

# COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

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2020

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# FLY-FREE HOLIDAYS



## ⌘ CARRIER

PARIS » ROVINJ » VENICE

This nine-night luxury trip starts by taking the Eurostar, business class, to Paris for two nights in the plush Hotel Le Bristol near the Champs-Élysées. Next, you travel overnight to Venice aboard the high-speed Thello train. From Venice you drive by hire car to Rovinj for three nights at the Hotel Monte Mulini on the Croatian coast. Coming back, there are two nights in the Belmond Hotel Cipriani before returning to London on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. From £7,420pp sharing. [carrier.co.uk](http://carrier.co.uk)



## ⌘ SUNVIL

LONDON » CORFU

This holiday is on beautiful Corfu but the journey takes two days each way. Travel is by rail: first to Paris on Eurostar, then a night in Milan, and onward to Bari for the overnight ferry to Corfu. From around £1,600pp, based on two sharing and including return travel to London, B&B in Milan, overnight ferry and seven nights self-catering at Kalami Bay on Corfu. Hotels also available. [sunvil.co.uk](http://sunvil.co.uk)



## ⌘ RED SAVANNAH

LONDON » AVIGNON » PARIS

This 11-night trip includes business class seats from London to Avignon and seven nights at Crillon le Brave, a romantic hamlet-cum-hotel, plus wine-tasting at Chateauneuf-du-Pape. Return to Paris, with four nights at the boutique Relais Christine on the Left Bank, from £2,595pp sharing. Add four nights at the Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa, plus travel and sightseeing, from £1,515pp. [redsavannah.com](http://redsavannah.com)



## ⌘ EXPLORE

LONDON » AMSTERDAM » DELFT

A leading adventure holiday company designed the trip with the smallest carbon footprint: a self-guided highlights of Holland by bike. Graded 'easy', and covering 196km, this eight-day trip starts with Amsterdam's picturesque network of canals and historic townhouses, moving on through meadows dotted with windmills to Haarlem's Frans Hals Museum. The next leg rolls past tulip and crocus fields to the blue and white crockery of Delft; then you cycle to Gouda for syrup waffles. The route back runs alongside the River Amstel, once used to chill its famed beer. From £975, including bike rental and B&B. The rail journey takes five hours, fares from £110. [explore.co.uk](http://explore.co.uk) ■



## ⌘ BLACK TOMATO

LONDON » LJUBLJANA » INNSBRUCK

For this 11-day holiday the bespoke travel company suggests taking the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express to Venice and then travelling by chauffeur-driven electric car to Gredic in the wine area of Goriška Brda in Slovenia. On day seven you travel by road for three nights in Ljubljana, where one day is spent on activities at Lake Bled. In the last two days you are driven to Innsbruck for a night in the Alps, before taking a train back to London via Zürich and Paris. From £8,700pp, based on two sharing, and including all transportation, accommodation and some meals. [blacktomato.com](http://blacktomato.com)

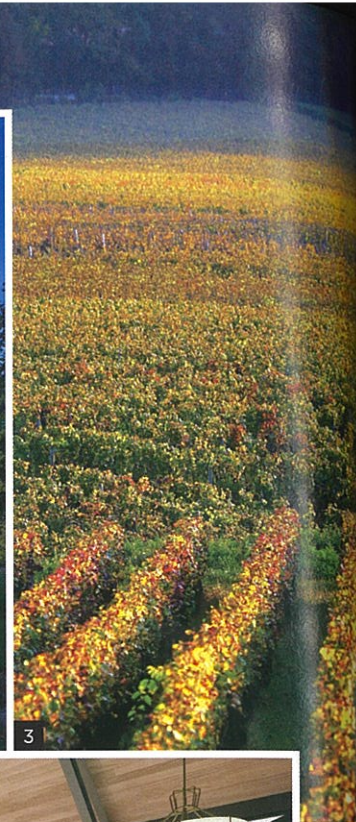


Sip wine on the slopes  
of Mount Etna with  
Tasca d'Almerita



# THE GRAPE ESCAPE

Take wine tasting to the next level with these all-new estate hotels and tasting experiences, advises **Alice Lascelles**



