

Burgundy



With the vineyards and plains of Champagne to the north and the Rhône Valley, gateway to the Midi-Pyrénées, to the south, Burgundy (Bourgogne in French) can make a strong case for being the real heartland of France. Amid some of the country's most gorgeous countryside, two great French passions, wine and food, come together here in a particularly enticing and hearty form.

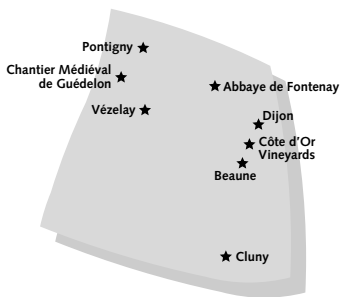
Burgundy's towns and its dashing handsome capital, Dijon, are heirs to a glorious architectural heritage that goes back to the Renaissance, the Middle Ages and beyond, into the mists of Gallo-Roman and Celtic antiquity. Many civil and religious buildings, including Beaune's stunning Hôtel-Dieu, are topped with colourful tile roofs. Dijon, Beaune, Châtillon-sur-Seine and other towns have truly outstanding museums (www.musees-bourgogne.org, in French).

Burgundy is a paradise for lovers of the great outdoors. You can hike and cycle through the highly civilised vineyards of the Côte d'Or, on a network of cycling trails (such as the Voie Verte in Saône-et-Loire) that are also great for in-line skating, and in the wild reaches of the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan (Morvan Regional Park); glide along the waterways of the Yonne in a canal boat; or float above the vineyards in a hot-air balloon.

The majority of Burgundy's most interesting historical sights are found in three *départements*: Côte-d'Or (capital: Dijon) in the northeast; Yonne (capital: Auxerre) in the northwest, almost at the gates of Paris; and Saône-et-Loire (capital: Mâcon) in the south. Most of the lightly populated Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan is in the region's fourth *département*, Nièvre.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Marvel at the glories of the late Middle Ages at **Dijon's Musée des Beaux-Arts** (p461) and **Beaune's Hôtel-Dieu** (p468)
- Sample Burgundy's most renowned vintages in **Beaune** (p468) and along the vine-carpeted slopes of the **Côte d'Or** (p465)
- Explore the hilltop village of **Vézelay** (p485) and stroll into the surrounding countryside
- Conjure up monastic life in the Middle Ages at the abbeys of **Cluny** (p492), **Fontenay** (p472), **Pontigny** (p480) and **Vézelay** (p485)
- Watch a 13th century-style château being built with 13th-century technology at the **Chantier Médiéval de Guédelon** (p479)



■ POPULATION: 1.6 MILLION

■ AREA: 31,582 SQ KM

History

At its height during the 14th and 15th centuries, the duchy of Burgundy was one of the richest and most powerful states in Europe, a vast swathe of territory stretching from modern-day Burgundy to Alsace and from there northwest to Lorraine, Luxembourg, Flanders and Holland. This was a time of bitter

rivalry between Burgundy and France – indeed, it was the Burgundians who sold Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc) to the English – and for a while it seemed quite possible that the kingdom of France would be taken over by Burgundy. In the end, though, it worked out the other way around, and in 1477 Burgundy became French.

