experience in a convivial atmosphere around some rare and exceptional wines personally collected over decades by the hotel's owner.

A Wellness Haven

Get pampered at the Wellness Center Marie de Bourgogne, which represents a refined space of 600 square metres in pure Burgundian tradition. Choose from 15 unique spa journeys, including cryotherapy, aquabiking, hydrostatic bed, balneotherapy bath, floating bed, massage for couples, and cosmetic products based on grapevines. Also enjoy authentic Ayurveda experiences in the new Ayurvedic Center.



A Royal Recipe

Borrowed from the kitchen of legendary chef Alain Ducasse, this exclusive recipe for a traditional French soup will transport you to 18th-century France.

Chef Alain Ducasse's interpretation of *oille* is served at Ore.

HERB & LEAF SOUP

Serves 4

Ingredients

LETTUCE PURÉE:

- 1 head of lettuce
- 60g baby spinach
- ¼ sweet onion
- 1 unpeeled clove of garlic
- 1 bunch of parsley
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 20g unsalted butter

ROYALE:

- 50g heavy cream
- 50g unskimmed milk
- 1 whole egg
- 180g lettuce purée

WATERCRESS CONDIMENT:


- 1 bunch of pepper watercress
- 40g baby spinach
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 tbs. olive oil
- 10g butter
- lemon juice (to taste)
- chicken white stock (to taste)

BROTH:

- 2 deboned chicken thighs
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. butter
- 1 tsp. black pepper corns
- 3 green cardamom seeds
- 1 star aniseed
- 1 tsp. fennel seed
- 1 shallot
- 50g ginger
- 200g chanterelle mushrooms
- 1 lemongrass stem

In the 18th century it was customary for guests to commence their meals with a typical French soup known as *oille*. The practice is described in the book *Le cuisinier royal et bourgeois* by François Massailot, a *chef de cuisine* to various illustrious personages of the era including royalty. This inspired legendary chef Alain Ducasse to serve the traditional culinary creation at private dinners organised in his exclusive restaurant Ore, fittingly located in the Pavilion Dufour of the majestic Château de Versailles.

We present Chef Ducasse's "Herb and Leaf Soup" recipe, his interpretation of the 18th-century *oille*. Recreate this at home and bring your inner masterchef to the fore.



At The Gentlemen's Table recreates Louis XIV's dinners for renowned guests visiting Versailles.

- 2 bunches of chervil
- 1 bunch of tarragon
- 1 bunch of flat-leaf parsley
- 1 litre mineral water
- 1 bird's eye chili
- ½ lime
- juice from ½ lime
- olive oil (to taste)
- 4 gold leaves

Method

LETTUCE ROYALE:

- Wash the lettuce, remove the leaves and cut in strips.
- Place a cast iron pan over the heat, add the olive oil and then the butter, sauté the onion and garlic still in its peel, add the lettuce and cook very quickly. When cooked, add the baby spinach leaves and the parsley.
- Cook, then immediately place on ice.
- Once cooled, press through a cloth, and reserve the cooking juice to add to the broth.
- Using a blender, mix the lettuce purée with the milk, cream and eggs.
- Adjust the seasoning and mix all the ingredients together. Filter through a conical sieve and set aside in a cool place for at least 3 hours.

WATERCRESS CONDIMENT:

- Heat another pan, add the olive oil then the unsalted butter. Once the colour turns nutty brown, place the watercress and the baby spinach leaves quickly, then deglaze with a little white stock.



Chef Ducasse (right) and Chef Stéphane Duchiron at Ore.

- Cook quickly and place on ice.
- Using a blender, mix everything with a little olive oil, a clove of garlic cooked in water for 10 minutes, relax the purée with some of the white stock or water to obtain a supple and light-green watercress purée, then set aside.

BROTH:

- Using an average-sized cast iron skillet, add the olive oil and sauté the boneless chicken thighs without colouring them too much.
- Once golden in colour, add the butter followed by the pepper

and the other spices (cardamom, star aniseed, fennel).

