



# Group Trips

with Grape Escapes





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# Group Breaks and Tours for Wine Lovers

Created in 2004 by wine lovers Mark and Claire Hallett, Grape Escapes is a specialist wine tour operator offering a broad selection of holidays and trips to the premium wine regions, principally in France. From birthday weekends, Hen and Stag trips to bespoke circuits for wine and car clubs, our expertise is in creating perfect trips for individuals, groups and companies. Grape Escapes offers you the flexibility to arrange the perfect holiday for your group.

The company has experienced great success over the last few years, which has allowed us to spread our wings and develop our existing products within France and also to start working with new exciting regions, such as Porto in Portugal, Rioja in Spain and Tuscany in Italy.

To discuss your group's trip to the premium wine regions, please call us on **08456 430860** or e-mail **info@grapeescapes.net**. We would be delighted to hear from you and answer any questions.



*"I wanted to thank Mark and his team for arranging such a fantastic escape for me and my friends. We all had such a fun time and I can think of no better way to celebrate a birthday!"*

Hayley **Birthday Trip**



# Why Grape Escapes?

**During the initial stages of arranging a group trip, it is important to consider whether it is best for your group to organise everything yourself or whether you would rather leave the hard work to a general travel agent or a specialist tour operator.**

We can't make this decision for you, as every group has different requirements; however we have underlined below the advantages of booking with Grape Escapes rather than making your own arrangements or booking with another company.

## Personal Service

At Grape Escapes, we believe that there is no substitute for individual knowledge and experience which enables us to deliver a truly personal service to all of our customers. We specialise in a limited range of destinations so you can be sure



that we have a deep and extensive knowledge of your chosen holiday region. Although general travel agents may be able to arrange a tour for you, their knowledge of the region and the wines may be less extensive.



## Always on Hand

As group leader, the organisation of the trip (and of the other group members) can become stressful. It is therefore important that you relax on the trip and reap the benefits of your hard work. If you encounter any problems whilst you are travelling, Grape Escapes are on hand 24/7 to resolve any issues that may arise.

## Quality

We believe that our customers deserve the best value and service, irrespective of whether they are spending £200 or £20,000 on a trip. We have personally visited most of the hotels that we recommend and we keep all of our suppliers under constant review to ensure that the quality of service and welcome meet our high standards. As well as monitoring responses from our customer feedback, we ensure

that each supplier is assessed regularly by a Grape Escapes representative to ensure that the establishment is still as we would expect.

## Flexibility

We believe that each group has its own specific requirements and we have a broad range of activities to create bespoke trips to meet these requirements.

## Choice

The flexibility offered by Grape Escapes isn't just limited to the dates that you would like to travel, but also includes the type of accommodation and travel method you prefer. We have visited dozens of hotels in each region to find the right accommodation for our guests and we offer a range to suit all requirements. We guarantee the most appropriate accommodation for your requirements and budget. In this brochure, we have included sections on travel and accommodation so that you can evaluate the most suitable option for you.

## Great Wineries and Wines

With every Grape Escape, you will have the opportunity to visit a number of vineyards and wine makers. We know from personal experience and consistent customer feedback that the most enjoyable tours are not necessarily given by the big names, but often by our carefully selected



smaller growers who are infinitely passionate about their wines. We therefore organise visits to a range of wine makers both small and large, to allow you to compare for yourself. On many of our tours, you will have the opportunity to meet the wine makers and learn firsthand about the numerous factors that influence the production of quality wines and of course, no tour would be complete without tasting the wines! Grape Escapes have exceptional relationships with each of our partners and Grape Escapes guests always receive a VIP welcome at some of the best wine estates in the world.

## Fine Dining

A final essential element in every Grape Escape is the opportunity to enjoy the wines as the makers intended – by sitting down to enjoy them with a good meal. We take the same care in selecting and recommending restaurants and individual menus as we do with the rest of your trip.

## Financial Security

Grape Escapes is a fully bonded tour operator, offering you 100% financial protection. Booking your trip as a package with a reputable bonded tour operator or travel agent means that in the event of a problem after you have paid for your trip, (for example, a supplier becoming insolvent), your tour operator is required to make alternative arrangements for you and the payments you have made will be protected.

**In conclusion, if you are thinking of organising a group trip individually, you need to carefully consider how important the above elements are to your group. There are many advantages to having a tour operator arrange your trip for you and many of our guests feel more relaxed leaving the arrangements in the hands of a specialist.**

*"I just wanted to say thank you so much for all the excellent suggestions you made on our itinerary. We had a fabulous weekend in the Champagne region and this was made all the more enjoyable by the research you did for us and the excellent service you provided. I will without doubt send any friends pursuing wine breaks in your direction. Thanks so much!"*

Daniella **group of friends**

# Booking your Group Trip

**So you have decided that you would like to organise a trip for your group. This helpful guide will assist you through the booking process with Grape Escapes.**

## 1. Before Contacting Grape Escapes

### Establish a Group Leader

The group leader will be the main point of contact for Grape Escapes and for the other participants. If you are arranging the entire trip (booking travel, accommodation and devising the itinerary) yourselves, this can be a big responsibility. If you book your trip with Grape Escapes, then we will undertake many of these tasks for you, both before the trip and during your time away, leaving you free to enjoy the event.

### Who is going on the trip?

Prices can vary depending on the size of your group, therefore it is a good idea to work out a minimum and maximum number of participants prior to obtaining a quote. Grape Escapes can cater for groups of 2 to over 200 people! This will allow you to have a firm idea of how much the trip is going to cost.

Larger groups can be more economical as fixed costs are shared out over a larger amount of people. In some cases, we can arrange for the group leader to travel free so please mention this to us when you request your initial quote.

When considering what you would like to do on your trip, it is important to consider that some activities require a minimum number of participants, for example dining as the guests of a wine maker, whilst some activities will not be possible for larger groups such as visiting some of the most prestigious chateaux.

### What type of trip are you looking for?

Different types of groups travel for different reasons, and it is important for us to understand what you are looking to do in general before exploring the finer details.

Birthday parties and Hen and Stag groups travel to celebrate and these trips are all about having an enormous amount of fun. Centrally-located hotels are ideal for these groups, who will usually want to enjoy the city's night life. Festive activities such as Sabrage and gala dinners are also popular with these groups.

In comparison, gastronomy and wine clubs travel primarily to learn as much as possible during their trip and experience vineyards and wine-making up close. They will generally want to visit a larger number of estates and taste a wide range of wines. Master classes, cookery schools and horizontal tasting meals are ideal for these groups.

For car clubs, it is all about the driving. As well as having a partly transported tour (so that the drivers can enjoy the extensive tastings), Grape Escapes can also arrange activities such as self-drive treasure hunts, which allow car club members to explore the region in their own cars and also offers them the chance to take souvenir photos of their cars in front of some fabulous buildings and backdrops.

We have also arranged many trips for other types of groups such as private members' clubs, rotary clubs and simply groups of friends. These groups have their own reasons for travelling. Some are celebrating a special occasion, some would like to learn more about wine and wine-making and some would simply like to enjoy tasting some great wines.

We would be delighted to hear from you to discuss your group's specific requirements.







### Where do you want to go?

We can arrange group trips to many of Europe's premium wine regions and further information about where we travel to can be found between pages 12 and 27.

Knowing which wines your group members like to drink is very helpful in establishing which region you would like to visit. For example, 99% of the wine produced in Champagne is sparkling, therefore a group member who does not like bubbles may not wish to visit the Champagne region. Our trips can include non wine-related activities as well, therefore we can offer something for tee-totallers and pregnant women in addition to wine lovers as part of a tour party.

Depending on when you are looking to travel and the primary reason for the trip, you may also wish to consider the likely climate / weather at the time of your trip and we can suggest which regions may be better at different times of year in order to find better weather.

### Travel

Once you are sure of where you would like to go, the next step is deciding how you would like to travel there. Information on travelling to specific regions can be found between pages

12 and 27 and you will find a practical summary table on pages 46 and 47 of this brochure. Most of our guests travel from the United Kingdom, therefore you will find a vast amount of information regarding travel from here specifically. However, we welcome groups from across the globe and would be happy to provide you with specific information about travelling to your preferred region from your particular country of residence.

Although Grape Escapes do not sell flights as part of our packages, we can arrange private transfers or rail travel from your arrival airport as well as travel by ferry, Eurotunnel and Eurostar.

