

Tasting Notes

Between Saturday afternoon, October 17 and Thursday evening, October 21, a group of eighteen Winchester Jumelagists were joined by twelve from St. Germain-en-Laye for a very intensive, informative, and just plain fun tour of Burgundy. We experienced the terroir, the wine, the food, and the friendship. Pictures tell only the very small part of the story. These words may add very little. It's sort of a location story – you just have to be there!!

Burgundy is bounded roughly by the cities of Sens, Dijon, Maçon, and Nevers. The five wine regions, Chablis, Côte de Nuits, Côte de Beaune, Côte Chalonnaise, and Maconnais, may be familiar names to some of you. Having been there makes them real. Annual production of about 180 million bottles is evenly divided between white (almost all Chardonnay) and red (almost all Pinot Noir). [For a comparison, annual production in Napa County California is about 70 million bottles.]

Our friends in St. Germain-en-Laye organized the tour. Their selection of Christophe as tour guide proved to be outstanding. He knew the territory and was known there. He arranged for entry into large tasting houses such as La Chablisienne and Château de Meursault. But, he was also able to gain entry into the very small vineyards such as Domaine Léger-Plumet, Cornu, and Bellard. Here we were met by the owner and his family and treated to a most relaxing and informative, and tasty, discussion – in French of course, but Christophe or one of our members provided an ongoing translation.



I will never drink a glass of wine again. Rather – I will treat it gently – look at in the light – smell it – swirl it – sip it – and, finally, savor it

After leaving St. Germain-en-Laye early Sunday morning our first stop was in Chablis where this writer learned that Chablis is not necessarily that pinky, semi-sweet inexpensive wine from California. Rather, Chablis and the later-to-be-introduced Bourgogne Blanc are suburb white wines. From Sunday afternoon until Wednesday evening we were guided along Route N74, which is the Burgundy wine route -- stretching from Dijon through Beaune to Macon and environs. The vineyards are essentially

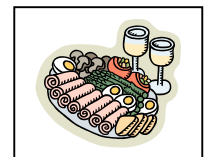
all on the western slopes of the hills facing the morning and noonday sun. Here we tasted reds and whites, often ending the session with a Premier Cru or Grand Cru – something you may not find in your local wine store, or, if found may not be able to afford.

The language of Burgundy is of course French. But, with the assistance of our St. Germain friends, Christophe, and our own limited Franco-phone capability, the language barrier proved to be no barrier at all.

We did not spend the entire day eating, driving, and tasting. On Tuesday afternoon we visited Cluny, an eleventh century site of the Benedictine order and reputed to be then the most important church in the Catholic world. While in Beaune, we were treated to a walking tour of the city by one of the St. Germainoise who was raised there. On Wednesday, we visited Soultré, an important site in the prehistory of the region [indeed of all of Europe] and many of us climbed the monolithic rock of Soultré that took us up to a spectacular overview of the valley with yellow vineyards as far as one could see. Finally, on the Thursday trip the tour took up to Flavenay – its claim to fame rests on the production of Anise candy, a very old abbey, and the site for some of the filming of the movie *Chocolat*.



The uninformed may think of Burgundy as only a wine-producing region. However, the food surely has to be equal in flavor, favor and reputation. The group dined in restaurants ranging from large and elegant to country style and railroad station. Dining on Bœuf Bourguignon or Coq au Vin in the land of origin simply cannot be described in print or pictures.



The tour covered the Saturday in St. Germain-en-Laye through a Thursday evening return there. All of the Winchesterites took the opportunity to extend by arriving a few days early or leaving a few later. They rounded out their stay with time in Paris, the provinces, or seeing friends.

All now safely returned and planning the next event. Stay tuned

