



Top: the windmill of Moulin-à-Vent above its autumnal Gamay vineyard

Left: Beaujolais is moving away from its *nouveau* image, helped by vintages such as 2009

Left: the Route du Beaujolais, which takes you through the village of Morgon (far left)

'There's never been a better time to visit this compellingly beautiful, compact little stretch of country between Lyon and Mâcon'

vine-clad hills south of Mâcon. There, we gorged on the cheap and cheerful fruits of the Gamay vine, gleefully smuggling it back by the cubitainer over unmanned borders deep in the Jura. In due course our two children, together with joyous bands of university friends, signed up for the harvest and spent back-breaking days bent over the punishingly low Gamay vines (and head-breaking nights fuelled by rivers of Beaujolais).

Then came Beaujolais Nouveau. People couldn't get enough of this briefly macerated, cherry-red beverage whose production more than doubled between 1977 and 1985. But vast volumes and unseemly haste are seldom synonymous with quality, and while Nouveau proved to be a great

BEAUJOLAIS VILLAGES
Belleville
Cluniac
Clouster
Château de Cercy
VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-SAÔNE
BEAUJOLAIS
Lyon
Domaine des Terres Dorées

CRUS BEAUJOLAIS

1. Juliéna
2. St Amour
3. Chénas
4. Moulin-à-Vent
5. Fleurie
6. Chiroubles
7. Morgon
8. Regnié
9. Brouilly
10. Côtes de Brouilly

★ Six of the best estates

Château de la Salle
Château du Basty
Beaujeu
Brouilly Hill
Château de la Chaize
Château Thivin
Morgon
Belleville
Château de la Grange Cochard
Corcelles-en-Beaujolais
Fleurie
Domaine Chignard
Romanèche-Thorins
La Tour du Bief
Jullié
Mons du Beaujolais

Limit of Crus Beaujolais wine region

To Mâcon
A6
River Saône
River Rhône
To Lyon

Six of the best Beaujolais estates to visit

★ **Domaine des Terres Dorées, Charnay**
Jean-Paul Brun is known for his highly prized, exciting, unusual, long-lived Beaujolais-Villages and crus. Visits by appointment only to his elusive domaine in the Pierres Dorées.
Tel: +33 (0)4 78 47 93 45

★ **Château de Cercy, Denicé**
Michel and Cyril Picard conjure up some fine Beaujolais (including a rare Chardonnay-based Blanc) from the limestone-clay soils of this less-favoured southern end of the region. www.chateau-cercy.com

★ **Château du Basty, Lantignié**
Taste Pernette and Gilles Perroud's Beaujolais Lantignié (one of the most ageworthy of the Villages appellations) and perfumed, lively Régnié at their château high above the vineyards.
www.chateaudubasty.com

★ **Château Thivin, Odenas**
This 25ha (hectare) estate in Brouilly was one of the first to experiment with alternative ways of training Gamay (the usual is *gobelet*), with consistently impressive results. Visits welcome.
www.chateau-thivin.com

★ **Château de la Grange Cochard, Villié Morgon**
James and Sarah Wilding have attracted attention (and awards) with their meaty Morgon grown on some of the best granitic soils of Les Charmes and Côte du Py. Tasting by appointment. www.lagrange-cochard.com

★ **Domaine Chignard, Fleurie**
Classic Beaujolais domaine making serious Fleurie, one from Les Moriers, the other a special cuvée from low-yielding, densely planted vines more than 30 years old, aged in small oak barrels. Tel: +33 (0)4 74 04 11 87

cash cow for many hard-pressed producers, it did untold damage to the region's image as a whole.

