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So, when it comes to wine, where does one begin? Let's start with the concept of 'terroir'.

According to the *Collins Dictionary*, in winemaking, this is the combination of factors, including soil, climate and environment that gives a wine its distinctive character.

But, of course, it is much more than that. "Terroir is a concept so French that the word doesn't have an equivalent in any other language," say the winemakers at Château Margaux, a prestigious estate of Bordeaux wine in the Médoc region. "Terroir is a genetic heritage of great wines."

Terroir isn't just 'terre' (earth), not simply the scientific makeup of the soil. *Terroir* speaks of its history passed down through generations of winemakers who have worked that land for a thousand years. The *terroir* is also the shape of that land, be it mountainous or flat, by the sea or inland; it is the plants that grow on it, the insects that pollinate them, the animals that thrive there,

Come wine with me

Fruity, full-bodied or sparkling? No matter what your personality, there's a winemaking property destination in south-west France to match, says **Daniela Harris**

the sun, the sea and the air that infuses the grape. Most importantly, *terroir* embodies the importance of history and of looking back as well as forward. It is that history that attracts tourists from all over the world to come and explore the land and culture – that indefinable '*je ne sais quoi*'.

Two of the most influential *terroirs* in France are the Languedoc and Bordeaux.

BORDEAUX BIGSHOTS

The very word 'Bordeaux' is synonymous with wine and it is the most famous winemaking region in the world. Bordeaux's wines may not be the rarest or priciest these days but they will

"Terroir speaks of its history passed down through generations of winemakers"

always be the benchmark for everyone else.

Domaines in Bordeaux are not allowed to artificially irrigate their fields which is why each vintage (year) is unique as it is defined by that year's climate. Bordeaux wines are 90% red, but there are also many delicious whites. Did you know, for example, that Sauvignon Blanc was born in Bordeaux?

There are more than 10,000 wine producers around the city of Bordeaux. Here are some of the leaders in the field, and where to find them.

Château Petrus

100% Merlot grapes.

Produced on just 27 acres by the Moueix family since 1964, Château Petrus is so exclusive that we all know the name and yet they don't even have



Vineyards outside St-Émilion
in the Bordeaux region

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€1.2M

NARBONNE, AUDE

This elegant formal manor house sits in a very popular village surrounded by vineyards, and only 30 mins from the beach! It has 11 bedrooms, two swimming pools and a separate annexe, making it an ideal rental opportunity.



€478,800

MARIAC, GIRONDE

Only 30 minutes from the world-famous St-Émilion is this five-bedroom renovated stone house. Pretty as a picture with rose bushes and charming pigeonnier, it overlooks the lush garden and a large terrace and balcony.



€850,000

CERBÈRE, PYRÉNÉES-ORIENTALES

With incredible sea views from the rooftop pool, this excellent property is only 500m from the beach and close to the Corbières vineyards! It is spread over three floors with four bedrooms and an independent studio.



€1.4M

BERGERAC, DORDOGNE

Sitting amidst the vineyards is this beautifully restored six-bedroom manor house. It has 1.3ha of mature parkland and a pigeonnier gîte. It's walking distance from the local village and only 15 minutes' drive from Bergerac airport.

a website! The actual château dates back to the 1st century.
Location: 33500 Pomerol

Château Haut-Brion Blanc

53% Sémillon and 47% Sauvignon produced on just seven acres of vineyards.

Owned by Prince Robert of Luxembourg, who is the 4th generation of the Dillon family who started this *domaine* in the 1930s, this white wine has a heritage that skilfully fuses both sweet and dry with singularly expensive results.

Location: 33600 Pessac

Château Lafite Rothschild

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10-20% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc.

The name comes from the La Fite family, who owned the estate back in 1234. In the early 18th century, the Marquis of Ségur, owner of Château Lafite, became known as the Wine Prince, thanks mainly to social influencer the Maréchal of Richelieu and transatlantic fans such as Thomas Jefferson.

Location: 33250 Pauillac

Château Margaux

Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot.