### When do you want to travel and for how long?

Grape Escapes can arrange group trips for mid-week and weekend dates throughout the year and we



*"Thank you for organising a brilliant awayday for us. The feedback that Paul and I have had has been unanimously glowing. We're especially grateful for the ingenuity and flexibility you demonstrated in accommodating our varied demands of the 2 days."*

Joe **Team Building trip - Big 4 accountancy firm**



will work entirely around your group's preferences. At this stage, you may only be able to establish which month you would like to travel and whether you'd like to travel during the week or over a weekend. This will be enough information to provide you with an initial proposal. In the European wine world, April to June and September and October are the busiest months of the year and travel during these periods needs to be booked as far in advance as possible to avoid disappointment. For those who are looking for the best rates, travelling between November and April and during July and August tend to be the most economical however please note that August in particular can be challenging as many European wine-makers take their annual holiday at this time.

For individual group members who would like to stay longer and further explore the region, Grape Escapes can arrange extra nights' accommodation for them.

### Accommodation

We will require an idea of the type of accommodation that you are

looking for in order to provide you with a quote and whether you will be requiring twin, double or single rooms. We can arrange accommodation in basic 2\*, 3\*, 4\* or 5\* hotels in the city centre or Châteaux and gîtes out in the vineyards.

Please see pages 28 to 33 for further information about accommodation.

### Budget

This is probably the most important factor of your trip.

Setting a budget is always difficult, however it is very important that we have an idea of how much your group would like to spend; We have created trips from £150 per person to over £2000 per person, therefore sending you an itinerary at £900 per person if you are looking at a budget of half this would be unhelpful and likewise, if we create a trip at a considerable amount less than your budget, this may not offer the overall polished trip that you would be expecting.

It is advisable to set a guide price for the group and once you have a budget in mind, we will need to establish exactly what this budget includes

(for example, travel to the region, accommodation and meals).

Your group's quote will consist of a combination of travel, accommodation, meals, tour transport and activities. Although we will be unable to provide you with a breakdown of individual costs, we can certainly advise you about the factors that affect the price of your trip.

For some good examples of what you can expect for your trip depending on your budget, please see pages 28 and 33.

## 2. Contacting Grape Escapes

Once you have established as many of the above elements as possible, we would be delighted to hear from you by telephone or e-mail. We will issue you with an initial quote usually within two working days and this can then be amended as required to completely correspond with your requirements.

It is important to note that Grape Escapes quotes are valid for 28 days and availability cannot be guaranteed until we have received confirmation that you wish to book your trip, together with your deposit payment.

If the named accommodation / visits are not available, we will endeavour to find suitable alternatives of a similar grade and this may be subject to a supplement or a rebate depending on the price available. If you would like to request a visit to a specific vineyard or estate, we will do our utmost to arrange this, however all requests are subject to acceptance by the particular domain.

### 3. Securing your Booking

When you are completely satisfied with your proposal, we will send you a booking form for your trip. The completed booking form together with a deposit of £90 per person (or 15% of the total price if the total price per person exceeds £700) will be required in order to secure your booking. The final balance will usually be due 60 days before you travel.

The group leader may wish to pay everyone's deposit in one transaction, which is usually the simplest solution. Alternatively, group members can contact Grape Escapes individually to make their own deposit payments and the group leader will be provided with a statement detailing the party members who have paid. However, it remains the group leader's responsibility that the members of their group have made the required payments. Payments can be made by cheque or debit / credit card or directly into the Grape Escapes account via bank transfer. Grape Escapes is a fully bonded tour operator and information about your financial protection can be found on page 44.

Approximately two weeks after we have received all of the deposit payments, a booking confirmation will be issued to the group leader, detailing exactly what has been purchased.

### 4. Your Travel Pack

We will send the group leader a Grape Escapes travel pack three to four weeks before departure. The pack will contain any travel tickets, the group's itinerary, vouchers for your hotel, tours and visits, a map of the region and a list of recommended restaurants.

Also included will be menu choices if we are arranging any meals for you. Groups dining in France are often required to eat the same dish from a fixed menu for the table (not withstanding any specific dietary requirements) which will often be chosen by the group leader in advance.

### 5. Amendments and Cancellations

Our standard terms and conditions also apply for groups, and these can be found on our web site, at [www.grapeescapes.net/terms.shtml](http://www.grapeescapes.net/terms.shtml)

**And finally, enjoy your trip!**

*"Thank you again for helping to plan a fantastic birthday surprise for my husband's 50th birthday. From my initial inquiry, to the planning stages when I looked at several options for the custom agenda, through to the actual day itself, you were a pleasure to work with. You were always patient, responsive and professional and offered exceptional service, and more importantly for me, peace of mind."*

Carolyn **Birthday Trip**





# General Travel Information

## Self Drive or Coach from the UK

Driving offers not only the most cost effective but often the quickest way of travelling to certain regions. Not only that, but it also offers the most convenient way to transport any purchases back home!

We can also arrange for coach travel from the UK for your group and this is most cost effective travel option for groups of over 25 people.

person. For weekend travel during high season (late May to early June and late July to early September), peak season travel supplements may be applicable.

### Eurotunnel

With a crossing time of only 35 minutes from Folkestone to Calais, Eurotunnel offers the fastest channel crossing in a car. There are up to three trains per hour and no other operator offers a greater choice of departure times. The price for travel

Malo or Caen is generally six to seven hours and for Bilbao, two or three night cruises are available.

Brittany Ferries also offer overnight crossings between Plymouth and St Malo for longer trips.

Prices depend largely on the date of travel, type of cabin required and the number of people travelling. Grape Escapes would be pleased to confirm exact prices for your preferred dates of travel.



## Eurostar (and onward rail from Paris)

For customers based in central London, travel by Eurostar is a quick way to travel to France and for many other customers, the comfort and speed of modern international rail plus the virtues of carbon neutral travel combine to make travel by Eurostar and onward TGV (French high speed intercity rail) an attractive option. Departures are currently available from London St Pancras and Ebbsfleet and Ashford in Kent.

You should expect to pay between £104 and £149 per person for return Standard Class Eurostar and TGV travel provided that this is booked at least 120 days prior to your date of travel.

Travel in Standard Premier on the Eurostar and First Class on the onward TGV starts at £209 per person. Guests enjoy wider, more comfortable seating on both trains, a power socket next to their seat, a selection of magazines

### Dover to Calais Ferry

The standard ferry takes around 90 minutes. Our guests are free to choose their preferred departure and return times and with over 25 departures each day, we can usually book a crossing within 30 minutes of your ideal travel times (if booked in advance).

Based on four people per car, the price of return crossings would be £18 per

by Eurotunnel is between £18 and £33 per person based on four people per car (please contact us to confirm the exact price for your preferred dates of travel).

### Brittany Ferries to St Malo, Caen and Bilbao

These longer day / overnight crossings are ideal for those wishing to take a leisurely route to the region. The crossing time from Portsmouth to St



and newspapers and a complimentary light meal and drinks on the Eurostar in each direction.

We are happy to book your Eurostar and onward TGV at the best available fare and add this fare to the cost of your weekend. Alternatively, we recommend that guests consult [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com) for details on the

best fares currently available for your preferred dates of travel. Train prices increase as the departure date nears so early booking is recommended

## Flights

Flights will need to be booked directly with your preferred airline as Grape Escapes doesn't offer a flight booking service. We would be pleased to arrange private airport transfers or rail travel from the airport if required.

For details of which airlines offer flights to each of our destinations, please feel free to use a very helpful interactive flight route map at [www.travref.com/travel.php](http://www.travref.com/travel.php) Further details about specific regions can be found throughout the following pages.



*"We had such an amazing time, and everyone was incredibly impressed with the itinerary that you put together for us!! The boutique Houses were definitely highlights though, as we got very personal service by the owners themselves. Anyway... just wanted to say thank you again for everything that you did. It was a very memorable holiday for us all, and I'd be happy to recommend you and your services to anyone interested. I hope we can use you again!"*

Kathy **group of friends**

# The Regions and how to get there

## CHAMPAGNE

Champagne continues to be our most popular destination and the region's world famous sparkling wine has been always been associated with celebration, making it a great option for birthday trips and Hen and Stag



weekends as well as more serious wine tasting clubs. The constant sound of corks popping contribute to an unforgettable festive atmosphere, which creates truly memorable moments.

The picturesque hillsides and valleys are covered in vines and forests- perfect for car clubs and there is also a real sense of history associated with the region. For cultural groups, the university city of Reims is home to no less than four UNESCO World Heritage sites, including one of the finest gothic cathedrals in northern Europe where 25 kings of France were crowned. It is also where the formal surrender was signed at the end of World War II.

