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The history of the Climats

The Climats, a named area with a hierarchical structure set within defined boundaries have, over the centuries, revealed their full potential through crus and cuvées that are distinct from each other yet reflect a culture that claims very ancient roots, a culture specific to this winemaking region, a culture that is totally bound up in an expression of wine and place. Like a work of art created jointly by Man and Nature, the Climats combine land, grape variety, expertise and structural characteristics.

The diversity of the 1,200 Climats in Côte-d'Or is an age-old heritage in its own right, a living reminder of the culture visible in the scenic unity linking Dijon and Les Maranges, through stone-built huts and cabins, stills and cellars, monastic wine stores, vigneron's houses, the Hospices de Beaune and the ducal palace in Dijon etc.

This trip mirrors each stage in the birth of the Climats as part of the

Information:

- By car, the trip takes 75 to 90 minutes depending on the traffic.
- By bike, the trip takes 2 to 2½ hours depending on your cycling ability, plus the time spent on trains.
- Follow the suggested chronological order because the trip has been designed to show the historical emergence of the Climats de Bourgogne from a geographical point of view.



1. Wine growing and ancient civilisations in Côte-d'Or

Vines were introduced into Southern Gaul by the Greeks in the 6th century B.C. In Burgundy, archaeological data shows that they were grown here circa 50 A.D. In fact, agricultural engineer Columella and naturalist Pliny the Elder mentioned the growing of vines in the North of Gaul in the 1st century A.D. It was during this period that wines from Gaul began to compete with Italian wines. In 92 A.D., an edict from the Roman emperor, Domitian, demanded that some of the vine stock in Gaul should be removed. The edict was never applied and it was repealed in 280 A.D. by Probus who was already describing Gaul's vines as "admirable and ancient". A visit to the Archaeology Museum in Dijon and a walk through the "Ancient Roman Vines" district in Gevrey-Chambertin both serve as reminders of winegrowing in ancient times.

1.1. Visit – Musée Archéologique, Dijon (GPS: N 47°19'18"; E 5°02'18")

Address: 5, rue Docteur Maret, 21000 Dijon - Admission: free

Information: <http://www.dijon.fr/les-musees!0-35-1/musee-archeologique!1-38> - +33 (0) 380 488 370

Although the earliest description of Burgundy's vineyards, viz. the vineyard in Autun, is to be found in a speech dating from 312 A.D. given to Emperor Constantine, the Archaeology Museum in Dijon has a number of older archaeological reminders of their existence (dating from the Gallo-Roman period: they are on the 2nd floor of the museum). A funeral monu-

ment discovered in Tart-le-Haut (canton of Genlis) shows a couple of vigneron. The man on the right is holding a pruning hook in his left hand. The god on the barrel from Mâlain (canton of Sombernon) is probably Sucellus. The “wine merchant” monument in Til-Châtel (canton of Is-sur-Tille) shows a row of shops including a wine merchant’s. This proves that the wine trade existed in Burgundy at that time. Last but not least, the museum still has some grape pips from the Gallo-Roman period.



1.2. Brief stop – Ancient Roman vines in Gevrey-Chambertin (GPS: N 47°13'54; E 4°59'54”)

N.B. The vines no longer exist. This is a residential district currently undergoing development and, consequently, full of modern houses. Only the street name (Rue des vignes romaines) shows where the vines were planted during the Roman period (there are no traces of the vines today).



The village of Gevrey-Chambertin 12 km south of Dijon has one reminder of Gallo-Roman vines in the hamlet called “Au-dessus de Bergis”. An archaeological dig conducted between 2008 and 2010 revealed a large number of aligned rectangular ditches, the remains of an ancient vineyard dating from the late 1st century A.D. to the first half of the 2nd and into the 3rd century. It was a large vineyard (more than one hectare has been discovered to date) and it was laid out using rigorous Roman measurements. The distances between the rows and the sizes of the ditches are amazingly constant. The measurements taken on the site correspond to the recommendations for the planting of vines given by Columella, a Roman agricultural engineer living in the 1st century A.D. The proximity of small holes indicates the use of stakes to support the growing vines. Spatial data has revealed that the Gallo-Roman vineyard consisted of carefully aligned plantation ditches and a system of stakes, in addition

to provignage trenches here and there. It is more than likely that the vines were grown on stakes and hooked over horizontal bars made of wood or reeds to improve the exposure in the plain. These vines were fairly far away from the hills. In memory of this Gallo-Roman vineyard, which has now disappeared beneath a residential district, it was decided to call the street “Rue des vignes romaines à Gevrey”.