- Roast, then add the sliced shallot, ½ stick of lemongrass and ginger cut into pieces. Continue to colour on the heat.
- Add the chanterelles. Deglaze the pan with mineral water.
- Bring to a boil, then skim and cook slowly for at least 1 hour and 30 minutes.
- Add the chopped herbs (chervil, tarragon, parsley), the remaining lemongrass, and a bird's eye chili; cover with a damp cloth and reduce to 2/3. At the end of the cooling time, add the lime zest and infuse for 10 minutes.
- Filter through a conical sieve and set aside.

Chef Ducasse brings utmost attention to the selection and quality of produce used in Ore.



Finishing touches

- In the bowls that will be placed in a bain-marie, add a small ladle of the Royale. Cover with cooking film and cook in a 90° oven for 25 minutes.
- Meanwhile, cool the watercress condiment, adding a dash of lemon juice.
- Heat the *oille*, add a dash of olive oil, make an emulsion and a dash of lemon juice.
- Place a spoonful of watercress condiment on the warm Royale.
- Serve with the hot broth on the side, to pour over at the last moment.

Château de Nice and its surroundings have played an important role in the history of the city.



Soak up the Sun in Nice

With its exotic cuisine, casinos, festivals, sporting events, and more, Nice in Côte d'Azur makes for an extraordinary beach holiday.

From lively seaside resorts to unspoilt coves, fragrant fields of rosemary to charming hilltop villages, hiking trails to snow-capped peaks, you are sure to find your paradise in Nice. Add to that 300 days of sunshine each year, an international airport, and an inventory of emblematic hotels that make it a world-famous destination.

WELCOME TO NICE—CAPITAL OF THE CÔTE D'AZUR

Nice surprises you with an illustrious heritage, a sense of *joie de vivre*, its dynamism, and its strong connection to arts and culture. You could play the typical tourist and visit its monuments, gardens, and pedestrian paths that connect the hills to the city centre, or go deeper with an art and culture trail that includes visiting museums, artists, and learning about the local craft. Its aesthetic neighbourhoods, beautiful light, and pleasant climate charm you any time of the year.

SHOPPING

On the lookout for an evening dress, a necklace, or artisanal products? Nice has it all. A variety of luxury brands and boutiques find their corner in Nice. Take your pick from Nice Etoile or the Galeries Lafayette (the first one in France after Paris) and the shopping centres in Cagnes-sur-Mer and Saint-Laurent-du-Var that spoil you with their selection of stores.



Nice is home to a variety of luxury brands and boutiques; (right) enjoy a meal by the beach or go for fine dining at a Michelin-starred restaurant.



ON THE MENU

Titillate your taste buds with the flavours of Nice's local cuisine or experiment with exotic dishes. Enjoy your meal in a luxurious setting or at a café in a typical alley, relish a grilled fish lunch on a beach or go for fine dining at a Michelin-starred restaurant helmed by great chefs. After all, gastronomy is also part of Nice's way of life, and its comprehensive exploration calls for a separate itinerary altogether!

STAY

Contemporary hotels, traditional hotels, palatial hotels, international chains, in

the city centre, on the outskirts of Old Nice, along the beaches, tucked away in the hills... There's no dearth of stay options in Nice!

SINGLE CARD ACCESS

Make the most of your holiday in the Côte d'Azur with the French Riviera Pass. Similar to what you would find in other European capitals, this pass provides free access to the main sites and activities on the Riviera! Available locally, or at frenchrivierapass.com

For more information, log on to www.nicetourisme.com

On a Vegan Quest in St Tropez

On her last visit to Saint-Tropez, **RASHMI UDAY SINGH** had two precise missions: meet the reclusive diva Brigitte Bardot and explore the town's booming vegan culture.

I am on a quest. To meet the Hollywood superstar of yesteryear, Brigitte Bardot. I'm in Saint-Tropez, the town she calls home. In the process, I eat my way through some amazing vegetarian and vegan food. Bardot, an animal rights activist, is also a vegetarian. I fall in love with *tarte tropezienne*, a creamy tart created by a Polish pâtisserie in her honour. The dish is addictive!