Highlights for Grape Escapes groups who visit this region include Champagne-filled gala dinners as the guests of both small, boutique producers and large, prestigious Champagne Houses, learning Sabrage (the Napoleonic art of opening a Champagne bottle with a sabre) and scenic, self-drive treasure hunts.







## Travel to Champagne

Champagne is our most popular region partially because it is so easy to get to!

**Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK** Reims is located just 2½ hours drive from Calais.

**Eurostar** The journey time from London to **Paris Nord** is around 2 hours 20 minutes and the onward journey from Paris Est to Reims takes just 45 minutes.

The lowest price for the return journey from London to Reims in standard class is £89 per person; however this fare is, in practice, very hard to achieve and is never available for travel at the most popular times (e.g. Fridays and Sunday afternoons / evenings). A more realistic estimate for weekend group travel would be between £104 and £149 per person if booked well in advance. Travel in Standard Premier on the Eurostar and 1st class on the onward TGV starts from £209 per person.

**Fly** Paris is the closest airport to Champagne and is very well served by flights from the UK and indeed around the world. For the easiest access to Champagne, we recommend that you fly into **Paris Charles de Gaulle** although **Paris Orly** is also suitable if you want to make the onward journey by private coach

**Rail Transfer from Paris to Champagne** There are three TGV's per day directly from Paris CDG airport to

Champagne Ardennes (three miles from the centre of Reims) and the journey time is just 30 minutes. If the times of these trains are not convenient, then guests will need to travel into central Paris on a local train from where they can board a high speed TGV bound for central Reims. We are happy to book your rail tickets for you and these usually cost between £35 and £50 per person depending on whether you are travelling during rush hour. Alternatively, we recommend that guests consult [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk) for details on the best fares currently available for your preferred dates of travel.

**Coach Transfer from Paris to Champagne** For the executive experience, we can arrange for a chauffeur to meet you upon arrival at Paris CDG or Orly and transfer you directly to your hotel in Reims. Simply let us know your flight details and we will do the rest. The journey time is between 80 and 110 minutes depending on the time of day and traffic conditions. Prices are dependent on the number of guests; however based on eight people travelling together, return transfers cost just £48 per person.

## BORDEAUX

For many people, the very name Bordeaux conjures up images of grand Châteaux and equally grand wines. On a Grape Escape to Bordeaux, you can taste these famous wines and visit these Châteaux. The region produces such a diversity of wines that there is certain to be a wine to suit most drinkers in your group. The majority of Bordeaux wine is red; but they also produce a small quantity of rosé wine plus very good dry white wines and some of the most sought after and expensive dessert wines in the world. However the region offers much more besides wine.

At the heart of the region is the vibrant riverside city of Bordeaux,



which is a fabulous place to stay. The city itself has very recently undergone a complete renovation and has consequently been awarded UNESCO status. Girls' getaways will enjoy exploring the Rue Saint Cathérine, one of Europe's longest shopping streets and gastronomy fans will enjoy the large variety of gourmet brasseries and restaurants that can be found in the quaint side streets.

Outside the city, the premium wine regions spread out in almost all directions. Heading north towards the estuary of the Gironde is the Médoc, home to the most famous Châteaux of Bordeaux including Margaux, Lafite, Latour and Mouton Rothschild.



To the east, heading upstream along the Dordogne river is the beautiful medieval town of St Emilion, (classified as a UNESCO world heritage site) and its vineyards and the equally prestigious appellation of Pomerol. To the south of the city are the vineyards

of Graves and beyond these, the rolling slopes of Sauternes. With such a variety of sub regions to explore, our groups often prefer to spend more than two nights here.



## Travel to Bordeaux

Located in south-western France, there are many practical ways of reaching Bordeaux.

**Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK** **Brittany Ferries to St Malo or Caen** These over-night crossings are ideal for those wishing to take a leisurely route to the region. Bordeaux is located 5½ hours' drive from St Malo and 5¾ hours from Caen.

**Eurostar** **Bordeaux** is around 3 hours from Paris by train, giving a total journey time of around 6½ hours from London. Ticket prices in standard class start at £109 per person.

**Fly Bordeaux** airport serves mainly domestic flights, however there are direct UK flights from London and some of the other regional airports. Direct flights also operate from Madrid and Amsterdam. There are several flights from Paris CDG each day, therefore this may be practical if you are flying into Paris.

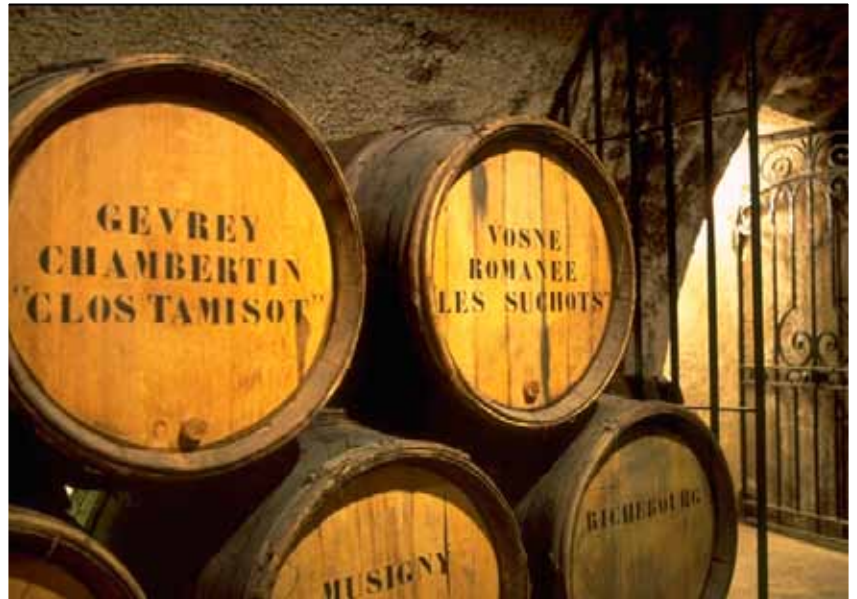
The airport is situated around 20 minutes' drive from the city centre and there are always plenty of taxis waiting at arrivals. Alternatively, a regular shuttle bus will take you to the city centre in 45 minutes and costs around 12 Euros per person for return tickets.



## BURGUNDY

Norman abbeys, Châteaux with their glazed rooftops, ducal towns and charming villages make Burgundy an historic region with a glorious heritage. It is a land of rolling hills, waterways and of course, vineyards.

Grape Escapes groups usually stay in the centre of Dijon or Beaune. Dijon is the historical capital of Burgundy, which began as a Roman settlement. It was home to the Dukes of Burgundy from the early eleventh Century until the late 1400s and was a place of great wealth and power during this time. Being a university city, it boasts a lively atmosphere and great nightlife. Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy is one of France's principal wine centres- the primary wine auction



in France takes place at this ancient town's famous Hospices. This town is smaller and quieter and would be

perfect for those wishing to enjoy a relaxing stay in the region.





Burgundy wines are highly acclaimed, and the region is home to some of the most expensive wines in the world. As with Bordeaux, both red and white wines can be tasted here and comparative horizontal tastings can be experienced due to the close proximity of different terroirs. Wine clubs will enjoy discovering how wines from the same producer's vineyards and of the same vintage can taste so different despite only being separated by a few metres.



## Travel to Burgundy

Burgundy is situated in eastern France and is easily reached from the UK by car, coach, Eurostar and by plane.

### Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK

**Burgundy** is located around 5 hours' drive from Calais and driving may offer the most cost effective way of reaching Dijon or Beaune.

**Eurostar** **Dijon** is around 1½ hours from Paris by train, giving a total journey time of around 5½ hours from London. Ticket prices in standard class start at £89 per person.

**Beaune** can be reached easily with a connecting train from Dijon. The journey time is just 20 minutes.

**Fly** The nearest airports are **Geneva** (around 150 km from Dijon) and **Lyon Saint Exupery** (around 180km from Dijon). There are direct flights from several British airports to both of these airports.



## THE LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire Valley is a lush green land on gently undulating countryside, with rich vineyards interspersed with charming towns and magnificent Châteaux. The region boasts some of the most famous Châteaux in France: Amboise, Chambord, Azay-le-Rideau, Villandry and Chenonceau to name but a few. Known as the *Garden of France*, the region's Châteaux and cultural monuments illustrate exceptionally well the ideals of the Renaissance and of the Age of Enlightenment. The rivers Loire, Cher, Indre and Vienne meander gracefully through the region and offer a delightful backdrop to many of the region's Châteaux and towns.