2. Mediaeval winegrowing on hillsides: the first enclosed vineyards (6th – 14th centuries)

As shown by the Gallo-Roman site in Gevrey-Chambertin, until the 7th century A.D. most vineyards were planted in the plains close to villas. This is no longer the case and it was the Lex Burgundionum (6th century) that brought about the change. Firstly, it stated that anybody planting vines on wasteland would become the owner of the land and, secondly, it introduced the first measures to protect vines i.e. enclosures. Their primary purpose was to protect the plants from the animals that were left to roam free and graze at will; their secondary aim was to promote winegrowing by establishing it firmly and sustainably in this area. A visit to some of these enclosed vineyards (Clos de Bèze in Gevrey, Clos de Tart in Morey, Clos de Vougeot, Clos de Saint-Vivant in Vosne, Clos du Roi and Clos du Chapitre in Aloxe-Corton) shows clearly that wine production in well-defined geographical locations has helped to create areas known for their excellence.

2.1. Brief stop - Le Clos de Bèze in Gevrey-Chambertin (GPS: N 47°13'12"; E 4° 59'57")



Le Clos de Bèze is one of the oldest Climats in the hills. Its history is thought to date back to the founding of the similarly-named abbey in 630 A.D. (Saint-Pierre de Bèze is a Benedictine abbey 30 km north-east of Dijon). Tradition has it that, at that time, Duke Amalgaire of Burgundy gave the monks a significant number of vines, with land to grow them on (fields, forests etc.) and vigneronns to tend them. This donation, however, did not create the 15 hectares of the clos we see today. In fact, the concept of a clos did not yet exist. The first explicit mention of a clos belonging to the monks of Bèze dates from 1219. Distance and, more importantly, serious financial difficulties forced the monks to transfer their clos to the canons from Langres Cathedral (in Dijon) at that time. By purchasing a few other plots of

adjacent land, the canons eventually became the owners of a homogeneous clos covering some 50 acres, which they then leased to various associations of vigneron from Gevrey. For them, the distance from their land did not constitute an obstacle to its successful use.

2.2. Brief stop - Le Clos de Tart in Morey-Saint-Denis (GPS: N 47°11'55"; E 4° 57'26")

Address: 7 Route des Grands Crus, 21220 Morey-Saint-Denis

Le Clos de Tart is privately owned. No visits available.

The Clos de Tart dates from sale of a 5-hectare vineyard by the Hospitallers of Brochon to the young Abbey of Notre-Dame de Tart in 1141. It was the first Cistercian convent, a community of Bernardines set up within the boundaries of Tart-l'Abbaye, 20 km east of Morey-Saint-Denis. Later, during the reform of 1623, they moved to Dijon. Founded in Rue Sainte Anne, the convent now houses the Museum of Burgundian Life (musée de la Vie Bourguignonne) and the Museum of Religious Art (musée d'Art Sacré). The nuns were skilled manager and, to ensure that they owned enough property to be self-sufficient, the Sisters of Tart enhanced and extended the vineyard, turning it into a clos. Very soon, a wine store was built next to it. During the French Revolution, the clos was confiscated, like many others, and sold off as a national asset. Purchased by Nicolas Marey, the Clos de Tart remained in the Marey-Monge family until 1932, when it passed to the Monmessins from Charnay-lès-Mâcon. The company celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1965 and, for one harvest, brought the old wine press built in 1570 back into use. This grand cru vineyard is unique in Burgundy. It consists of an unbroken 7.5 hectare plot and has never been divided up since 1791. It has only had three owners since the Middle Ages and has belonged to only two families since the French Revolution.



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2.3. Visite - Le Château du Clos de Vougeot (GPS : N 47°10'34"; E 4° 57'23")

Address: Rue de la Montagne – 21640 Vougeot

Information: <http://www.closdevougeot.fr> - +33 (0)3 80 62 86 09

The ticket office at the Château du Clos de Vougeot closes at 4pm in winter. Check opening hours.