While on this adventure, I also come across some interesting facts: not only is St Tropez Bardot's residence, but the town's popular Pan Dei Palais used to be the home of the Indian princess Bannou Pan Dei, who married a French General and moved here. Moreover, St Tropez is where the reigning Bollywood queen Deepika Padukone



From top: Chef Quentin Durand, Claude Maniscalco, and Jaques Silvant at Pan Dei Palais; blue radish cannelloni at restaurant Les Toits, Hôtel de Paris.

now stays regularly. It is at the beautiful palace of Bannou Pan Dei that I dine with my knowledgeable companions Claude Maniscalco and Jacques Silvant. We are surrounded by statues of Buddha, and paintings and antiques from India. Chef Quentin



RASHMI'S VEGGIE WOW MOMENTS IN ST TROPEZ



- Getting many amazing views of the St Tropez peninsula at the Lily of the Valley restaurant, where the brilliant Chef Vincent Maillard pampered me with his vegetarian masterpieces—from a courgette flower quinoa salad to a vegan chocolate avocado mousse.
- Tasting David Didelot's vegan risotto and detox salad at Le Girelier (on the harbour).
- At the legendary La Ponche restaurant, where the charming owner, and Brigitte Bardot's friend, Simon Duckstein dined with me, and Chef Christian Geay regaled us with his vegetarian delights.
- A sumptuous dinner at the Michelin-starred La Bastide de Saint-Tropez, where Chef Philippe Colinet's mastery over vegetables was a joy to witness.

Durand's delicious vegetarian starter made of artichokes, carrots, zucchini, and edible flowers comes out on top.

Of the many vegan meals in St Tropez, the blue radish cannelloni at restaurant Les Toits at Hôtel de Paris surprises me the most. It is a balanced masterpiece of texture and flavour. Coconut cream and almond foam are skillfully used by Chef Damien Cruche. As Cruche points out, his inspiration is Provençal but the flavours are international, and the focus is on local, seasonal, organic products.

My St Tropez journey ends without meeting Brigitte Bardot. But her gallant husband not only comes to see me with her greetings, but also joins me for a tasting of the famous *tarte tropezienne*. Now that's what I call, having my tart and eating it too!



From left: Farmers' markets are an integral part of the culture of Provence; Oppède Le Vieux is a quaint hilltop village known for its medieval ruins.



A Provençal Journey

The muse of many a French Impressionist, Provence holds a special place in the heart of gourmand **KAREN ANAND**.

For me, Provence is the land that Peter Mayle wrote about in his book *A Year in Provence*. Published with little fanfare, it went on to become one of the most successful travel books of all time, selling more than a million copies in the UK and six million internationally, and then became a TV series. In his subsequent book, *A Good Year*, which was made into a film starring Russell Crowe and Marion Cotillard, it was clearly the villages and vineyards and unmistakable "light" of Provence that were the real stars. Stunning villages built into the hillsides amidst vineyards, white oak and olive groves, lavender fields and rosemary bushes. I had to discover more.

This is my fourth trip to the region, and I discover that mesmerising light that French painters called 'luminosity'. It isn't surprising that Provence is the region where many French Impressionist painters found their inspiration—most notably, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Derain, Dufy, and Picasso. Picasso bought a house for his mistress



Author Karen Anand in Provence.

of nine years, Dora Maar, in the beautiful village of Ménerbes. I can see why. Despite the tourists, Ménerbes still remains an agricultural and winemaking area with cherry orchards and oak forests rampant with black truffles in season. We visit the Maison de la Truffe for lunch. It's an idyllic setting overlooking the

valley with a menu entirely devoted to truffle dishes. We start with 'Like a Luberon Garden' (goat cheese mousse, vegetables, Aestivium truffle) followed by three Normandy oysters under a Melanosporum black truffle sabayon, creamy scrambled eggs with black truffles, and finish with warm apple with black truffle in caramel sauce and Brie de Meaux truffled with black truffle.

