

Post



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May 15, 2022 · 4 min read

St. Emilion - May 15, 2022

Updated: Feb 22, 2023

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Today's our first day in the Dordogne, aka the Perigord. Few places in this region are more revered and celebrated than Saint Emilion, and we're headed there today. We got into our new place here, from Paris, yesterday, and we'd love to hang out, but we have a lunch reservation and it's market day, so off we drive.

As drives go, it's not too bad, maybe 30 minutes. We've been told market days are crazy. If you don't get there early you won't get a parking spot, so we leave at the crack of dawn (8 am which is early for us). We get to St. Emilion without a hitch and easily find a parking spot in the public lot at the edge of town. There are maybe thirty spaces and only half are full. Hm.

Given how early we got away from Baleysague we haven't had all our coffee, so we start looking for a place to get an espresso or a café crème. This is France, how hard can that be? It turns out, pretty hard. The city isn't very big and we cover much of it pretty quickly. At one point Karen spies a chef prepping for the day through an open window. She asks how to get to the market. The chef answers that it's not today. There's a market today in... (and he lists a couple of other nearby towns). Dang, we got bad information. No wonder it is so empty.

We continue to crisscross the town, looking for coffee. We find a hotel, but they're done serving breakfast. We're on the street where we stayed twenty five or so years ago. It hasn't changed. We're strategizing on where in the town we might not yet have looked for an open café. A spry old man with bushy eyebrows and funny glasses asks if we need help and we start conversing with him (in French).

We ask about coffee and about the company Scott worked at in the late 90s (whose founder has a famous winery/chateau in St. Emilion). Our new acquaintance introduces himself, Guy-Petrus Lignac. His family created the uber-famous Petrus wine label and he owns Château Gaudet in town. He does know where Chateau Dassault is (the one I'm looking for) but not where I can buy a bottle. He invites us for a tour of their wine house and gives us his card. The tour is at 11. We promise to be there.

We finally find coffee (and many adjacent cafés) at the square next to the monolith church. We sit, order and drink our coffees and eat our croissants . It's all heavenly, as usual. We do some wine shopping and end up buying a bottle of Chateau Dassault for a friend back in Austin (who, like Scott, also worked at Dassault).

At 11 we head to Chateau Gaudet, the winery of Guy-Petrus. He greets us and shows us to a lovely courtyard. He knows we are Americans from Texas and so has his American and his Texas flags out. He was delightful. We looked him up online over breakfast and found loads of information. We also found that someone tried to scam him out of a lot of money, way back when, and the BBC did a special on it. An other couple (two guys) joined us for the tour. They're from Italy/UK/some other places. Guy put out the Italian flag for them.

We hear about the history of the winery and eventually get a tour of the cave. We had to leave our cell phones and cameras above ground. Someone took pictures a while back and posted them on the internet. The result was that someone broke in and stole some very expensive bottles of Petrus he had down there.

We taste the wine. It is OK. We end up buying two 60 euro bottles. In return he comp'ed us the 20 euro per person tour fee. He did show us some pictures he had of his grandfather, or some such relative, who worked on a ranch in Texas years ago. Guy's planning to visit and now has our phone and email.

We leave the wine at the winery to pick up later (so we don't have to drag it all over town). Lunch is at Le Tertre. We know the French word for Theater, which is close, but this is different. Over a wonderful lunch we learn it means 'steep incline' which perfectly describes the pedestrian street the restaurant is on. It sprinkled for a while as we had lunch (inside) and we were sure the poor people walking on this tertre were going to slip and land on their butts, but thankfully no one did.

Lunch is amazing. Delicious and inventive and French. The amuse bouche is tuna rillette with flying fish roe on a champagne gellée. We have fois gras, tuna tartar, veal (two ways), fish (red mullet). Dessert is lemon éclair, pavlova with strawberry, and tiramisu. So good!

We retrieve our wine from Chateau Gaudette and brave the tertre to get back to our car. Scott drives back home and takes us many kilometers in the wrong direction. This wouldn't be the last time he does that!

Back at the room we swim in the pool and groan at the thought of dinner. But Ron and Karen whip up a light, delightful, French dinner and we dine al fresco with more wine. Afterwards there's a big thunder and lightning storm that blows over. It's quite the show. Everything around is so lush and green, it's understandable that they'd have rain now and again.

Photos

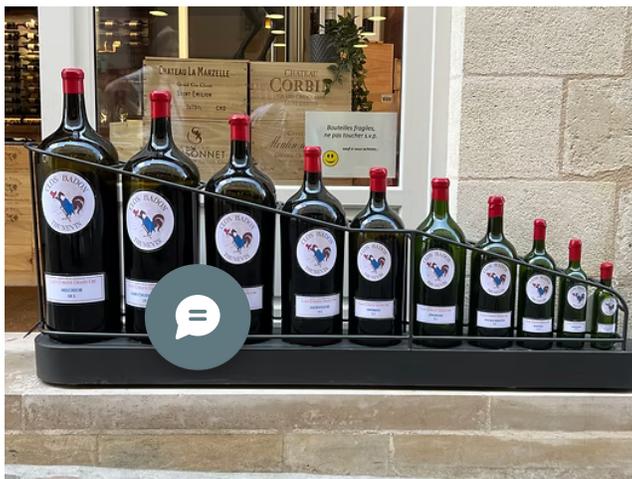






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