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The Vougeot estate was one of the first vineyards set up by Cîteaux Abbey. The first donations to the monks date from 1112-1115. They consisted of no more than a few plots of land and a small wine store that was later replaced by the large wine cellar visitors see today. The clos that we know did not yet exist at that time! It was first mentioned in 1212 (one hundred years after the vineyard was set up) but it does not mean that the property was a uniform, continuous stretch of land. On the contrary, the monks' vineyard consisted of many small plots inside and outside the walls of the abbey. The primary purpose of the clos was to indicate the impact of the tax reductions granted by the monks of Saint-Vivant in Vergy to their neighbours in some concrete manner. However, the Clstericians did not own all the enclosed land, far from it, and not all the enclosed land was used solely for vines. But by successive purchases and exchanges, the monks finally became the sole owners of the clos. They erected buildings in the centre of the vast estate, laid out around two courtyards to enable their lay brothers (the brothers responsible for manual work and the monastery's secular business) to "live in" and tend the grapes. The great wine cellar and the dorter, which has no openings to the outside world, probably date from the late 12th century. The sense of Cistercian enclosure, their rejection of the outside world, is seen to its fullest extent from the west. The still room was rebuilt in 1476-1477. Then, during the Renaissance period, the Abbots of Cîteaux turned the farmhouse into a luxury residence. The two wings of the castle built in 1551 were the abbots' private apartments, ostentatiously confirming their high status because the building was visible from the Dijon-Beaune road.

2.4. Brief stop - Le Clos de Saint-Vivant in Vosne-Romanée (GPS: N 47°16'13"; E 4° 95'94")

Le Clos de Saint-Vivant is privately owned. No visits are available.

Founded between 894 and 918 A.D., the Cluniac priory of Saint-Vivant de Vergy lies in the Hautes-Côtes behind Nuits-Saint-Georges, within the boundaries of Curtil-Vergy. The establishment of a real vineyard from the 13th century onwards enabled the priory to get much of its income from work on the vines. One of the main parts of the Saint-Vivant estate was located in Vosne in 1232. This, though, was not yet a clos. A dozen transactions over the course of the 13th century enabled the prior to build up a vineyard covering some 20 hectares, divided into four large clos - Clos des Neuf Journaux, Clos du Moytan with an area of 5 acres, Clos de Quatre Journaux (together, these three formed what we now know as Climat de Romanée-Saint-Vivant) and Clos des Cinq Journaux, the future Romanée-Conti. Although the priory was not all that far from its vines, the monks' wine press was not in their cellar in Saint-Vivant. The grapes grown in Vosne were pressed on site. Priory buildings are known to have existed here in 1311. They included a house with a set of outbuildings in the heart of the village near the church. Now private property, the building still contains the press used to press the grape harvest on site. An 11-kilometre walk allows visitors to follow the path taken by monks from Saint-Vivant when going from the priory to their vineyard ("The Saint-Vivant Monks' Path" - more information available from the tourist office, 3 rue Sonoyes in Nuits-Saint-Georges)



For a view down over the village, walk the first few hundred metres of the monks' path (Rue du Temps Perdu). It looks down over the clos and the famous Climats de Vosne including Romanée-Conti. It also shows the full extent of the land that makes up the Climats.