Tours, the capital of Touraine is the largest city in central France. An old but lively university city, it is the original home of the French language. Among its many delights is a stunning Cathedral, dating back almost 900 years. Famous for its medieval district, there are weekly markets and fairs, as well as plenty of traditional bars and



restaurants. We can also arrange group tours to the famed sub regions of Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé and Muscadet.

The Loire Valley offers a broader range of wines than any other wine-growing region. It is the home of Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc, and it is the only region in the world to specialise in Cabernet Franc and also makes superb botrytised dessert wines. The Loire Valley is an ideal destination for groups who would like to taste a large

variety of wines and discover beautiful Châteaux as well as vineyards.



### Travel to the Loire Valley

The Loire Valley is located in western France and there are an extensive number of ways to reach the region.

#### Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK

**Tours** is located around five hours' drive from Calais or 3½ hours from St Malo.

**Eurostar Tours** is located just over an hour from Paris by train, giving a total journey time of around 4½ hours from London. Ticket prices in standard class start at £89 per person.

**Fly** Ryanair fly direct from London Stansted and Manchester to **Tours**, and the city centre is only a very short shuttle ride from the airport.

**Tours** can also be reached easily by TGV from Paris CDG airport (or central Paris). Alternatively, guests could fly to **Nantes**.



## THE RHÔNE

The Rhône Valley became a prestigious wine region upon arrival of the Romans in 125BC, when it is said that the Syrah and Viognier grapes were introduced to the region and are still widely planted throughout the region to this day.

The Northern Rhône's climate is controlled by the mistral wind, which defines its harsh winters and warm summers and the region boasts many prestigious wine-making villages such as Hérimitage and Condrieu. Lyon, the second biggest metropolis in France is the capital of the region. A major centre of business with a reputation

as the French capital of gastronomy, the city is famed for its historical and architectural landmarks and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Southern Rhône boasts some spectacular scenery and attractive villages and enjoys an enviable 2600 hours of Mediterranean sunshine per year.

Guests who travel to the Rhône with Grape Escapes enjoy VIP activities such as gourmet picnics on the famous Hermitage Hill, superb vineyard walks and fabulous city tours.



### Travel to the Rhône

This depends on whether you would prefer to arrive in the Northern or Southern Rhône.

**Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK** Lyon is located around 7 hours' drive from Calais, and therefore this travel method would be suitable for long trips of perhaps a week or more that combine other regions, such as Champagne or Burgundy.

**Avignon**, the capital of the Southern Rhône is another 2¼ hours' drive from Lyon and again, driving would be more suitable for those enjoying a longer trip.

**Eurostar** Direct trains to **Lyon Part Dieu** connect from Lille, Paris and Marne la Vallée, giving a total journey time of between 5¼ to 5¾ hours from London.

Ticket prices in standard class start at £109 per person.

Ticket prices for **Avignon** start at £119 per person and the journey time from London via Paris or Lille is around 6 to 6½ hours. Between July and September, there is one direct train every Saturday from London.

**Fly** For flights to **Lyon Saint Exupéry**, direct flights are possible from several British airports. **Avignon** is less well served by direct flights; however **Marseille** would be suitable for groups looking to visit the Southern Rhône and is well served from the UK.

## ALSACE

Alsace is the smallest region in metropolitan France, however, it is a region packed tightly with culture, gastronomic delights and of course vineyards. The region offers a cultural blend of modern French institutions and traditional Germanic cuisine and architecture. Alsatian cuisine, marked by the use of pork in various forms evokes conviviality and dishes are served with generous portions. Foie gras has been produced in the region since the 17th Century, however Sauerkraut remains its gastronomic symbol.

The region is famous in particular for its picturesque villages and its large number of churches and castles,



which have miraculously survived five Centuries of wars between France and Germany. It is also famous for wine-making, with 170km of vineyards spanning the Route des Vins d'Alsace and the stunning forests and lakes of the Vosges Mountains are a sight to behold. For guests looking for a truly authentic experience, we can arrange accommodation in the picturesque village of Riquewihr. If your group is looking for a base from which to also enjoy the region's nightlife, the bustling town of Colmar would be ideal.

The region is famed for its Late Harvest wines, made from grapes which have been left on the vine longer





than usual, and its botrytised dessert wines. Grape Escapes groups enjoy gastronomic dining and superb winery visits here as well as a range of other cultural activities, such as a guided tour of the famous Schlumpf motoring museum.

## Travel to Alsace

Alsace is easily accessible from the UK for a short break, however it is also an ideal destination as part of a longer, multi-region trip.

### Self Drive or Travel by Coach from the UK Colmar

is located around 6½ hours drive from Calais, and therefore this travel method would be suitable for longer trips of a week or more that combine other regions, such as Champagne or Burgundy.

**Eurostar** **Strasbourg** is around 2½ hours from Paris by train and onward travel from Strasbourg to Colmar would

take around an hour. Riquewihr is located just a short taxi journey from Colmar.

**Fly** There are direct flights from Gatwick, Heathrow, Manchester and Edinburgh to **EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse**, which is the closest airport to Colmar and Riquewihr. It would also be practical to fly to **Strasbourg**, which is better served by UK airports.



## RIBERA DEL DUERO

Over the last few decades, Ribera del Duero has become a premier source of world-class red wine. The region is characterised by its flat, rocky terrain, and its most famous vineyards can be found around Peñafiel and Aranda del Duero. The region is home to arguably Spain's most prestigious wine, Vega Sicilia. With its Romanesque architecture and natural beauty, the region has become increasingly popular as an oenotouristic destination. There is even a museum dedicated to Spanish winemaking in the impressive Moorish castle in Peñafiel.

The appellation's terroir and the native Tempranillo grape are combined to create bold and expressive red wines that are characterised by their complexity, intensity and powerful fruit flavours. The Albillo grape is the only white variety that can be found in the region, but this wine is primarily



distributed locally. Wines from Ribera del Duero are delicious when they are young, but in common with the wines of La Rioja, they also have the capacity to age magnificently. Ribera del Duero wines are becoming increasingly popular, producing 60 million litres of wine annually.

On a Grape Escape group trip to Ribera del Duero, you can expect to enjoy traditional meals in convivial settings, discover innovative and modern wineries and marvel at the awesome sight of Cathedral-style

cellars stacked high with barrels.

However you prefer to travel, there are many practical ways of reaching Ribera del Duero.



### Travel to Ribera del Duero

**Self drive or Travel by Coach from the UK** **Brittany**

**Ferries to Bilbao/ Santander** These overnight cruises are ideal for those wishing to take a leisurely route to the region. The onward journey time would then be around 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours. This would be ideal for groups wishing to spend longer in the region and visit Rioja, Ribera del Duero and other wine regions in Castilla Y Leon, for example Toro and Rueda.

**Fly** The nearest airport is **Valladolid**, which is just an hours' drive from Peñafiel. Alternatively, guests can fly into **Madrid**, which is around 2-2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours away but well served by the UK and many other airports worldwide.

Ryanair currently flies from Stansted to Valladolid several times each week.

## RIOJA

Formerly known as Logroño, due to the fortified site around which it was developed, Rioja is the second smallest autonomous community in Spain and has the smallest population. Although the region has changed its name, the capital is still known as Logroño. The Mediterranean climate provides hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Like its wine, the gastronomy of Rioja makes it a notable Spanish region.

The region is well-known for its hilltop medieval towns, impressive mountains and huge monasteries. The capital, Logroño was an old Roman settlement and was the main seat of the Basque witch trials, part of the Spanish Inquisition in 1609. It is filled



with beautiful plazas and parks, such as Carmen Park, which possesses a large quantity of flora and fauna and the Town Square, which has hosted numerous public events and concerts over the years. The town of Haro is extremely important in terms of the region's viniculture, as the coveted Haro Wine festival is held here each year. It is home to many of Rioja's great bodegas (wineries) and is known in particular for its fine red wines. Grape Escapes guests can stay in both Logroño and Haro as well as the region's other beautiful towns.

Many of our groups enjoy spending more than just a few nights in Spain and combining a tour of both Rioja and Ribera del Duero. Grape Escapes groups have enjoyed many unique activities in Rioja such as hot air balloon tours across the vineyards, tapas "bar runs" and bottling their own wine from the barrel.