1 Cloudy Bay's tasting shed 2 Four Seasons Resort, Napa Valley  
3 Ripe French vines 4 Devon's Lymstone Manor 5 Château  
Lafaurie-Peyraguey in Sauternes 6 Sicily's Tasca d'Almerita

Wine and wanderlust have long gone hand in hand. Now a fresh crop of hotels, retreats and tasting rooms offer oenophiles the chance to get straight to the heart of the action.

New for New Zealand is the Cloudy Bay Shed ([cloudybay.co.nz](http://cloudybay.co.nz)), a beautifully appointed cellar door in Central Otago, the South Island region that famously served as the spectacular backdrop for the *Lord of the Rings* movies. Set in a lush garden among acres of vines, this state-of-the-art, glass-walled tasting room is the place to sample the Cloudy Bay vineyard's celebrated pinot noir, before enjoying a barefoot barbecue under the stars. If that whets your appetite, Cloudy Bay also offers From Forage to Table, a six-day gourmet extravaganza of spearfishing, oyster shucking, foraging, wilderness picnics, vineyard tours, helicopter flights over fjords and glaciers, and private dinners at its HQs in Central Otago and Marlborough, accompanied by lashings of its top wines. I had a little taster of this, and all I can say is: prepare to be amazed.

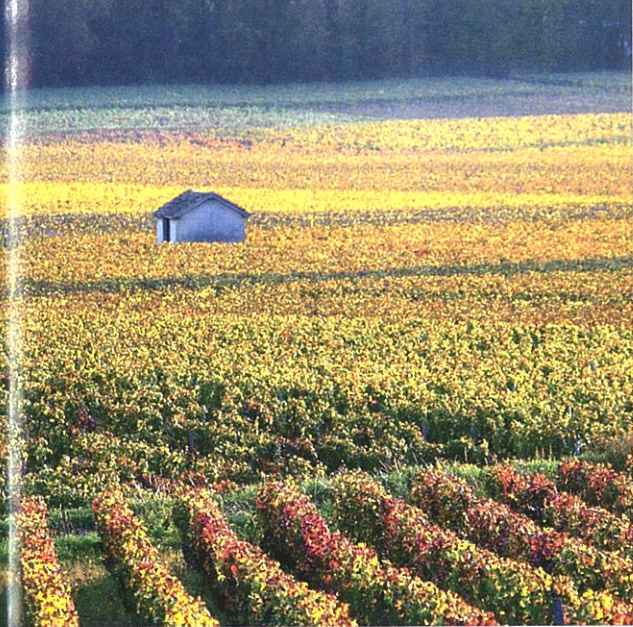
The curator of this – and many other – exclusive wine trips is Clos 19 ([clos19.com](http://clos19.com)), an arm of luxury drinks company Moët Hennessy. With access to a whole portfolio of illustrious wine estates and distilleries around the world, including Krug, Ruinart, Hennessy and Glenmorangie, as well as New World wineries

including Cloudy Bay, Newton Vineyard in Napa and Argentina's Cheval des Andes, it's a one-stop shop for epicurean adventure. Choose from a range of prêt-à-porter packages, or talk to them about arranging something tailor-made.

Bespoke travel specialists Black Tomato ([blacktomato.com](http://blacktomato.com)) has teamed up with online restaurant magazine *Eater* to create Eater Journeys, an exciting new series of itineraries taking in some of the world's top eating and drinking destinations. The Paris & Burgundy trip begins with an urban safari through some of the capital's most famous restaurants, bars and food shops, adding in a guided market tour, a cookery class and a cheese and wine tasting, before culminating in truffle hunting and more wine tasting in the heart of Burgundy.