2.5. On the way/Viewpoint - Le Clos du Roi in Corton (GPS: N 47°04'17"; E 4°51'52")

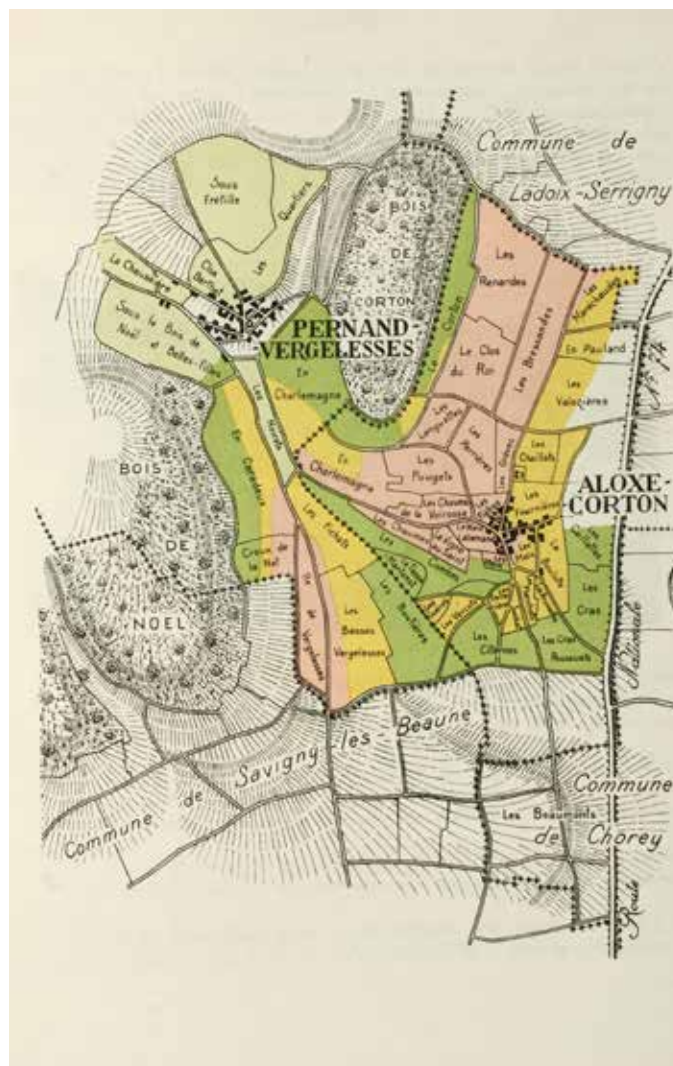


Known for many years as the “Cloux de Corton”, the Climat de Corton-Clos du Roi originally belonged to the Duke of Burgundy. Its current name is a reminder of the king’s seizure of ducal lands on the death of Charles the Bold in 1477 but it has only been used since the 19th century. It is not clear when this clos was formed but it would seem to date from a later period than the others. The oldest known mention dates from 1309 and it was not until 1346 that the term “clos” was systematically used in conjunction with this vineyard. With the Clos de Bovaiche (the future Clos du Roi de Beaune) and the Clos de Chevrey in Volnay, both of them probably set up between 1260 and 1290, the Clos de Corton was one of the three great wine estates belonging to the Dukes of Burgundy in the Beaune area. It was even extended by 13 acres in the early 15th century. Like the “Cloux de Corton”, the ducal clos were unusual for their specific harvests. From the 1390s onwards, the vigneron responsible for their care began producing wines separately from the vines in each clos. Separating the harvests in time and space meant crushing the grapes separately and putting them into their own barrels. Thus, by the end of the Middle Ages, there was a specific Clos de Corton wine that differentiated this vineyard from others. Listed as a Grand Cru in 1937, it is now one of the historic prestige Climats in Côte de Beaune.

2.6. On the way/Viewpoint – The vines of the Autun chapter in Aloxe-Corton (GPS: N 47°04'55"; E 4°51'36")

The Côte de Beaune gained an advantage from the presence of the bishopric in Autun, the successor to the Gallo-Roman town of Augustodunum. As the leading figure in the town, the bishop needed vineyards to provide wines for Mass (symbolising the blood of Christ) and receive prestigious guests with the honour their status demanded. The chapter of Autun Cathedral gained an increasing hold on vineyards in the Beaune and Nuits

areas between the 7th and 11th centuries. This was particularly so in Aloxe where the very long-standing presence of the canons is referred to in the “Clos du Chapitre”, a vineyard registered as “Les Meix” around which the village seems to have grown. The canons of Autun did not live in Corton. They delegated the care of their land, signing leases for specific periods or, in some cases, for life with vigneron from the village. They did, though, have a representative on site (a “closier”) and they owned several houses and working buildings containing a wine press and barrels. They also had two wine stores and an underground wine cellar. Through a succession of purchases and exchanges, the Autun chapter extended its landholding and, by 1532, the canons owned 166 ouvrées (just over 7 hectares). When the estate was sold as a national asset during the French Revolution, it included 245 ouvrées, or 10.5 hectares. The Clos des Meix was only part of the land owned by the canons of Autun. In Corton, in addition to the “Clos du Chapitre”, a number of 13th-century names have survived and are present to this day in the names of Climats such as “Corton Belmont” or “Les Cailloux”.



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3. The founding of the Climats: a search for quality and praise for differences (14th - 17th centuries)

The search for quality was one of the main reasons for the emergence of the Climats. The Valois Dukes of Burgundy promoted Burgundy’s wines throughout Europe thanks to their territorial possessions and diplomatic relations. They even went so far as to introduce production standards, specifying vineyard layouts, single grape varieties, fine plants, quality locations etc. Gradually, the search for balance between grape varieties and locations led to a hierarchy in the wines produced, with “good hills” and “good places” being contrasted with “poor places” and “small wines”. This paved the way for separate cuvées.

3.1. Visit - The Hospices de Beaune and Nicolas Rolin (GPS: N 47°02'19"; E 4° 83'64")

Address: Rue de l’Hôtel-Dieu – 21200 Beaune

For further information: <http://www.hospices-de-beaune.com> - +33 (0) 3 80 24 45 00

The ticket office at the Hospices de Beaune closes at 5.30pm in winter. Check opening times.