### Travel to Rioja

#### Self drive or Travel by Coach from the UK Bilbao/

**Santander** These overnight cruises are ideal for those wishing to take a leisurely route to the region. The onward journey time would then be around 1 to 1½ hours depending on where you are stay-

ing. Please contact us to confirm the exact price for your preferred dates of travel.

**Fly** The nearest airport is **Bilbao**. There are direct flights from Stansted, Manchester, Heathrow and Dublin.



## TUSCANY

Located in central Italy, Tuscany is widely considered to be the true birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. Home to some of the world's most influential and artistic minds such as Da Vinci, Botticelli and Dante, not only is the region famed for its superb wines, Tuscany also boasts beautiful landscapes, a prestigious artistic and academic culture and unique gastronomic traditions.

Tuscan cuisine is reputed worldwide for its delicious simplicity. Florentine steak, made from the highest quality Chianina beef is produced here, as well as regional delicacies such as Olive Oil made from Moraiolo, Leccino and Frantoiano olives and white truffles from San Miniato. Tuscany's capital, Florence, lies on the river Arno and was one of the wealthiest cities in medieval times. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is regarded as one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Groups staying here can easily visit the



prestigious wine area of Chianti, near the villages of Gaiole, Castellina and Radda. The area has been producing wine since the 13th Century and is often referred to as the “Bordeaux of Italy.”



### Travel to Tuscany

**Fly Florence City** is a very small airport that is only served by London City and London Gatwick.

For those who are not London based, flying to **Pisa** is very practical, as there are direct flights from many of the main UK airports.



## PIEDMONT

Grape Escapes also offer group tours in Piedmont to taste Barolo, one of Italy's greatest wines as well as Barbaresco and Asti. In this stunning region, guests take an unforgettable journey through beautiful hills, lakes and mountains. Piedmont is famous for having inspired the great authors, Stendhal, Dickens, Flaubert and Hemingway, who were bewitched by such sights as the magical mirrored waters of Lakes Maggiore and Orta.

Grape Escapes groups usually prefer to stay in Torino, the Olympic city and the old capital of Italy and industry. Today, the city is a new capital of culture and design, packed with splendid palazzos, galleries, museums and delightful historic residences. Accommodation in Asti can also be arranged upon request.

Gastronomy lovers will regale in Piedmont's superb cuisine, which boasts a symphony of tastes, unique flavours and a rich culinary heritage. The king of the region's gastronomy

is the White Alba Truffle, which is rare and precious and is characterised by an intense aroma and taste that is unrivalled. Cheese lovers will be spoilt for choice here as well as those with a sweet tooth, who will without a doubt savour the exquisite tastes of the famous Gianduiotti chocolates.

And for wine lovers, Piedmont is well-known for its fine red wines, with Barolo being the jewel of the crown. To be at its best, this robust and velvety wine should undergo a long period of ageing, similar to another of the region's great wines, Barbaresco. Those who prefer white wines will be able to satisfy their palates with Arneis and Gavi or with Erbaluce di Caluso and Cortse. We must not forget Asti of course, which accompanies desserts.

Our groups can enjoy sumptuous gastronomic dinners, beautiful vineyard hikes and fascinating cultural visits in this exciting and varied region.



### Travel to Piedmont

**Fly Turin** is a very small airport that is only served from Dublin, London Stansted and London Gatwick.

For those who are not London or Ireland based, we would advise flying to **Milan**, which is better served.



## PORTO

Port wine (also known as *Vinho do Porto*, *Porto* or simply *Port*) is a fortified wine that is produced exclusively in the Douro Valley. The wine received its name in the latter half of the 17th Century from the seaside city of *Porto*, where much of the product was brought to market or for export to other countries in Europe.

Located along the Douro river estuary, Porto (also known as Oporto) is



Portugal's second largest city. It is also one of Europe's oldest centres, dating back many centuries when it

was an outpost of the Roman Empire. With over 150 classified monuments and a historical centre, Porto was registered as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1996. You will discover an astonishing number of heritage sites in this fascinating city; from Visigothic and Celtic villages, Roman roads, bridges and Castros to Romanesque

and Gothic Churches and Cathedrals that were built during the Medieval Age. However, the city also boasts many contemporary and artistic features, which can be found in its streets, architecture, monuments and museums. This pretty, lively city is perfect for groups as it is so compact.

Visitors enjoy taking picturesque walks to the world-famous wine lodges in Gaia and as well as the fabulous tasting sessions, Grape Escapes guests can also take in their beautiful surroundings on a scenic river cruise in a traditional *Rabelo* boat and travel further afield to visit other styles of wineries in the Douro region, such as *Vinho Verde*.



### Travel to Porto

**Fly** Ryanair fly directly from Liverpool and London Stansted to **Oporto** and flights are also available from London Gatwick with Easyjet.







# Accommodation

**There are many hotels in the city centres and vineyards that surround the premium wine regions and we can arrange accommodation in any of these.**

As one of the UK's largest wine tour operators, we benefit from exceptional rates from our partner hotels, which are offset against the cost of the tours. It is usually considerably more cost effective to book your tour as part of a package. We are confident that we would be able to match or even beat any price that you have already been quoted.

We have classified our partner hotels under four grades: Tradition, Superior, Elegant and Luxury. Please

**Tradition Grade: £30-40 per person, per night guide price**

Tradition grade hotels tend to be 2\* or simple 3\* hotels. We look for clean, well run properties where our guests will receive a friendly welcome. The rooms in this grade tend to be quite simple and may be smaller than rooms in hotels of a higher grade; however all rooms will have en-suite bathroom facilities. Breakfasts offered in these hotels will in general be in a continental style and there will be limited or no cooked breakfast options available.

## **Hotel Bristol (Reims)**

The 2\* Hotel Bristol is a 19th century Bourgeois-style building in central Reims, boasting a range of facilities to ensure a comfortable stay. It is an ideal venue for those who enjoy staying in a charming, traditional hotel in the heart of the action. Offering excellent

value for money, the warm, welcoming atmosphere will make you feel at home.

**Superior Grade: £38-£60 per person, per night guide price**

Superior grade hotels selected by Grape Escapes are always of at least 3\* standard. They include hotels from popular chains such as Holiday Inn, Mercure and Novotel together with a number of family-run properties. In general, these hotels will offer air-conditioning in most rooms and the rooms will often be larger than those in a Tradition grade hotel. Breakfast options will often include a selection of hot and cold food.

## **Henry II (Beaune)**

This 3\* hotel is ideally situated in a central location and is a perfect base from which you can explore the



find below an example of a hotel in each accommodation grade to provide you with an idea of what sort of facilities you could expect and a guide price for rooms in hotels of each grade. The guide prices are based on accommodation in twin or double rooms for two nights.





charming cafés, excellent restaurants and boutique shops within Beaune's ancient ramparts, or explore the famous Hospices.

A member of the reputed Best Western group, part of the hotel is set in an exquisite building classified as an historical monument, right at the entrance to the old town, putting you in the middle of the vibrant town. The other part is a more modern building, blending harmoniously with the past. Here you will find a comfortable breakfast lounge, a friendly bar and secure on-site parking.

The hotel's 58 rooms are large and air-conditioned and every room is sound-proofed for your comfort. Free wireless internet is available in each room, as well as room service, safe-box, tea and coffee making facilities, TV, telephone and an en-suite bathroom.

### **Elegant Grade: £55-£105 per person, per night guide price**

Grape Escapes Elegant grade hotels usually offer something a little special. These properties tend to be in the best locations or offer a very high standard of accommodation or dining. Several of these hotels are also of historical significance in the region. In general, they will have an official rating of 4 stars; however we do include several of the very best 3\* hotels in each region in this category, especially where the properties offer something unique and if we can be assured of superior rooms in these properties.



*"All I really wanted to say was how much my wife and I enjoyed the trip, it really was a fun few days. The restaurants you chose were first class as was the hotel."*

Ian **Private Members' Club Trip**



Within this classification, we offer hotels in a range of styles including chic, modern, designer hotels to more classic hotels and historic Châteaux harking back to a bygone era. The facilities at these hotels can also vary significantly from property to property. A number of our partner hotels offer spa facilities and pools, while others have a Michelin starred restaurant attached. If there are specific facilities that you would like at your hotel then please let us know.



