

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Hotel, once a spiritual retreat, remains heavenly

By IRENE S. LEVINE
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Situated in Burgundy, one of the premier wine-growing regions of France, the Abbaye de la Bussiere has to be one of the most beautiful hotels in the world. As you pass through the elegant wrought-iron gates at the foot of the driveway, the imposing stone building looks as if it came out of a fairy tale. Ironically, back in the 12th century, this now sybaritic hotel housed a spiritual community of Cistercian monks.

About three hours by car from Paris, the Relais & Chateaux property in the Ouche Valley is set in a gracefully landscaped, 15-acre park with its own lake, century-old trees and more than 24 types of flowering plants.

Clive and Tamith Cummings, the son and daughter-in-law of the English property owners, live on the grounds with their children and two Shetland

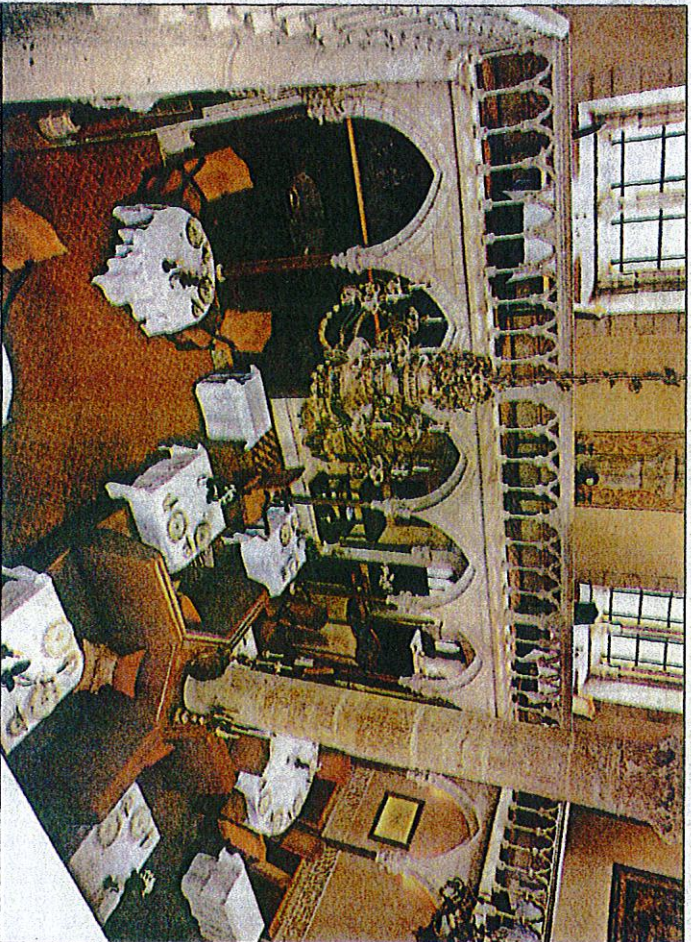


PHOTO BY IRENE S. LEVINE
The dining room in the restored Abbaye de la Bussiere hotel in Burgundy.

ponies. The couple have restored the neo-Gothic buildings, retaining the charm and ambience of the past while adding modern

luxuries and conveniences. Among the nine buildings is a well-preserved 14th-century wine cellar with a press used by the monks to

make wines for the sacrament. The 18 lake- and garden-view rooms and suites have been completely restored



PHOTO BY JEROME LEVINE
An ancient wine press at the Abbaye de la Bussiere.

and updated. They are decorated with plush linens and bedding, silk fabrics, period antiques and flat-screen TVs. The bathrooms, with double sinks and whirlpool baths, are stocked with Bulgari toiletries.

Dining either at the formal Michelin-starred restaurant with vaulted ceilings or at the less formal but still elegant bistro (open for breakfast and lunch) is a memorable gastronomic experience.