Now covering 650 acres, this wine estate was classified in Napoleon's 1855 Bordeaux Classification of the Médoc, while earlier that century the château itself was built and earned its nickname the Versailles of the Médoc. Four decades after her father bought the château, owner Corinne Mentzepoulous-Petit is one of the leading women in the wine industry and ensures Margaux remains one of the success stories of Bordeaux as well as a billion-dollar business.

Location: 33460 Margaux

SOUTHERN STARS

The Languedoc is an infant compared to Bordeaux in terms of its recognised heritage but not compared to the rest of the world and, today, it is the single largest wine exporter in the world. It is geographically and climate-wise a destination full of surprises and variety. The wines that come out of the area may sometimes lack

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LOCATION



€77,000

LIMOUX, AUDE

This superb renovation project sits in a private position on the edge of a quiet hamlet in the Limoux wine region. The work has been started to a high standard and there is full planning permission to create a lovely home.



€800,000

LIMOUX, AUDE

This large house with a gîte has 11 mostly ensuite bedrooms, making it an ideal business opportunity. Set in tranquil countryside with very pretty views, it comes with a large garden, heated swimming pool and lake.



€120,000

CASCATEL-DES-CORBIÈRES, AUDE

This charming three-bedroom detached village house has views over the surrounding vineyards and hills. It benefits from spacious living rooms, a garage and a cute garden overlooking the Corbières hills.



€479,000

DURAS, LOT-ET-GARONNE

This magical former hunting lodge has views over vineyards and the fairytale château of Duras. It has four bedrooms and is within walking distance of the pretty local village with shop and wineries.

sophistication but they are young, fresh and vibrant. Here are our favourite go-to wines.

Blanquette de Limoux

Despite dating back to 1531, this celebratory fizz is still young at heart and is cracked open with a satisfying pop at every occasion in the region. There are three types of blanquette de Limoux, the *brut* (dry), the *doux* (sweet) and the *ancestrale*, which is the original method and is packed with fruity flavours - the very essence of summer. The grape most used is Mauzac. The best-known producer is the wine co-operative Sieur d'Arques which produces an impressive 4,000 litres or so a year from vineyards across the Aude. *Location: 11206 Limoux and all its surrounding villages*

Minervois rosé

The Minervois region is well known not just for its reds but also for the variety of rosés

they have on offer. Clos du Temple epitomises the rosés of the region, from famous local winemaker Gérard Bertrand it is an award-winning rosé which is a blend of Syrah, Grenache, Cinsault and Viognier. *Location: 34800 Cabrières*

Maury

Maury is a '*vin doux naturel*' which is similar to a port and is produced by adding fortifying spirits to the wine mid-fermentation. It was first recognised as an AOC (controlled term of origin) in 1934. It is now available all over the world, including leading supermarket chain Tesco. The vines are grown on a wide plain in the most southerly and sunny climate in France, sheltered by the Catalan Corbières mountains to one side and the Pyrénées to the other, giving the grape its naturally sweet and rich flavours. The wine is made from Grenache for the red and

Macabeu for the white version. It's a perfect accompaniment for chocolate or cheese or a pre or post-meal tittle.

Location: Maury, Tautavel, St-Paul-de-Fenouillet and Rasiguères

Fitou

Once the bad boy of red wine, this rough and rustic peasant red has become a pleasant red. The Fitou region down by the coast is a *terroir* where high winds, the Mediterranean salty air and flora rich with yellow honeyed broom have a profound influence on the grapes. Similar to its neighbouring Corbière reds, Fitou uses Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah grape varieties. The southern limit of Fitou is also the limit between the Languedoc and Roussillon (Catalan) areas which now form part of Occitanie.

Fitou marks the transition between the two and retains

Roussillon in its cultural makeup. It is a perfect example of how *terroir* forms part of the cultural identity of not just the land but its people. Despite it only gaining appellation status in 1948, 14th-century documents reference Fitou wines. Try Rocflamboyant Fitou, Mont Tauch or Les Crouzels. *Location: 11350 Mont Tauch*

So, now we've whetted your appetite, it's time for you to wet your whistle. I can personally recommend living in an area that produces wines that suit your palate and your lifestyle. See you here soon? Cheers! ■

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