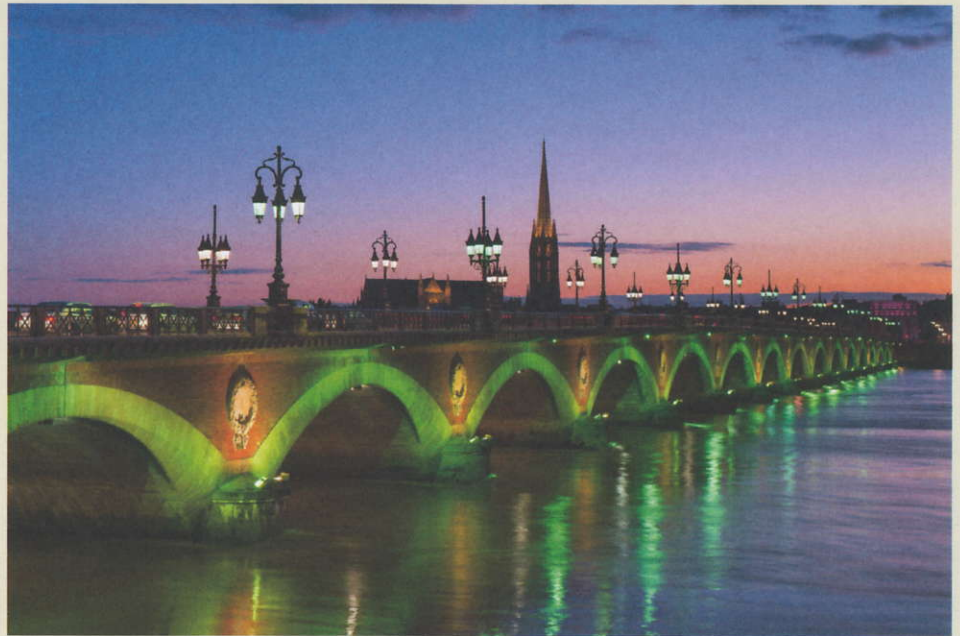


A TASTE OF BORDEAUX

With a proliferation of vibrant wine bars, France's highest number of restaurants per capita and some chic boutique hotels, it's no surprise that Bordeaux is the hottest European city destination this year.

BY LINDA WATKINS

There is an aura of growing confidence about Bordeaux. The city, which straddles a crescent-shaped bend in the Garonne river, has nurtured its historic center and the so-called Port of the Moon to the status of Unesco Heritage Site. It is looking to consolidate its position as the world's wine capital with the opening next year of the ambitious Cité des Civilisations du Vin cross-cultural center.



WHERE TO DINE



The salon and library of **La Grande Maison** (lagrandemaison-bordeaux.com), an exclusive six-room hotel, house a restaurant by Joël Robuchon, holder of the world's most Michelin stars, whose haute cuisine does justice to a cellar boasting 259 Bordeaux grands crus classés.

On the chic Allées du Tourny since 1894, the quietly sophisticated **Dubern** (dubern.fr) is enjoying something of a revival. Scottish chef Daniel Gallacher (formerly at Spoon) adds a personal twist to French classics and excels at fish and seafood dishes such as a creamy squid carbonara. Add in a well-structured wine list and it's a recipe for success.

La Tupiña (latupina.com), which means 'the cauldron' in Basque, is a Bordeaux institution in a different mold. Owner Jean-Pierre Xiradakis prides himself on preserving southwest culinary



traditions, and here you feast on robust domestic classics. Staples such as melt-in-the-mouth lamb shank, accompanied by excellent wines, are served in an auberge-style setting.

In contrast one of the hottest bistronomique tickets for lunch is **Garopapilles** (garopapilles.com), a wine shop-cum-restaurant with a soothing Scandinavian-meets-industrial décor and a herb-lined courtyard. Leave all the menu decisions to the amiable Tanguy Laviale, formerly the private chef at Château Haut-Bailly.

In an inventive repertoire, his complex ravioli dishes stand out. Gaël Morand will suggest wine pairings from his eclectic selection of small, often organic, French and overseas producers.

Former négociant (wine merchant) Patrick Herreyre has a novel proposition for his **Nama** 'wine restaurant' (namawinerestaurant.com): charge an entrance fee and then offer fine wine and cuisine at reduced prices. Tapas include Wagyu charcuterie, while the dinner menu is regional with Japanese influences, for example foie gras with yuzu confit. A regularly-rotated wine list features exclusive wines by the glass.

For the best Chinese food, it's worth tracking down **Au Bonheur du Palais** (abdp.free.fr) – a favorite of Parisian chef Thierry Marx, no less. Tommy Shan advises on menu and wine choices (and explains the Chinese poetry adorning the walls), while brother Andy wields the wok. The flavorful food is Cantonese and Sichuan; order sesame chicken to balance fiery dishes heightened with spices sourced in China.

Clockwise from top: Dusk falls on the Garonne river in Bordeaux on a summer evening; La Tupiña; La Grande Maison