### **Hôtel de l'Univers (Tours)**

The Hotel de l'Univers is a five-floor hotel dating from 1846. It is set in a fashionable shopping area between the station and the historic centre of Tours and the cities' main sites including the Cathedral, basilica and the Place Plumereau are all within a few minutes' walk. The 85 guestrooms are each decorated in rich burgundies with classical-style furniture, and include satellite television, direct-dial telephones, mini-bars and free wireless Internet connection. Bathrooms are equipped with shower/bath combinations, telephones, hair dryers and premium toiletries.

Guests can relax on leather sofas in the atrium-style lounge area and browse through the portraits of the hotel's famous visitors. French gourmet food is served in the restaurant and the lounge bar serves Champagne and a selection of malt whiskies and cocktails. The multilingual staff at the 24-hour front desk can provide room service, safety deposit boxes and a laundry / dry cleaning service. Wireless

Internet access is also available in public areas and motorists can park securely in the hotel garage.

### **Luxury Grade: £90-350+ per person, per night guide price**

For a hotel to be classified as luxury grade, it will need to be officially classified as either 4\*, 4\* luxe or 5\*. These hotels offer the highest level of comfort and luxury in your preferred region and offer a level of service to match. As with our Elegant grade hotels, the style of hotel and the facilities offered by each property vary significantly; however most hotels in this category will have a renowned restaurant attached.



### **Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux et Spa (Bordeaux)**

The Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux has recently undergone a complete renovation, which remains respectful to the 18th Century building's history whilst allowing guests to enjoy a full range of modern luxuries. The rooms, all designed by renowned French architect Jacques Garcia, are in a 19th Century style, with rich fabrics and





marble bathrooms; at the Grand, guests are invited to experience the epitome of luxury.

The facilities within the hotel allow guests to experience the height of luxury in all aspects of their stay. The 1000m Bains de Les Spa is a true haven of relaxation. The stunningly decorated restaurant “Le Pressoir d’Argent” offers fine dining and some of the best wines from the neighbouring Bordelais region. For a more casual dining experience, the Brasserie L’Europe offers fresh and original cuisine with an outside terrace. The Victor Bar has an exciting array of cocktails from the classics to innovative creations by the Head barman, also comes highly recommended for whisky connoisseurs. Valet parking and a concierge service are also available.

The Grand Hôtel has 5 different levels of room, ranging from Superior to the Royal Suite. Each room has individual climate control, dual line telephones, Wi-Fi, a Loewe Television and a marble bathroom stocked with lavish toiletries, bathrobes and slippers.

### Rural and Vineyard Accommodation: £40-£200+ per person, per night guide price

Many of our groups enjoy staying as the guests of rural boutique hotels and wineries, as well as in self-catered gîtes. Rural and vineyard-based hotels are most suitable for groups who will have access to their own vehicles, as the cost of private transfers can often be expensive.



*“All the girls had a fantastic weekend, including the Hen, continuously saying how well it had been organised which is thanks to all of you. Everything ran so smoothly, all the tours, hotel, restaurant etc... was just perfect.”*

Nicole **Hen Weekend**

However, most gîtes are private and allow for enjoyable, convivial activities such as barbecues and aperitifs.

Each group has different requirements and we would be pleased to discuss these with you if you are looking to stay in a gîte.

One of our preferred suite of gîtes is operated by a partner agency outside Bordeaux near St Emilion, sleeping from 14 to 24 people. Our favourite of these individual gîtes is a recently renovated luxury 8 room property that offers fabulous views across its own 12 acre valley.

As well as boasting a triple aspect salon, study, elegant dining room, luxury fully-equipped kitchen with an American fridge and triple oven, a large vaulted underground wine cellar is also available to guests, allowing you to purchase wine on site.

Outside, a swimming pool with 16 sun loungers, croquet lawn, large terrace, boules green, barbecues and a shared tennis court are available.



**Château Accommodation:  
£80-£350+ per person, per  
night guide price**

Similarly to our partner gîtes, the Châteaux are usually located out in the vineyards and surrounding villages, therefore the cost of private transfers for those who do not have cars can be prohibitive for many groups. In addition, the rural location of these villages means that there is very little

choice for groups who enjoy nightlife, unless you are willing to take expensive taxi journeys or drive to the larger towns. However, these properties are idyllic and would suit a group who are looking primarily to relax and enjoy their peaceful surroundings. We use the same classification system for our chateaux accommodation as for our hotels and most Châteaux tend to fit into the Elegant or Luxury grades.

**Château d'Etoges (Champagne)  
(Elegant Grade Château)**

Built at the beginning of the 17th Century, the Château d'Etoges has hosted many French Kings, who enjoyed staying for a few nights on their way to the East. Famous guests include Louis XIV, the Sun King, who was particularly fond of the sensational gardens, fountains and pools. It is said that King Louis XVI sought refuge here during his escape to Varennes following the French Revolution. The owners who have had the Château within their family for over a century vow that every guest will receive a regal welcome, matching their famous clientele of the past!







the expansive grounds are truly breathtaking. Drinking a flute of Champagne on the terrace on a warm summer evening is a real treat - otherwise the aperitif can be taken in the opulent, grand lounge, where you will find comfy leather sofas and daily newspapers. Each of the Chateau's twenty bedrooms is individually styled and decorated with period furniture. Reflecting the charm of the old days, you will find genuine antiques and tapestries.

In a small, picturesque village that matches the elegance of this beautiful Chateau, guests can take in the sights, sounds and particularly tastes of the Champagne region before retiring to what feels like their own personal castle. In this charming and unique destination, you can take a ride around the moat in your very own rowing boat providing you don't scare the swans! The Chateau also offers bicycles, table tennis, croquet and boules to keep even the most active guests occupied!

Crossing the bridge over the Chateau's moat is like stepping into a fairytale - the grandeur of the façade and



*"The students LOVED the Champagne trip - both wineries were perfect! This was routinely ranked as one of their top three activities. We were a little disappointed in the weather but the guide did beautifully in adjusting the plan a little. We hope to include Champagne in our plans again next year."*

**Sandy Group of US post graduate students on an MBA tour programme**



# Activities

There are so many things to do on a Grape Escape and our groups are truly spoilt for choice. Over the next few pages, we would like to provide you with an idea of the types of activities that your group can participate in during your wine tasting tour.

## It's all about the Wine

### See Firsthand the Wine-making Process and Meet the Maker

The process of wine-making is a complex and specialist art, where the maker has the ability to vary the style of the wine to give different taste nuances. We believe that the best way to learn about how wine is made is to see the process from start to finish, and meet the people making the wine and allow them to explain their art to you. At these family-run estates, you will have the opportunity to taste a vast selection of these estates' wines. Our groups often dine as the guests

of these estates, accompanied by the wine maker.

### Visit a Prestigious Estate

Whilst the visit to the small winery allows you to meet the maker and learn about the art of wine-making, a visit to a large, world-famous domaine will give you an idea of the vast scale of wine production. Here, you will see millions of bottles aging in vast cellars, many of which were excavated by the Romans. Your visit here will conclude with a tasting session of the domaine's wines.

### Additional Tastings and Prestige Cuvées

Following your tour at a prestigious estate, we can often arrange horizontal and vertical tastings of other terroirs and different vintages from the domaine's range. These additional tastings can also include Prestige Cuvées, such as Moët and Chandon's Dom Perignon.



### Horizontal Tasting Lunches and Dinners

We arrange grand tasting lunches and dinners with many of our premium partners, where the focus is the wine that accompanies the meal. During these lunches, the group will have the opportunity to horizontally taste Premier and Grand Cru wines from a single producer and of the same vintage. The grapes will have been harvested from different vineyards that are often just metres apart, allowing our guests to discover from themselves whether terroir exists.

### Tasting Masterclasses

For those who would like to discover the real intricacies of wine tasting, many of our partners offer tasting master classes. Here, a specialist will present a selection of wines to you and assist you in fine tuning your tasting skills.





### Tutored Tasting Sessions

These usually take place in convivial, friendly wine bars in the city centres, where a charismatic and knowledgeable host will guide your group through a more informal but very informative tasting session of a range of premium wines from the region that you are visiting. The wines are usually accompanied by tasters of local dishes, cheeses and meats.



## Great Gastronomy

### Cheese Tasting

Wine can be made even more enjoyable when it is accompanied by cheese from its region. Our groups enjoy guided tours of local fromagères and chèvreries, which always conclude with an extensive cheese tasting session. For a more informal experience, local restaurants can also host our groups and provide an early-evening tutored cheese and wine tasting session.