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Known as the “Hospices de Beaune”, the hospital is one of the most remarkable examples of Flemish-Burgundian architecture anywhere in Europe. When it was founded in 1443 by Nicolas Rolin, Chancellor to the Duke of Burgundy, and his wife Guigone de Salins, the hospital immediately became a charity institution, “I, Nicolas Rolin [...] Chancellor of Burgundy, on this day, Sunday the fourth day of August in the year of Our Lord 1443 [...] in the interests of my salvation, wishing to exchange temporal goods for celestial benefits, [...] hereby found and irrevocably endow in the town of Beaune a hospital for sick paupers, with a chapel to honour God and his glorious Mother [...]”. It continued to function as a public hospital until the 1970s. Most of its income came from wine. Thanks to the donations and legacies known to have existed in 1471 and five centuries of skilful management, the Hospices became the owners of a vineyard recognised as one of the most prestigious on the Côte. With an area of 60 hectares, it includes famous Climats that produce mainly premiers crus and grands crus. The Hospices de Beaune has been holding its famous wine auction on the third Sunday of November since 1859 and it has become an unmissable date in the diary of wine professionals everywhere. The auction sale also helps to perpetuate the charity work begun by the founders and donors in the Middle Ages.

4. The emergence and differentiation of Climats in modern times (16th – 19th centuries)

From the 16th century onwards, two major upheavals led to the emergence and the real differentiation of the Climats. The political context was one of them. The erstwhile ducal vineyards became Crown property and changes were introduced. The land belonging to monasteries and aristocrats was significantly reorganised under Louis XIV and, more importantly, after the French Revolution. At the same time, there were changes in the wine-growing hierarchy. The notion of a “Climat” appeared in the 16th century in an attempt to differentiate between locations and define wines (crus) that were more and more elegant. The Climats became increasingly common during the 18th century. References to cellars and wine merchants and a visit to the Burgundy Wine Museum (Musée du Vin de Bourgogne) give a glimpse of life in a wine-producing Climat in the late 16th and early 19th centuries.

4.1. Visit – Wine cellars and wine merchants in Beaune

Check opening times, especially in the low season (address at the end of the document).

Privately-owned wine businesses appeared in Burgundy during the 18th century with the aim of creating a reputation for Burgundy's crus and Climats throughout Europe. The businesses were set up by professional salesmen and artisans, some of whom did not come from a winemaking background. The oldest of these companies included Champy Père & Cie (1720), Poulet Père & Fils and Lavirotte (1725), Bouchard Père & Fils (1731), Patriarche (1780) and Lamarosse (1797). Less than a century later, the town of Beaune, having become the main centre of the wine trade in Burgundy, had some sixty businesses of this type. Merchants acted as middlemen between producers and consumers, purchasing, storing and aging the wines.

This led to new notions of vintages and cellaring. The merchants wanted to offer and sell top-quality wines, often to customers a long distance away, using the services of their own networks. The arrival of the railway in the 1850s was an additional advantage. When the town and its outskirts underwent redevelopment, the merchants had an opportunity to purchase some of the bastions and ramparts. They then used them to house countless large vats known as "foudres", tanks and wine presses. Vast winemaking workshops and huge warehouses filled dozens of kilometres of cellars. First introduced into religious communities in the Middle Ages and developed in the 18th and 19th centuries for the needs of the wine trade, there were more than 5,000 underground wine cellars in Beaune.



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4.2. Skilful description and classification of the Climats: Visit to the Musée du Vin de Bourgogne (GPS: N 47°02'37"; E 4° 83'74")



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Address: Hôtel des Ducs de Bourgogne - rue d'Enfer – 21200 Beaune
Information: <http://www.beaune.fr/spip.php?rubrique465> - + 33 (0)3.80.22.08.19
The Burgundy Wine Museum closes at 6pm. Check the opening times.

The Burgundy Wine Museum, housed in the former ducal palace, contains several illustrations of the Climats. The finest is a copy of the Academy, or Cassini, map. It is a map of the kingdom of France commissioned by Louis XV and drawn from 1746 onwards under the direction of César-François Cassini du Thury. It consists of 180 pages and is both a geometric map based on the position of some 300 points per sheet, and a work of art depicting roads, rivers and geographical relief. The vines are shown from Dijon to Santenay. The document was also the first major national survey of place names. Other important works include paintings by Félix Jules Naigeon, an artist from Beaune who created numerous Burgundy landscapes including Harvests in Pommard in the last quarter of the 19th century. The museum contains many reminders of the traditions and customs of the winegrowing sector. From the 18th century come a wine merchant's sign and a pair of wine jugs. Among the unusual items dating from the 19th century are betrothal pruning hooks given by a man to his future wife, marriage cups and tasting cups, bottles and sets of glasses. However, the main attraction of this museum is the impressive collection of tools used in caring for vines in the days before the phylloxera epidemic, a collection that sheds light on the popular culture and traditions of the winegrowing community.

