



Vintage time to drink in Bordeaux

Conditions are right to plant yourself among the riverbank vineyards, writes **Cathy Hawker**

Classical architecture meets urban renewal with spectacular effect in Bordeaux, a Unesco world heritage city on the banks of the Garonne river.

A tenth of 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. It is also the capital of France's largest wine-producing region, and the names associated with it are legendary.

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

A population boom over the past 20 years has made it France's sixth-largest city. What's more, the extension of the Paris-Tours TGV line will shave a third off train times to the capital, putting it just two 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," says Doug Storrie of Maxwell Storrie Baynes. "And it's well placed for day trips to the Atlantic coast."

Two-bedroom flats of 900sq ft in the city centre start from £300,000. Grisel Immobilier has a studio in trendy Chatrons for £241,000 and a beautiful 2,220sq ft three-bedroom flat for £737,000. A grand three-bedroom flat in an 18th-century building facing the river is £1.12m through [Home 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 wine makers in the New World, producers are adding modern architecture to their historic estates and opening their doors to wine tourists.

"Wine tourism is steadily improving in Bordeaux," says Alex Hall, a Briton who moved there in 2004.

His company, Vineyard Intelligence, advises people buying vineyards in Bordeaux.



Architect Jean Nouvel's **Château La Dominique** is one of the most pleasant places to visit in Bordeaux

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