Markets are another reason to come to Provence. I head to the Farmers' Market in Coustellet on Sunday morning. Locals still buy and sell their vegetable, fruit, local honey, olive oil, salami, and spices here. I see piles of fresh lavender and learn the differences between *lavande fine*, which is edible and used in cooking and quality perfumes, and *lavandin*, which is used in soaps and cosmetics.

Of all the picturesque villages in Provence, the medieval village Gordes is most well-known with several films having been shot here. It has a castle with underground cellars worth exploring, cafés, and shops. It also has quite an iconic luxury hotel called La Bastide de Gordes, which has one of the most exquisite views in all of Provence and a Michelin-star restaurant by Pierre Gagnaire.

Whether I'm looking for a salt of the earth experience or want to languish by the pool in a fashionable bastide, Provence ticks all my boxes.



Sonal Holland MW enjoying her stay at Château Soutard in Saint-Émilion.



Tasting from double magnums at Château d'Yquem, a top Grand Cru Classé sweet wine from Bordeaux.

Discovering Bordeaux

There are few better ambassadors for French wine than the grand châteaux, lush pastoral estates, and exclusive experiences of Bordeaux. **BY SONAL HOLLAND MW**

As India's only Master of Wine, I've had the privilege of visiting the vineyards of Bordeaux every other year. My first visit to Bordeaux was as a student, pursuing rigorous studies to become a Master of Wine. I soaked in the history of the region, understanding the business of wine and discovering its wine making. My subsequent visits helped me establish the broader cultural context of wine in France, its association with haute gastronomy, its promise of a healthy lifestyle and its *joie de vivre*. Wine, indeed, is a way of life for the French.

In the recent past, I have had the privilege to visit some of the grand châteaux of Bordeaux and partake



A stellar line-up of different styles of Bordeaux wines, ready for tasting.

in unparalleled wine experiences on lush pastoral estates amidst magical settings. One of my most memorable wine experiences took place in 2019. On an invitation of the Baron Eric de Rothschild and his daughter Saskia de Rothschild, I was part of an elite gathering of global wine connoisseurs from around the globe at Château Lafite Rothschild in Bordeaux to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Rothschild acquisition of Lafite. Visiting their iconic cellar, tasting historic vintages, and being seated for an intimate dinner in the august company of the godfather of films, auteur Francis Ford Coppola, and noted British actor Dominic West was a mystical experience. We sampled the

16 best vintages of Lafite going back to the 1868; a priceless opportunity.

To an Indian consumer, French wines are synonymous with high quality, and Bordeaux wines are well positioned to tap into this. The conversation about French wines is not just restricted to the most expensive or the finest wines in the world, but explores an entire wine-making universe: a great diversity of styles, the use of multiple grape varieties, a deep wine-making history, the profound understanding of terroir and a wide range of wines across all price points. France has a wide repertoire to suit the palate and pocket of everyone. And once you master the art of tongue-twisting pronunciations, a beautiful world of French wine awaits!



Sonal Holland MW with movie legend and wine producer Francis Ford Coppola at a celebratory dinner at Château Lafite Rothschild.



From left: Pairing tandoori chicken with wine may not be your first thought but it's a pleasurable combination if done right; brunch calls for a wide variety of dishes, and hence, diverse wines.

your entrée menu includes chicken tandoori, veggie cutlets or succulent lamb kebabs, then your best bet is the Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Brut, whose fruity notes contrast beautifully with the warmth of spices.

COURSE 2

A GROOVY GRAVY KIND OF PAIRING

If your menu consists of pungent gravies like chicken stew *à la Kerala*, Gujarati *kadhi* or mustard fish curry, the ideal companion would be the Alsace Pinot Blanc, which offers floral tones for your taste buds. If it's creamy gravies such as butter chicken, malai kofta or mutton korma that you're serving, then choose the dry white Alsace Reisling, whose subtle hints of white fruits and mild spices will perfectly accompany velvety sweet sauces.

COURSE 3

OF PULAO AND BIRYANIS

This course will interest red wine lovers. Biryani fans can raise a toast with the Côtes de Bergerac, whose soft textures are an instant match with spices or caramelised onion. If you are going veggie with pulao, mint or saffron rice, then choose the Castillon Côtes de Bordeaux. Its strong aromas of raspberry and plum can do wonders to your humble pulao.