5. Burgundy's Climats: the revival of a unique benchmark

Burgundy's Climats underwent profound change in the 20th century with extensive replanting of vines after the phylloxera epidemic, the gradual introduction of mechanisation, the significant urban growth that led, in some cases, to the disappearance of ancient Climats (including one in Dijon), not to mention the impact of wars and crises on the winegrowing sector. To survive in the face of such change, a number of unscrupulous vigneron engaged in fraudulent practices (blending, falsification of wines etc.). However, the introduction of controlled designations of origin (appellations d'origine contrôlée) and claims of excellence from the Climats as a whole led to the revival of a unique benchmark in terms of wine. A visit to the Burgundy Wine Museum reveals the difficulties involved in the introduction of AOCs and the folklore that gradually began to surround vines and wines over the 20th century.



5.1. Difficulties with the introduction of Appellations d'Origine (included in the visit to the Burgundy Wine Museum)

French winegrowers faced a succession of crises in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (phylloxera, oversupply, fraud, litigation relating to AOC boundaries) and professionals had to set up numerous committees and commissions on a local, national and international level to create a pressure group that could monitor the burning issues of the time (protection of AOCs, excise duties, taxes, prohibition, propaganda about the benefits of wine, planting problems etc.). Until the breakout of the First World War, merchants sold most of their wines in other countries. The interwar years were particularly difficult, especially after the introduction of prohibition in the USA. Moreover, French wines were in competition with wines that were imported or produced artificially, leading to oversupply. Certain owners, even in Burgundy, were more concerned with profit than quality in those days so, for the first time, laws were passed to combat fraud. Designations of origin were introduced in 1927, followed by Controlled Designations of Origin (AOCs) in 1935, although not without difficulty. Many merchants lost their credibility in the face of competition from new kids on the block – boutique vigneron. These vineyard owners became increasingly independent and their decision to set up unions of wine producers was one of the most significant factors in the introduction of AOCs.



5.2. The folklore about vines and wines (included in the visit to the Burgundy Wine Museum)

While the Climats were re-establishing their position through a search for quality and authenticity, the area was acquiring its own specific social structure and a culture of festivals designed to commemorate the history of the vineyards. Traditional Burgundian festivals and special events may be local but they are also well-known on a global scale. Held on the third Sunday in November, the public wine auction at the Hospices de Beaune, first organised in 1859, is the oldest and most famous charity wine auction in the world. The Confrérie des Chevaliers de Tastevin, an association founded in 1934 at the height of the crisis hitting production in Burgundy, now has 12,000 members worldwide and its property, Le Clos de Vougeot, is an embodiment of the recognition enjoyed by people as a result of their hard work and the quality of their products. Set up in Burgundy in 1938 by the association, the Saint-Vincent-Tournante is a festival held every year in a different village over the last weekend in January in honour of St. Vincent, the patron saint of vigneron. It is a popular event with winegrowers and mutual providence socie-

ties. Other well-known events include the Paulée de Meursault that follows the auction sale at the Hospices de Beaune to bring together vigneron and their best clients from all over the world, the Fête de la Pressée de Chenôve and the Fêtes de la vigne de Dijon, but there are countless other special events and celebrations in the winemaking community spread throughout the winemaking year.

Further information:

- **Hospices de Beaune auction sale:**

<http://www.hospices-de-beaune.com/index.php/hospicesdebeaune/Le-Domaine-viticole/La-Vente-des-Vins>

- **La confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin:** <http://www.tastevin-bourgogne.com>

- **La Saint-Vincent Tournante:** <http://www.tastevin-bourgogne.com/fr/index.php?rub=5>

- **La Paulée de Meursault:** http://www.ot-meursault.fr/agenda/agenda_fr.htm

- **La fête de la Pressée de Chenôve:**

http://www.ville-chenove.fr/fr/culture/rendez-vous_culturels

- **Les fêtes de la vigne de Dijon:** <http://www.fetesdelavigne.fr>

