

# Homes & Property

## Styled up for summer

John Lewis celebrates its 150th birthday  
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£1,121,000: a three-bedroom apartment in an 18th-century building facing the river at Chartrons (homes-hunts.com)



£785,000: a renovated six-bedroom house in a quiet, rural spot near Saint-Émilion, through Maxwell Storrle Baynes

**C**LASSICAL architecture meets urban renewal with spectacular effect in Bordeaux, a Unesco World Heritage city on the banks of the Garonne river.

At tenth the size of Paris and with some 5,000 listed buildings, Bordeaux is a perfect city in which to wander, awash with grand, 18th-century traffic-free squares and Europe's longest pedestrianised shopping street. The city's wine heritage only adds to its dizzying elegance. This is the capital of France's largest wine-producing region and the names associated with it – Margaux, Latour, Pétrus – are legendary.

Bordeaux's urban regeneration is thanks to its long-term mayor, Alain Juppé. The former French PM lovingly strong-armed the city into the 21st century, obliging residents to clean centuries of grime off their buildings, tearing down the warehouses that blocked the city from the Garonne to create inviting pedestrian areas, and introducing quiet and clean modern trams.

The Bordeaux population boomed in the past 20 years, making it France's sixth-largest city. What's more, the extension of the Paris-Tours TGV line will shave a third off the train journey to the French capital, putting it just two



Unesco World Heritage site: historic Porte Calhau city gate and Place du Palais, with modern stepping stone fountains, in the heart of Bordeaux



Go with the wine-red glow: the carpet of red stones imported to Bordeaux from Shanghai outside Château La Dominique's restaurant

### A PLACE TO STAY

Relais & Châteaux Hotel Le Saint-James, just four miles from Bordeaux in the sleepy, golden limestone village of Bouliac, has the region's smallest vineyard. A few dozen straight lines of vines are visible from all 18 spacious, light-filled guest rooms, setting the tone of this hotel where the wonderfully informal sommelier, Richard Bernard, can give you a quick and simple, informative lesson on French wine routes and grapes.

The French family-owned hotel led Bordeaux's current interest in design when it commissioned architect Jean Nouvel in 1989.

"This was the first hotel Nouvel completed and his design was revolutionary at the time," says general manager Anthony Torkington. "He put in a black-lined swimming pool and employed an open-plan, minimalist style around a traditional take on a tobacco barn."

Le Saint-James is a notable gastronomic destination with a Michelin-starred restaurant. Last year a modern cookery school opened where a dedicated chef offers classes, including shopping trips to Libourne's bustling weekly market.

"Most of our guests are French but we want to welcome more British to the area. Bordeaux is easy to reach from London," says Torkington.

"Le Saint-James combines world-class food and wine, country views and access to Bordeaux city centre and wine region."

And being 10 minutes from the town, it also offers a peaceful respite on hot summer evenings.

### CONTACTS

■ **Le Saint-James, Bouliac:** double rooms from £160 a night (+33 (0) 5 57 97 06 00; relaischateaux.com/sjames).

■ **easyJet:** daily flights from Gatwick and Luton to Bordeaux, from £25.74 single fare including all taxes (easyjet.com).

■ **Maxwell-Storrle-Baynes:** through Savills (savills.com; 020 7016 3740)

■ **Homes Hunts:** home-hunts.com (020 8144 5501)

■ **L'École du Vin:** +33 (0) 5 56 00 22 85 (bordeaux.com)

■ **Vineyard Intelligence:** vineyardintelligence.com

## A Bordeaux château? We'll drink to that

hours away by 2017. So with property prices two fifths of those in Paris, is it time to consider a Bordeaux weekend bolt hole?

### A CITY-CENTRE HOME

"Bordeaux is an affluent university city where property represents good value

compared with many other French cities," says Doug Storrle of Maxwell Storrle Baynes. "It's well placed for day trips to the Atlantic coast around Arcachon, Cap Ferret and the Pyrénées."

Two-bedroom flats of 900sqft in the city centre start from £300,000. Grisel Immobilier has a studio in trendy Chartrons for £241,000 and a beautiful 2,220sqft three-bedroom flat with high ceilings for £737,000. A grand three-bedroom flat on the second floor of an 18th-century building facing the river is £1,121,000 through **Homes Hunts**.

### TAKE THE TOUR

Bordeaux's location on the Garonne created economic prosperity from the 16th century, built largely on the wine trade. Now, just like the city centre, the notoriously secretive world of Bordeaux wine production is being revitalised.

Under pressure from the New World, producers are adding modern architecture to their historic estates and opening their doors to wine tourists.

"Bordeaux city has literally cleaned up its act and now wine tourism is steadily improving," says Alex Hall, a Briton who moved there in 2004. "There's the Fête le Vin, the world's largest wine tourism event, held on the river quays in June, and the Grand Crus weekend in May, the only time the general public can taste wines from 100 top producers in one place."

Hall's company, Vineyard Intelligence, advises people buying vineyards in Bordeaux. Hall is also a tutor at L'École du Vin, the central Bordeaux wine school which offers lessons and tastings to keen amateurs and knowledgeable professionals alike.

Homes are a fraction of Paris prices and rail times are about to be slashed. It's time to buy in the wine capital, says **Cathy Hawker**

### WINE AND DESIGN

To highlight Bordeaux's current obsession with modern architecture, Hall points out the Norman Foster-designed cellars that are under construction at Château Margaux and the dramatic, curvaceous cellar designed by Pritzker Architecture Prize-winner Christian de Portzamparc at Château Cheval Blanc.

Next to Cheval Blanc on the borders of Pomerol and Saint-Émilion, Château La Dominique, an acclaimed vineyard owned by French producer Clément Fayat since 1969, unveiled its own wonderful new cellar this spring.

Designed by Jean Nouvel and covered with concave metal strips in graduated shades of red that reflect the vines, the audacious building puts a new mark on the rural landscape, without disturbing it.

Above the shining steel vat room is a public restaurant and tasting room, with an open kitchen facing simple refectory tables and chairs made of horse-chestnut bark. The outside decking area has a vast carpet of small red glass stones imported from Shanghai.

Château La Dominique has a daily tour in English from June to September (otherwise Tuesday to Sunday only) including tastings.

The restaurant opens from the beginning of April at weekends, then every day for lunch and dinner in the summer season. Prices for lunch start at £20.



### 'Life is good in easy-going wine country'

LE PAVILLON VILLEMURINE, right, a lovely 1860s limestone manor house surrounded by vines on the edge of Saint-Émilion, was once owned by the Pétrus family, an illustrious name in Bordeaux wines. Nikki and Julian Garofano, left, bought it in 2010 when it was split into cramped flats. They restored it, creating five suites to rent.

The couple had previously owned vineyards, producing a red wine and a delicious, crisp white but now are happy to simply serve it from their extensive cellars. They have lived in France since leaving the UK in 2000. "Nikki worked in film location on programmes like A

Touch of Frost and I was training to be a lawyer," says Julian. "One day I asked her how she felt about taking six months off. She said yes and 14 years on we are still here." The couple will collect guests from Libourne TGV station and lead a complimentary personal tour of their favourite vineyards. "Guests come because Bordeaux is the holy grail of wine routes," says Julian. "And wine people are generally a fun, easy-going bunch. Life is good here. That's why we stayed."

■ **Le Pavillon Villemaurine:** pavillon-villemaurine.com. From £145 a room per night with breakfast.

