



Savouring Bordeaux

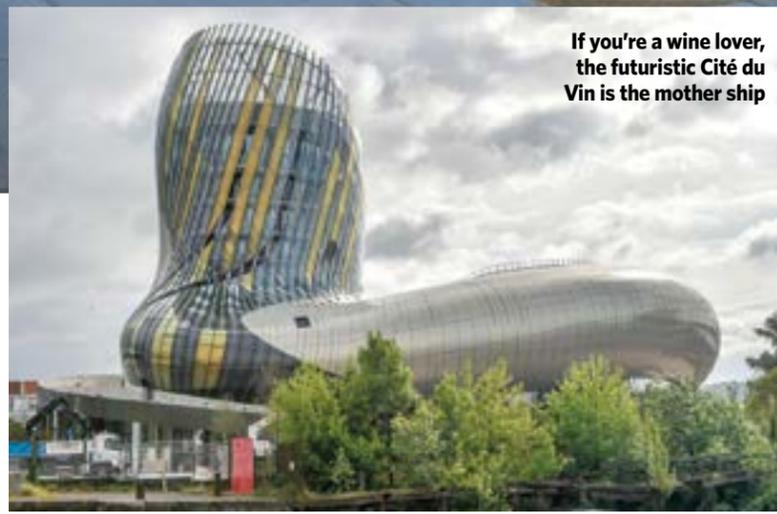
Combine culture, food and wine in and around this fantastic French city

Food Lovers *Great For*
 Bordeaux overflows with places to eat. I enjoyed contemporary cuisine at Hâ Restaurant behind the cathedral, the traditional fare of Au Bouchon des Chartrons near Quai des Marques and the relaxed atmosphere of Brasserie Bordelaise in the centre.



The opulent Palais de la Bourse reflected in the paving slabs of the nearby 'Water Mirror'

If you're a wine lover, the futuristic Cité du Vin is the mother ship



As the pink clouds of evening slowly change colour beneath my feet, I find myself mesmerised by Bordeaux's ingenious Water Mirror. And I'm not the only one. From morning till evening, young and old gather round this clever piece of urban adornment to enjoy the ever-changing reflections. Nestled between the river and the stately 18th-century Palais de la Bourse, the fun feature is simply a film of water across a large expanse of paving stones. But the effects are spectacular – it's the perfect place for a cute

selfie or some artier images. Summer visitors also love walking through the fine mist which regularly resprays one of Bordeaux's most compelling tourist attractions. **Clean and green** Many cities have enjoyed a makeover in recent years, but few can equal the success of Bordeaux. The opening of three fast, efficient trams not only cut pollution but prompted a major clean-up of its honey-blond facades. Restored to its former glory, the modern city is now quiet and elegant, but with

an urban buzz enhanced by a large student population. Heartland of Aquitaine and an English territory in the Middle Ages, modern-day Bordeaux is a relaxing and rewarding destination for a city break (visit bordeaux-tourism.co.uk), packed with culture, restaurants and tempting boutiques. Easily accessible by low-cost flights from the UK, it's also a popular interlude on touring holidays by car. And Bordeaux will be just two hours from Paris by rail when a new high-speed track opens in summer 2017. The city's historic centre is the most extensive urban environment to be awarded UNESCO World Heritage status, and its 347 listed historical monuments include churches and city gates, belltowers, mansions and monuments. But the main sites are easy to

explore on foot – pick up a free map and follow the circular UNESCO route. **The wine trail** I stayed at the three-star Hotel de la Presse, a quiet, comfortable base on Rue Porte Dijeaux in the city centre. Just around the corner is Rue Sainte Catherine, Europe's longest shopping street, and the designer district of Le Triangle, while a short tram ride whisked me to Quai des Chartrons, where redundant warehouses now house the Quai des Marques outlet centre. A couple more stops and I arrived at the Cité du Vin, Bordeaux's newest and boldest visitor attraction (citeduvin.com). This curvaceous glass and metal building is home to an outstanding wine museum that celebrates not only Bordeaux's famous vineyards and global wine industry, but also wines across the world from ancient times to the latest technology.

Everything here is interactive, launched with a simple touch of your electronic 'companion'. There's even an adapted version for children. You can easily spend half a day here – longer if you sign up for any of the optional tasting sessions or stop at Le 7 Restaurant. All visits include a glass of wine, or grape juice, in the 8th-floor Belvedere bar with panoramic view of the Garonne. But Bordeaux's river deserves further exploration. Take a 90-minute cruise with commentary, discover unspoilt islands and traditional fishing huts on a canoe tour, or take a day cruise into the

vineyards. The Department of Gironde is France's No 1 area for fine wine production, with 65 appellations, and motorists can follow six wine trails including Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers, Graves and Sauternes. Bordeaux even has its own suburban vineyards, with 20 châteaux located in the metropolitan area – the Tourist Information office near the Grand Theatre can book tastings and tours. **Out and about** East of Bordeaux, I've long had a soft spot for the beautiful hilltop town of Saint-Émilion,

guaranteed to satisfy both wine lovers and heritage buffs. This is a town that lives and breathes wine, its cobbled streets and ancient buildings spilling down the slope towards the vineyards. Don't miss the extraordinary church cut out of the rock, or the town's delicious signature macarons. Nor can I resist a trip to the Aquitaine coast, less than an hour's drive from the city, where unspoilt sandy beaches are dotted with low-key resorts backed by pine forests. The

closest resort to Bordeaux is Arcachon, a seaside gem with Belle Époque villas, nestled on the shore of a lagoon. For a seagull's eye view of this spectacular coastline, climb the wooden stairway to the top of the nearby Dune de Pilat, Europe's highest coastal sand dune. Look out over oyster beds, the shifting offshore sandbanks, and the unforgettable sight of this Saharan-style dune falling steeply away into the forest behind. Like Bordeaux's Water Mirror, it's mesmerising.

Why you'll love... Croatia



Woman's Weekly, features writer, Sarah

Where I Went This spear-shaped island is an hour's ferry journey south of Split (or 50 minutes by the white and blue catamaran). It might seem a marginal difference, but after setting foot on Hvar's sun-dappled shores you'll want to make every minute count.

Where I Stayed In a beautiful Air BnB apartment just a 10-minute walk from the main square, but there's quite a clutch of four-star hotels to suit the more luxuriously inclined. Overlooking the harbour, Hotel Adriana is a fantastic spot to rubberneck the superyachts below.

What I Did Took a water taxi to explore the neighbouring Pakleni Islands. But if the seas are too rough,



Hvar Tours runs daily excursions to the local, family-run wineries where islanders have been growing award-winning vintages for generations. Not that you would know. Their export market is non-existent, but that doesn't diminish their quality.

What I Ate Lobster in tomato and white wine sauce on a bed of spaghetti. This is the signature dish of the smart waterfront fish restaurant Gariful (hvar-gariful.hr), the best place to enjoy the catch of the day.

Great For Spirited Adventurers
 Work off the wine calories with a cycle tour of the vineyards, play golf at one of 15 courses around Bordeaux – or book a wine and golf package with Greens and Grapes (greensandgrapes.com).



Words: Gillian Thornton. Photos: Getty, iStockphoto.com