Despite its glamorous reputation, Champagne used to be curiously short on good hotels, but that's all changed since the arrival of the Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa ([royalchampagne.com](http://royalchampagne.com)), a sumptuous, creamy-coloured retreat among the vines, just outside Épernay. The panoramic views from the roof terrace are glorious, the spa is delightful and the champagne list to die for, but what this five-star hotel offers above all is the contacts to create a wine trip that's really unique: a one-to-one champagne tutorial for instance, or a private visit to Hautvilliers, the spiritual home of Dom Pérignon, as well as access to the kind of cult, independent champagne houses that are not normally open to the public.

One of my favourite jaunts of last year was a visit to the sleepy but utterly enchanting appellation of Sauternes, in south Bordeaux. Oft overlooked in favour of its more high-octane



neighbours in the north of the region, Sauternes is now seeing major investment. Lalique CEO and wine magnate Silvio Denz has poured huge amounts of time, love and money into the 13th-century Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey ([chateau-lafaurie-peyraguey.com](http://chateau-lafaurie-peyraguey.com)), restoring its famous winery and adding a Michelin-starred restaurant and a crystal-encrusted hotel. Situated just a short bike ride from several other eminent châteaux – including the ravishing Château d'Yquem – this dramatic property is a wonderful base from which to explore this lovely region.

Just down the road from Lafaurie-Peyraguey, the luxury hotel group Six Senses ([sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com)) is also in the process of revamping accommodation at the Grand Cru Classé Château d'Arche winery. An opening date has not been set, but having stayed at Six Senses, Douro – a hotel with a very cool, pared-back aesthetic, wonderful wine list and glass-walled room looking out on the valley's vertiginous vineyards – I have high hopes for this one.

Sometimes simply looking at the vines is not enough. At the five-star Castelfalfi ([castelfalfi.com](http://castelfalfi.com)) resort in Tuscany, wannabe vigneron can now adopt their own vineyard (or olive grove) on the 1,100-hectare estate. 'Be a Farmer' prices start at €260 (around £221) for a row of organically-farmed sangiovese vines and there's a tailored package of extras that can include an invitation to join the harvest as well as personalised bottles of Tenuta Castelfalfi. Even if you're not in it for the wine, this cluster of farmhouses, cottages and apartments in an 800-year-old medieval hamlet is well worth a visit.

If you're heading down south to Sicily, be sure to arrange a visit to Tasca d'Almerita's stylish new tasting room on the north face of

Mount Etna ([tascaalmerita.it](http://tascaalmerita.it)). This sparingly renovated 'palmento' (a traditional Enean wine cellar) lies just yards from the winery's spectacular 99-terrace vineyards and is fully equipped for hosting private dinners and tastings, either in the lofty stone dining room or in the more cosy drawing room by the fire.

One of the most hotly anticipated openings in the US this year will be the Four Seasons Resort in California's glitzy Napa Valley ([fourseasons.com/napavalley](http://fourseasons.com/napavalley)). Blessed with its own vineyard, spa, garden-to-table restaurant, farmhouse-style lodgings (without the mud, of course) and views of the Palisades Mountains, it promises winemaking tutorials with the hotel's winemaker, Thomas Rivers Brown, as well as tastings and vineyard tours by bike.

Closer to home, Lympstone Manor ([lympstonemanor.co.uk](http://lympstonemanor.co.uk)) – chef Michael Caines' romantic vineyard hotel on the Exe Estuary in Devon – will celebrate its first harvest this autumn. If you want to be sure of a front row seat (and you can literally see the vines from your bedroom window) book sooner rather than later. And leave room for a Michelin-starred dinner of truly epic proportions.

But why wait until you get to your destination to pop the cork? Private jet company VistaJet ([vistajet.com](http://vistajet.com)) now offers in-flight tastings as well as expert advice on buying and investing in fine wine. The company's well-connected concierges can also arrange a spin around your favourite wine region: how about a three-day tour of Tuscany and Umbria including dinner with the Antinori family, helicopter vineyard tours and accommodation on the family estates? Oenotourism has well and truly had an upgrade. @alicescelles. ■