



LFW G r a p e v i n e

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LFW Visits Southwest France!

By Bill Smith

We did it! On three days in June 2006, thirty three of us met in southwest France for LFW's inaugural world travel wine trip.



We kicked off our visit on Thursday June 22 at the Wine School in Saint-Emilion in the Pomerol AOC region.



As we smelled and tasted our way, Patrick Marchal taught all of us several new things about wine. Many of us were surprised to hear the first nose from sauvignon blanc is cat urine! We also discovered some of the most interesting sights of Saint-Emilion are not apparent at street level.

How many other places in the world have a massive underground church? A massive belltower (photo left) is built on top of it. Friday, June 23 was a very busy day for us. We traveled east along the Dordogne River to the adjacent Bergerac AOC wine region where our morning stop was at Chateau Tiregand, the most highly regarded winery in the Pecharmant subdivision of the AOC.



Winemaker Francois Xavier (related to Antoine de Saint-Exupery, aviation pioneer and author of the legendary Le Petit

Prince), led us on an interesting tour of his chai (pronounced "she").



From Chateau Tiregand we took a short drive into old Bergerac and had a wonderful sea bass lunch at L'Imparfait Restaurant.

They presented the *whole* fish . . . eyes and all. We gobbled it up.

After consuming a copious amount of white wine, we somehow made it to Gageac et Rouillac for a tasting at Clos d'Yvigne which is owned and operated by author and winemaker, Patricia Atkinson, who came to France from England. She started the winery by herself without knowing French or anything about winemaking.



Patricia was delightful and we tasted her whites, her Petit Prince, and her sumptuous, golden 2002 Saussagnac dessert wine.



Former LFW president, Mike Marron, presented her with a LFW shirt and made her an honorary member of LFW. [Editor's note: Mike, looking like a professional ad model here appears

pleased with discovering a unique wine from a different winery: a 2004 Chateau Faget.]

We made it to our Monflanquin area hotels after our visit to Clos d'Yvigne.



Believe it or not, our members rallied for a sunset wine and cheese event at the Smith

maison located at 9 Tour de Ville where nature put on a show with a perfect sunset at 9:43PM. We helped the sun to set by consuming nearly a case of wine from Chateau Tiregand and Clos d'Yvigne which was the perfect accompaniment to the local cheese.

Our group reserved enough energy to amble two blocks to the town square (circa 1252) to eat dinner outside at La Mercerie under the protective arcades. The French eat late, and the proof is that the last table was served dessert at 12:30AM!

Saturday, our members explored the area or took a canoe trip down the Dordogne.



Our members visited Chateau Biron (a large local castle), Monpazier (a neighboring English bastide town), some of the Hundred Years' War castles dotting the Dordogne and the colorful local marche (market) at nearby Villereal.

The Walkers, Andersons, Behrens/Hicks family and Smiths chose the river. The Walkers and Andersons took several "direct hits" from the Smith water cannons but were able to stay afloat. The very wet ride down the Dordogne felt good in the heat.

As the sun lowered in the sky, we met just outside Monflanquin at Calviac, a 12th century church and presbytry (minister's house).

American and London/Monflanquin resident, Nonnie Thompson, bought the ruined presbytry and reconstructed it. She conducted a tour and told us all about the 8th century sarcophagus she uncovered in the construction process. She also mentioned the grave of the bastard son of



the Black Prince in the adjoining graveyard. There are multiple sarcophagus findings in, around, and under the presbytry, and

one is in her lower closet. She literally has a skeleton in the closet! During this visit we enjoyed a case of assorted Bordeaux area wines and more cheese.

After “you had to be there” quips about the benefits of Nonnie having her very own “sarcophaguy”), we caravanned to Penne D’Agenais on the Lot River for a closing dinner at L’Air du Temps.

We had more of our own wine and enjoyed a delicious meal with a very tasty red fruit crumble for dessert. A warm, gentle rain



fell around us as we dined under the large overhang of the restaurant that is about 400

years old. Christopher Blunden shared a favorite story about the Shetland Islands, and a number of our men and women enjoyed a fine cigar after the meal. It was a fitting conclusion to a spectacular trip.

We then formed a caravan that I’m told wound up successfully racing through the countryside to avoid getting lost in the rain late at night on the back roads of France.

From Penne D’Agenais most of our members returned home, but a few stayed for biking a lively game of petanque and a visit to the tiny Zadkine (Russian cubist sculptor from Paris) Museum and neighboring church housing two of his masterpieces.

We then had a superb meal at La Recreation restaurant in Les Arques in the Lot.



This restaurant operated by Jacques and Noelle Ratier was featured in the book *From Here You Can't See Paris*.

Laureen and I were delighted and honored to host this trip. We were touched by the number of enthusiastic people who decided to make the trip, and we hope that everyone had as good a time as we did.



We loved the opportunity to get to know those who came a little bit better.



The spirit of our unique organization made this possible, and we thank each of you who attended.



A bientot, Bill and Laureen