On the up

Now, slowly, steadily, discerning wine drinkers are (re)discovering Beaujolais. Top Burgundy growers are looking south and snapping up the best vineyards. Côte d'Or producer Vincent Girardin recently purchased 20ha (hectares) of vines in the La Tour du Bief vineyard (Louis Jadot bought the other half), where he intends to make a quality red at an accessible price, aged in *barriques* from his Meursault domaine – 'a Moulin-à-Vent in the style of a Burgundy'. The fabulous 2009 vintage was >

How to get there

By car: on A6 motorway
By plane to Lyon: about 90 minutes from major UK airports – then hire a car
By train to Lyon: about six hours from London St Pancras or Ashford International via Lille or Paris – then hire a car
The drive from Lyon north: to the foot of the Beaujolais vineyards is about 30 minutes



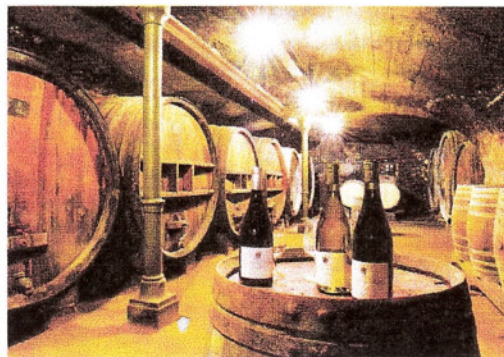
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the cherry on the cake, with the promising 2010 hot on its heels. There's never been a better time to visit this compellingly beautiful, compact little stretch of country between Lyon and Mâcon.

You could do Beaujolais in a day – but don't. Linger; take time to explore the area in all its variety, combining the newly created Route des Vins du Beaujolais with as many minor roads as you can muster (green-edged on any Michelin map, indicating scenic value). In the southernmost Pierres Dorées country close to Lyon (think the Cotswolds but warmer and sunnier, with rolling vineyards thrown in) you'll find radiant golden stone villages, Romanesque churches and Renaissance châteaux (one of which, Bagnols, is a luxury hotel, see p125). This is the heart of the basic Beaujolais appellation, responsible for oceans of light, bright, cheery Beaujolais (including Nouveau), with a handful of wine growers standing out from the crowd (see box p123).

Cruise through the crus

Further north, with a sidestep to take in the 10th-century Cluniac cloister at Salles-Arbussonas, you hit the first of the 10 crus (the named vineyards of Beaujolais) – Brouilly – and its Côte, set at a rakish angle like a big beret on top of the Brouilly hill. From here northwards, Beaujolais-Villages country begins to balloon out. A feature here are the elegant 17th- and 18th-century châteaux (de la Chaize, de la Salle, du Basty), many still working vineyards in family ownership where



you can visit, taste and stay overnight. These were followed in the 19th century by a slew of fine vineyard manor houses, set proudly amid their rolling vines rather than tucked away in villages behind high walls. Once the property of the Lyon bourgeoisie, many are now in the hands of a new generation of wine grower-investors with a firm belief in the potential of Beaujolais.

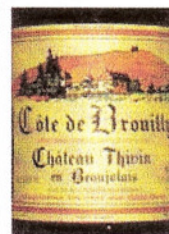
The villages that share the world-famous names of the most northerly crus (Morgon, Chiroubles, Fleurie, Moulin-à-Vent, Chénas, Juliéas and St-Amour) are surprisingly lacklustre, with none of the charm (or churches, or châteaux) of the Pierres Dorées. Plan on a tasting or two here, then buy a selection of regional goat's cheeses, cured meats and a bottle of Beaujolais rosé (Belleville and Beaujeu have good shops and markets) and head up into the hills to the west for a picnic in the little known Monts du Beaujolais. With luck you'll be rewarded with astonishing views, first of waves of vines unfurling at your feet, followed by the Saone valley and, on exceptionally clear days, distant glimpses of the Alps. **D**

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DOMAINE DE LA TOUR DU BIEF

Moulin à Vent
Les Vignes de 80 ans
2009
VINCENT GIRARDIN



Above: notable Beaujolais names and regions
Domaine Chignard, Domaine de la Tour du Bief and Côte de Brouilly

Above left: the gentle hills near Chiroubles, one of Beaujolais' 10 crus

Left: the cave of the Château du Basty, a producer worth visiting

'Plan on a tasting or two, then buy goat's cheese, cured meats and some wine and head up into the hills for a picnic'