COURSE 4

A SWEET ENDING

Pair your gulab jamuns, kulfis or kheer with the Muscat de Rivesaltes, whose citrusy notes match well with creamy desserts. On the other hand, the Clairette de Die Tradition, with its bouquet of floral notes and honey scents, is the perfect pairing with jalebis or barfis.

Indian Spice meets French Elegance

Confused about which bottles to pick up for your next soirée? Here's an easy guide to pairing French wine with Indian cuisine.

BY RONAK HEGDE - Atout France India

If you've always associated French wine with everything but Indian cuisine, it's time for a rethink. While this pairing may not be the most apparent 'match made in heaven', it is definitely a pleasurable palatable experience. We've carefully created a four-course menu that reveals many mouth-watering surprises and may tempt you to create your own fusion menu at home.

COURSE 1

LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING

Entrées pair very well with the king of wines: champagne! Did you know that champagne is a perfect match with greasy and salty foods, especially the brut varieties? Opt for the Taittinger Brut to complement butter garlic prawns, grilled fish or even the robust tandoori paneer. If, however,

Champagne goes nicely with a dish of prawns.





From left: The pink tarte praline was invented by an 18th-century Lyonnais pastry chef, who was inspired by the rose gardens in the Rhône region; Place de la Trinité is a square located in the 5th arrondissement of Lyon.

the Musée des Confluences—with its futuristic spaceship-like design—which focusses on anthropology and natural science. Lyon is dotted with churches, all equally stunning, but the Romanesque Basilica of Notre-Dame, perched atop the Fourvière hill, comes with a bird's-eye view of the city.

GOURMET GUIDE

I travel to eat. It was the primary reason to visit Lyon, considering it's the unofficial gourmet capital of France. The legendary Chef Paul Bocuse was Lyonnais. So, naturally, Les Halles de Lyon—Paul Bocuse was one of my first stops. This sprawling indoor market has more than 60 stalls selling high-quality artisanal products—bread, cheese, *foie gras*, pâté, terrine, chocolates, and more—from the region. I also loved trawling the outdoor food markets of Marché Quai Saint-Antoine, and La Croix Rousse Market.

My favourite thing to do was to grab a hearty meal at a *bouchon*, a traditional, homely restaurant typical of Lyon. Some Lyonnais dishes worth trying include tripe soup, *andouillette* (pork offal sausage), *quenelle* (fish dumplings in sauce), *boudin noir* (blood sausage), and praline tart. Wash it all down with a local wine, such as the light-bodied Beaujolais, or the rich, deliciously fruity Côtes du Rhône. Among restaurants, Le Bouchon des Filles, Chabert et Fils, and Chez Georges offer an authentic experience.

Lyon on a Plate

Located at the confluence of two of France's most important rivers—the Rhône and the Saône—Lyon, with its colourful riverfront townhouses and soaring church spires, is one of the prettiest cities in France. **BY PRACHI JOSHI**

PAST PERFECT

I discovered that the best way to explore Lyon is to ramble through the cobbled streets of Vieux Lyon (Old Lyon), which is one of the largest Renaissance neighbourhoods in Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Amid tiny cafés, bars, and souvenir shops, there are innocuous doors that open into *traboules*. Lyon's network of over 200 medieval passages—or *traboules*—was once used by silk merchants to access the riverfront.

The historical silk industry of Lyon was based in the neighbourhood of Croix-Rousse. Here, I visited La Maison des Canuts for a fabulous guided tour of the heritage that 500 years of silk production have left behind. Since I'm a museum geek, I had to drop in at Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, which is housed in a former 17th-century Benedictine abbey. It has a massive collection of Impressionist paintings, Egyptian antiquities, and modern art. Speaking of the modern, don't miss

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The Travel SIM Vacation Prepaid Plan comes pre-activated and specially tailored for short-duration visitors to France.

