

Marble?  
No, it's silk

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**B**ORDEAUX is the capital of one of France's most famous wine-producing regions. At the confluence of the River Garonne and the Gironde estuary, this Unesco World Heritage Site is home to 5,000 deliciously elegant 18th-century buildings.

Fabled wine brands among the region's 7,500 châteaux, including Petrus and Margaux, have brought class and wealth, leading Bordeaux with appealing history and traditions, but don't be fooled: this is a city offering the best of modern life.

There's great shopping and lovely cafés mixed in with meandering riverside walkways. An eco-friendly tram system criss-crosses the city centre. On warm summer evenings children joyfully play in the cooling Miroir d'Eau (water mirror) beside the Place de la Bourse, while strolling couples watch the world go by.

Contemporary architectural additions to centuries-old châteaux are open to the public and well worth a visit. Start at Château La Dominique close to Saint-Émilion, where you can dine in architect Jean Nouvel's concave metal-covered winery before heading to a tasting session in the gleaming vat room.

### GOLDEN TRIANGLE HOMES

"There has been a huge amount of money spent on Bordeaux in recent years," says Francois-Xavier de Vial of Home Hunts. "It has always been architecturally beautiful, but the centre and riverside have been completely transformed. Everywhere is immaculately kept and it has improved the popularity of the city tremendously."

Bordeaux was voted Europe's best city to visit this year by online portal Best European Destinations. By 2017, when improvements to the high-speed train line will shave one hour off the current three-hour journey between Paris and Bordeaux, the city should gain even more fans.

Two of the most popular residential areas in the city are Chartrons and the "Golden Triangle", which is bounded by three fine boulevards (Cours Clemenceau, Cours de l'Intendance and Allées de Tourny). Chartrons offers townhouses and



People watching: Apollo soul and funk bar in the heart of historic Bordeaux



Glorious setting: the Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux reopened with a fresh look

## Five-star luxury in city's historic heart

OCCUPYING a prime spot opposite the Grand Théâtre opera house, the Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux is as dark and atmospheric as a glass of claret.

For a long time the only five-star hotel in the centre of Bordeaux, it offers 130 comfortable rooms behind an 18th-century façade.

Reopened in 2007 with a fresh look by French interior designer Jacques Garcia, who introduced swathes of opulent velvet and Carrara marble bathrooms, the hotel has a spa, two restaurants – one overseen by Gordon Ramsay – and a "Night Beach" roof terrace.

The concierge offers bespoke wine tours to châteaux throughout the region, including private trips on a beautiful wooden boat along the Garonne with a carefully packed picnic.

À votre santé!

■ **Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux & Spa:** [ghbordeaux.com](http://ghbordeaux.com). Rates start from £200 a night.

# A corking wine capital

Top wine-making city Bordeaux is loaded with history and tradition, but also offers a real taste of modern life, says **Cathy Hawker**

warehouses restored into wonderful loft apartments. A fully renovated six-bedroom house, currently operating as a B&B, is available for £706,700 through Home Hunts, and a three-bedroom apartment with small garden and plunge pool is £326,600 with Grisel Immobilier.

The Golden Triangle in the heart of the city offers flats in historical houses. Home Hunts has a four-bedroom, third-floor apartment with high ceilings, marble fireplaces and a reception room for £873,000.

Leggett has an appealing selection of one- to three-bedroom

apartments, both refurbished and new, close to the quayside, priced from £193,000 for 970sq ft.

- **Home Hunts:** [home-hunts.com](http://home-hunts.com)
- **Leggett:** [frenchestateagents.com](http://frenchestateagents.com)
- **Grisel Immobilier:** [grisel-immobilier.fr](http://grisel-immobilier.fr)



## RAISE A GLASS PERFECT HOSTS FOR WINE FANS

ANGLO-FINNISH couple Alex and Emma Hall, left, moved into La Panneterie in 2008. Following extensive renovations they have created a wonderful family home to share with their sons, six-year-old William, and Jacob, aged four.

"We are in a classic location in the centre of the Entre-deux-Mers, 35 minutes from Bordeaux, close to the bastide (medieval) towns and the beaches at Arcachon, while Saint-Émilion is 20 minutes away," says Alex, 48.

Last November, they began offering B&B in an annexe of their stone farmhouse, ideal for

couples or families. They were fully booked for most of the summer with guests staying for anything up to nine days, having breakfast with the family and sharing the garden and pool.

Alex runs Vineyard Intelligence, sourcing property and vineyards, and is also a tutor at prestigious L'École du Vin de Bordeaux, making him the perfect person to give advice on the best local châteaux to visit for wine tastings.

A double room at La Panneterie is £58 a night, with space for two additional guests in a separate room from £18 per person ([la-panneterie.com](http://la-panneterie.com)).