### Distilleries

Distilleries can always be found in and near to the premium wine regions, and tours of these properties are a different and interesting experience. Here, you will discover the maker's secrets and as a perfect accompaniment to the wine, you will taste a different style of beverage.

*"Mark, thanks for organising the motley crew to get there and for scheduling a non-stop whirlwind tour of some fantastic champagne houses. Drink – we swam! From massive factory tour through boutique producers, from sipping in the sun above the vineyards of Epernay to climate controlled Testarossa garages, from 220 Euro Rosé to running street fights in Reims, you organised it all! Culminating in waving swords around while pillaging the cooperative Pascal's cellar fridges."*

Doug **Wine Club Trip**



### Gourmet Picnics and Barbecues

During the warmer months, gourmet picnics and barbecues can be arranged, where groups can dine al fresco together and enjoy stunning views. Quite often, these meals take place in the vineyards themselves or in picturesque riverside spots that can be reached by boat.

### Gala Lunches and Dinners at Prestigious Estates

Many of our prestigious partners arrange unforgettable gastronomic gala dinners at their Château or Maison. Surrounded by luxury and opulence, these five or six course gala meals



create very special memories for groups who are celebrating and they are always accompanied by a vast selection of the estate's premium wines.

### Michelin-Starred Dining

A true gastronomy tour would not be complete without a grand dinner served by a Michelin-starred Chef. Many of our partner Michelin-starred establishments provide exclusive group menus for Grape Escapes, where our guests will have the opportunity to sample the finest cuisine in the region.



### Something a little different

#### Sabrage

Groups visiting Champagne can be initiated into the Napoleonic art of Sabrage- the opening of a bottle with a Sabre! This fun experience will provide you with an impressive party trick to take home with you and will also provide you with a firm understanding of the history and culture surrounding it. Gourmet lunches and dinners can be served to accompany the Champagnes that have been opened.

#### Cookery Classes

Each region has its own specialty and these recipes can be taught to Grape Escapes groups by a local Chef. After preparing a grand luncheon as a group, you will then be seated in the dining room to relax and taste the fruits of your labour.

#### Blending Workshops

Have you ever wondered if you have what it takes to make it as a wine-maker? Under the supervision of the estate's cellar master, you will learn to create your own wine and choose your individual "cepage." After personalising





your wine label and naming your Cuvée, you will then be able to take your wine home with you as a souvenir.

### Horse-drawn Carriage Tours in the Vineyards

Horses were historically invaluable to vineyard work and your group can enjoy a relaxing guided tour in a Horse-drawn carriage. Your guide will regale the group with fascinating anecdotes about the region and its wine and a glass or two of wine can be enjoyed during the ride.

### Vineyard Hikes

For more active groups, hike through the vineyards with an experienced guide. Your guide will not only show you wonderful scenery and breathtaking views, they will also provide an understanding of the influence the landscape has, combined with the weather, on the quality of the grapes. They will explain where and why certain grape varieties, are grown, and the overall influence and contribution every element has on the wine itself. Cycling tours are also possible.



### Get Hands on!

There are always activities and things to see or do in the vineyards such as tasting the grapes, helping with the harvest, seeing the different techniques of pruning or in the Houses themselves, the first fermentation, management of the new and reserve wines, blending, the second fermentation, or degorgement. Our group tours are designed to be as hands-on as possible, subject to the season.



*"Thank you again most warmly from Jackie and me for a beautifully organised and orchestrated tour of Champagne. Short of piping "Champagne" from Fledermaus through the bus, I could think of nothing to add."*

Rod **Professional Group Trip**

### **Grape Escapes Guides**

All of the tours at the Châteaux and estates will be conducted in English. However, if you would like to know more about the history and features of the region, we can provide a bi-lingual guide who will be happy to accompany you throughout your tour.

## **Other Group Activities**

### **Scavenger and Treasure Hunts**

Popular in particular with Hen and Stag trips, a Grape Escapes guide will create a bespoke scavenger hunt for your group. This is a fun way to explore the city and set the tone for your evening. Car clubs enjoy a similar type of activity, in the form of a treasure hunt. This allows them to explore the region in their cars whilst solving cryptic clues. A prize is awarded to the winner.

### **VIP Nightclub Entry**

For those who would like to enjoy a few more glasses of Champagne or wine in the evening in a festive location, Grape Escapes can arrange complimentary night club entry,



with a reserved VIP area and free cloakroom facilities.

### **Spa Afternoons**

Vinotherapy has become particularly popular with groups who are spending more than three nights on a trip, and spa afternoons are a great way to relax and be pampered before an evening of festivities. These experiences include extensive use of the spa's

Jacuzzi, sauna and hammam facilities, followed by a luxurious face or body treatment.

### **Sports Activities**

Grape Escapes can arrange many sports activities for your group, such as Go-karting, canoeing, horse riding, golf, tyrolean jumps, quad-biking, bungee jumping, water-skiing and white-water rafting.

### **River Cruises**

Taking in the sights on a river cruise is a popular activity and allows guests to discover the region in a different way. Boats can often be hired privately and aperitifs and canapés can be served on board.

### **Hot Air Balloon and Helicopter Tours**

Yet another way to explore the vineyards, your group can enjoy a glass of wine up in the sky! Some of our partner wine estates and hotels have helipads and guests enjoy arriving in style at these destinations.







*"I loved the fact that we just had to simply turn up at a particular place at a particular time, without the typical hassles that you would normally get from attempting to organise tastings on your own."*

Phuong **Girls' Weekend**



# Example Tours

In order to offer you the flexibility to arrange a perfect tour, all of our group trips are bespoke and tailored entirely to your requirements.

We can cater for budgets of £150 to over £2000 per person and as one of the largest specialist wine tour operators, we benefit from exceptional rates from our partners. This allows us to offer fantastic value tours at extremely competitive prices.

To give you an idea of the types of tour that we can arrange for your group's budget, please see below.

## Girls' Weekend in Champagne (Budget £225 to £275 per person)

We recently arranged a girls' weekend for Claire and six friends in Champagne. Upon arrival in Reims, they checked into the 3\* Holiday Inn Garden Court and spent the remainder of the day and evening relaxing at the hotel and exploring the city's excellent range of shops and boutiques. In the evening, we recommended a

restaurant in the city centre to them and reserved them a table for dinner.

On Saturday, the group were met by a luxury chauffeured mini-coach, which accompanied them on a full day tour. During the course of the day, they were welcomed as the guests of two Grand Cru boutique producers of Champagne, where they met the estates' owners and saw firsthand the fascinating process from vine to bottle. At the second estate, they also each learnt the Napoleonic art of Sabrage and as they had each opened

a bottle, they needed to drink at least some of the Champagnes before heading off.

Their day ended in true style with a tour at the prestigious Champagne Veuve Clicquot. They firstly walked through the museum which is dedicated to the work of Madame Clicquot and then enjoyed a full tour of the estate, which was built over the historic chalk crayeres extracted by the Romans. Their visit ended with a tasting of la Grande Dame, Veuve Clicquot's Prestige Cuvée.

After returning to the hotel to freshen up, the girls enjoyed a gourmet four course dinner before enjoying a few more glasses of Champagne in the many bars and clubs in the city centre.

Claire said, "The whole trip was very well organised and we didn't have to worry about a thing. The staff at the Champagne Houses were all very friendly and Sabrage is a fantastic experience that I would highly recommend."



### TVR Owners' Club Trip to Alsace (Budget £575 to £650 per person)

Janine and 12 of her fellow TVR owners were already staying in France, and asked Grape Escapes to arrange a wine tour in Alsace as an extension to their holiday.

Before checking into their studios at the 4\* Kanzel Hotel Suites and Residences in Bablenheim, the group spent the day in Mulhouse, where they were taken on a private guided tour of the Schlumpf Motor Museum. The Schlumpf museum's impressive collection of cars is as prestigious to the motor world as the Louvre is to the art world! After settling in at the hotel, the group explored the area to find a restaurant for dinner.

After breakfast the following day, Janine and her friends took a leisurely walk to Riquewihr, one of the prettiest villages in France, nestled at the foot of the Vosges mountains. After a tour and tastings at the prestigious estate of Dopff Irion, a three course lunch with local delicacies was served at domaine Sparr. Here, they met the



estate's 9th generation owner, who proudly explained how he continued his ancestors' work. Glasses of four wines accompanied the meal, including three single varietal Grand Crus from some of the best vineyards in Alsace. After a guided tour of the village on foot, the day concluded with a tasting session at an up and coming winery.