Bouygues Telecom has launched a new prepaid SIM plan known as the Travel SIM Vacation Prepaid Plan. Created specially for foreign tourists staying for a short duration in France, this pre-activated SIM card can be used immediately. The user simply needs to insert the SIM in their telephone to activate it on the Bouygues Telecom network, enabling them to immediately enjoy all the benefits of a French mobile phone number and a full range of services.

The SIM card comes with an Eiffel Tower-shaped SIM card eject tool, a Paris metro map and a touristic guide that showcases French regions and allows you to enjoy some great deals. From May 2021, this offer will be

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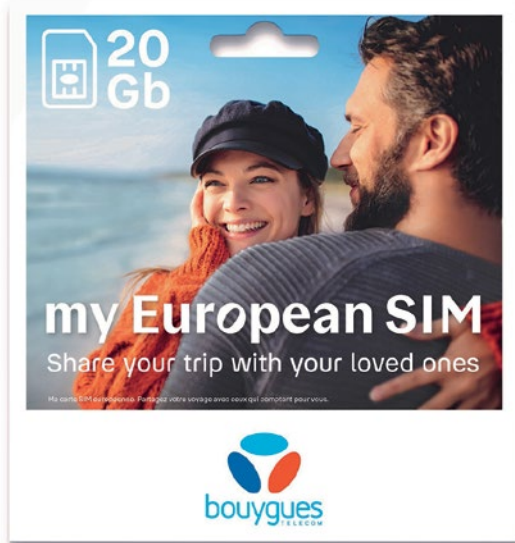
- A 20 GB data allowance on 4G, which can be used throughout France and Europe (connection sharing included).
- Unlimited calls and SMS within France and across Europe.
- €25 worth of international calls.

enhanced through a mobile application in partnership with tourism players and resellers allowing customers to plan their stay and obtain practical information on various topics (health, accommodation, good shopping tips and visits...). In addition, for any purchase of the SIM, a Petit Futé

Guide will be downloadable for free to discover the unmissable attractions of the country. The Travel SIM Vacation Prepaid Plan is available for sale in Bouygues Telecom stores, Relay shops, newsagents, and tobacconists.

Bouygues Telecom will make this SIM plan available through new sales outlets, to serve the more than 90 million foreign tourists who visit France each year.

The operator has also launched a dedicated web page—available in 10 languages—where the SIM card can be ordered directly. Pick up the card at airports or opt for delivery anywhere in the world and in France. For more, visit www.bouyguetelecom.fr/carte-prepayee/vacation-prepaid-plan





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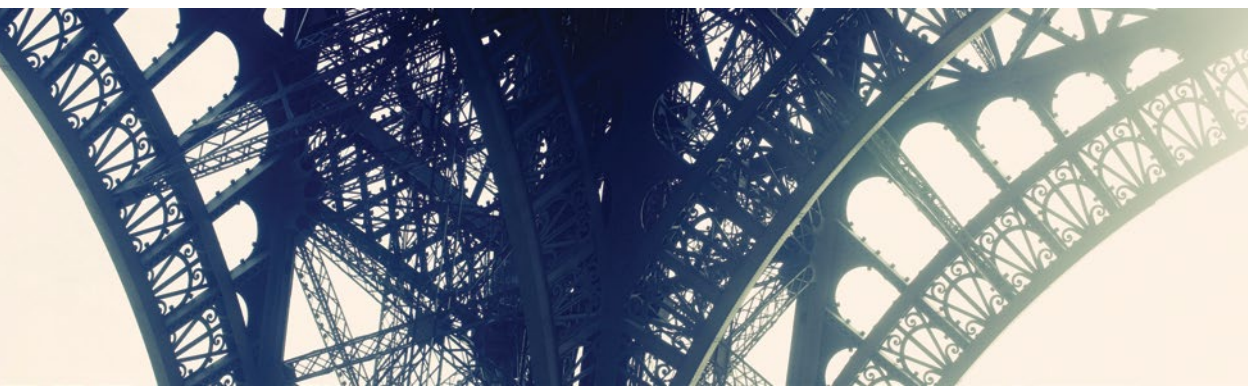




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