

# A Rare VINTAGE:

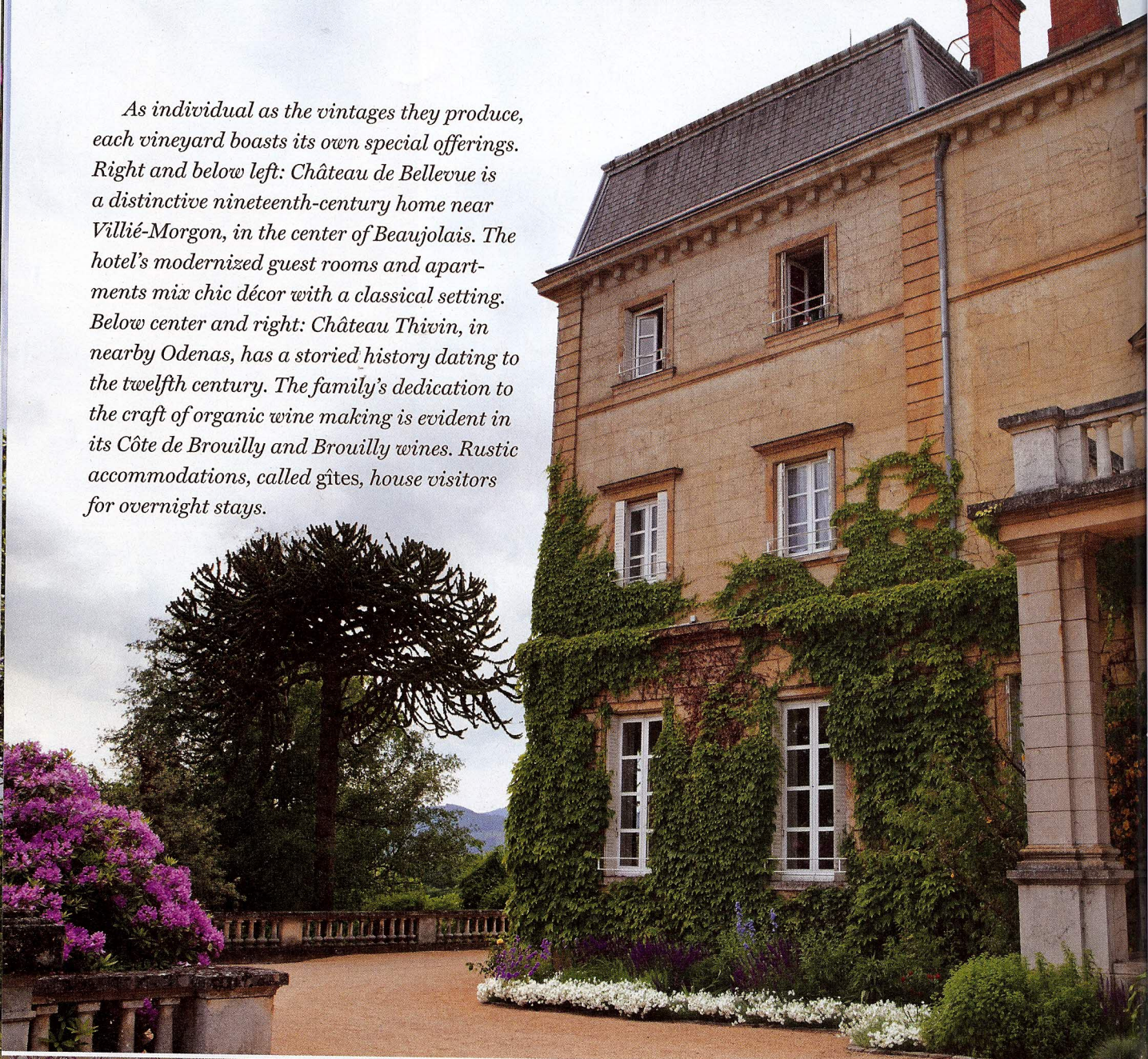
## Exploring the Rhône-Alpes

*Beneath a cerulean sky, picture-perfect panoramas of rolling hills blanketed with lush vegetation fill the Rhône-Alpes region of southeastern France. Still a hidden gem, the area's welcoming villages, historic sights, gourmet cuisine, and centuries-old family vineyards combine for a vacation to remember. Explore the province of Beaujolais, and taste the acclaimed Cru wines. Or drive a bit farther afield to enjoy the country hotels and scenic hamlets of the spectacular Loire Valley.*

TEXT BRITTANY FLOWERS PHOTOGRAPHY KATE SEARS



*As individual as the vintages they produce, each vineyard boasts its own special offerings. Right and below left: Château de Bellevue is a distinctive nineteenth-century home near Villié-Morgon, in the center of Beaujolais. The hotel's modernized guest rooms and apartments mix chic décor with a classical setting. Below center and right: Château Thivin, in nearby Odenas, has a storied history dating to the twelfth century. The family's dedication to the craft of organic wine making is evident in its Côte de Brouilly and Brouilly wines. Rustic accommodations, called gîtes, house visitors for overnight stays.*



## WINE MAKING & TASTING

Beaujolais is an exciting destination for both experienced and novice oenophiles. The artisan winemakers here are passionate people who are pleased to share their considerable knowledge about the wines they grow and sell. Conveyed directly from those who work the fields, there is a fuller understanding of the French term *terroir*—a mysterious word that encompasses the earth, the air, and the sweetness of life here. These combine to create the ideal conditions that give grapes (and, thus, the wines) their remarkable taste.

The Beaujolais region has twelve appellations: Beaujolais, Beaujolais-Villages, and ten Beaujolais Crus, which produce thoughtfully crafted wines that form the region's upper echelon. The ten Crus (a premier wine classification) of Beaujolais include Brouilly, Chénas, Chiroubles, Côte de Brouilly, Fleurie, Juliéna, Morgon, Moulin-à-Vent, Régnie, and Saint-Amour.

The *Beaujolais Wine Tourism Guidebook*, produced by the local tourism department, is an excellent map and an informative resource. Well researched and filled with beautiful photographs, the booklet highlights the area's 177 tasting rooms and includes the histories of the wineries, as well as opening hours and notes on the characteristics of each vintage and vineyard.