The next day was spent in the TVRs, firstly taking a leisurely drive to Colmar for a gourmet lunch before continuing



*"Just wanted to say we had a fantastic weekend, it couldn't have gone better! The hen actually said 'it was her best weekend ever' and 'we couldn't have choose a more perfect place' to take her."*

Sarah **Hen Weekend**



their drive to Munster. In Munster, they learnt how cheese is made at an artisanal cheese factory. The remainder of the afternoon was then free for the individuals to do as they pleased.

After checking out of the hotel on day four, the group continued their French trip, stopping en route in Ribeauville to explore the famous castle of Koenigsbourg.

Janine said, “We are a group of TVR car enthusiasts who enjoy driving our cars along all the twisty roads which Europe has to offer as well as being rather partial to a good drop of wine and scrumptious food. Grape Escapes have never ceased to impress us with their expertise to plan and organize our group trips for us. Their very friendly and competent team always manage to plan and adapt an itinerary to suit

our requirements, taking all the stress out of planning a ‘Driving Holiday’, leaving us to enjoy every minute of it from start to end and making our trips such memorable ones.”

### **Social Trip to the Loire Valley (Budget £750 to £850 per person)**

Paul, his wife and 10 friends wanted to spend three nights discovering the wines of the Loire Valley and Grape Escapes were delighted to arrange this for them.

The group travelled to Tours on the Eurostar via Paris and upon arrival, they checked into double rooms at the 4\* Hôtel de l’Univers, located in the heart of the city centre. After freshening up, a three course dinner was served in a traditional local restaurant.

On day two, the group was met at the hotel and chauffeured throughout the day by an English-speaking Grape Escapes guide. First stop was Langlois Chateau in Saumur. Following a short ‘classroom’ session to look at the geology of the region and why it is able to produce different styles of wine, the group enjoyed a tour of their extensive tufa stone cellars built into the side of the valley and the visit concluded with tastings of a variety of wines from across the region including sparkling wines. Lunch was then served in a troglodytic cave, where they tasted the local speciality, fouée. The day continued with a tasting session of some of the region’s best wines at one of the most prestigious producers in Chinon (Charles Joguet) and on the way back to Tours, the group stopped off at an artisanal chèvrerie, for a paired cheese and wine tasting experience. In the evening, a gala



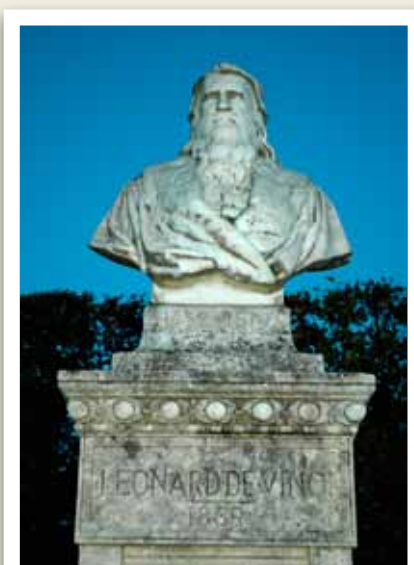


dinner was prepared for them by a Michelin starred Chef.

The following morning, the group's chauffeur collected them after a leisurely breakfast and accompanied them to Amboise, where they stocked up on local produce. After lunch, they visited the fascinating Château du Clos Lucé, the former home of Leonardo da Vinci. The day ended at a magnificent family-run Château in Vouvray, where they visited the estate's award winning grounds and tasted a large selection of the Château's own wines.

The group then took the Eurostar back to London on day four, laden with local treats.

Paul said, "We thoroughly enjoyed our trip, in particular the fabulous meals.



Our guides were extremely welcoming and informative and the Châteaux that we visited were beautiful."



*"Everything went extremely well and we were very impressed with the programme. We will be making one of these trips an annual event and I will be in contact with you again for next year."*

Mike **Car Club Trip**











# General Travel Information Table

## Regions

## Travel

	Closest Airports	Flight time from London / south east UK	Approximate number of flights per week from UK*	Duration of airport transfer	Self-drive	Port	Driving time
Champagne	Paris CDG	1hr	Very high	80-100mins or 40 mins by rail	Yes	Calais	2½hrs
	Paris Orly	1hr	High	90-110mins			
	Paris Beauvais	1hr	Low	2hrs			
Bordeaux	Bordeaux	1½hrs	Medium (summer) Low winter availability from regional airports	20-45mins	Yes	Saint Malo / Caen	5½hrs
	Bergerac	1½hrs	Medium (summer) Low (winter)	1hr		Caen	5½hrs
Burgundy	Lyon Saint Expury	1½hrs	Medium	1¾hrs	Yes	Calais	6hrs
	Geneva	1½hrs	Medium	1¾hrs			
The Loire Valley	Tours	1hr	Low	15mins	Yes	Saint Malo	3hrs
	Paris Orly	1hr	High	2hrs		Caen	3½hrs
	Paris CDG	1hr	Very high	2½hrs or 1½hrs by rail		Calais	5½hrs
The Northern Rhône	Lyon Saint Expury	1½hrs	Medium	45mins	No	Not recommended	
The Southern Rhône	Avignon	1¾hrs	Low	15mins	No	Not recommended	
	Marseille	1¾hrs	Medium	50-60mins			
	Nimes	1¾hrs	Low	40mins			
Alsace	Basel-Mulhouse	1½hrs	Medium	30-40mins	Yes	Calais	6½hrs
	Strasbourg	1½hrs	Medium	40-60mins		Zeebrugge	
Ribera del Duero	Valladolid	2½hrs	Low	30mins	Yes	Santander / Bilbao	2¾hrs
	Madrid	2½hrs		2hrs			
Rioja	Bilbao	2½hrs	Very high	90mins	Yes	Santander / Bilbao	1½hrs
	Madrid	2½hrs		4hrs			
Tuscany	Florence	2½hrs	Low	20-40mins	No	Not recommended	
	Pisa	2½hrs	High	1hr			
Piedmont	Turin	2¼hrs	Low	15mins	No	Not recommended	
	Milan	2¼hrs	High	1¾-2hrs			
Porto	Oporto	2½hrs	High	15mins	No	Not recommended	

\* **Very high/high** - Large number of flights from regional airports all year round and multiple flights per day from hub airport

**Medium** - Daily flights mainly from hub airports

**Low** - Very limited, mainly from hub airports. Not flights every day.

## Accommodation

Duration of rail travel from London	Station	Tradition	Superior	Elegant	Luxury	Gite/Rural	Chateau
4-4½hrs	Reims / Champagne Ardenne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6hrs-6½hrs	Bordeaux / Libourne	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4½hrs-5½hrs	Dijon / Beaune	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4½hrs-5½hrs	Tours	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5hrs-5¾hrs	Lyon / Vienne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5¾-6¾hrs	Avignon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7hrs	Colmar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Not recommended		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Not recommended		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Not recommended		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Not recommended		No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Not recommended		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

# Financial Security

**Grape Escapes are members of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited)** and as a result are able to offer all customers financial protection through their bonded scheme.

## Financial Protection and Peace of Mind

As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (member number 5167), an Association approved by BIS, Grape Escapes has provided a Bond to meet the requirements of the Package

Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992.

In the event of Grape Escape's insolvency, this Bond provides security for:

- non-flight inclusive packages commencing in and returning to the UK; and
- packages excluding flights to and from your destination

which are offered by Grape Escapes. Please note that bookings made from overseas must be made directly with Grape Escapes and not via an agent.

In the above circumstances, the following will apply:

- a refund of your prepayments if you have not yet travelled; or
- repatriation where your non-flight inclusive package commences in and returns to the UK if you have already travelled.





# Contact Us!

We have a reputation for providing excellent and memorable wine tasting tours, and many of our guests return to us again and again. For more information about any of our tours please contact us at:

Grape Escapes Ltd, The Manor House, High Street, Buntingford, Herts. SG9 9AB

Telephone +44 (0) 1763 273 373 / 08456 430 860 or contact your travel agent if this brochure was supplied by them.

[www.grapeescapes.net/](http://www.grapeescapes.net/) [www.champagneescapes.com](http://www.champagneescapes.com)  
[www.grapeescapescorporate.com](http://www.grapeescapescorporate.com)

*"The whole day tour was very organised we didn't have to worry about anything. The staff at the champagne houses were all very friendly."*

Claire **Girls' Weekend**

## Grape Escapes Ltd

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