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LIVING TRAVEL

3 Burgundy stays sainted by Michelin



A scenic table awaits at La Côte Saint-Jacques.

Photo: La Côte Saint Jacques/Relais & Châteaux

Just a two-hour train ride southeast of Paris lies one of France's top gastronomic regions — celebrated for its zesty wines, its tender Bresse chicken and its prized escargot. Heck, it's even got a dish named in its honor: beef bourguignon.

So it comes as no surprise that Burgundy is home to an impressive 33 Michelin-starred restaurants — trailing only Paris (with 105) and Provence/Rhone (83).

This trio of Relais & Châteaux properties alone racks up six total stars — combining gourmet cuisine and stylish accommodations, all in a gorgeous French countryside setting.

1) La Côte Saint-Jacques, Joigny



Dine on Chef Jean-Michel Lorain's Michelin-starred fare en plein air.

Photo: La Côte Saint Jacques/Relais & Châteaux

It may have lost its third star this year, but the dual-starred restaurant, helmed by Chef Jean-Michel Lorain, hasn't lost one bit of its shine.

Exquisitely prepared and creatively served, Lorain's dishes pop with bright colors and flavors: A perennial favorite is the lobster and fresh heart of palm salad; on a recent spring visit, it kicked off a dinner that featured a delicate, lightly smoked sea bass in caviar sauce and a beef wagyu brisket, served "pastrami style." And when the cheese trolley rolls into the dining room, prepare to be wowed.



A gourmet dish from the sea at La Cote Saint-Jacques.

Photo: La Côte Saint Jacques/Relais & Châteaux

Menus range from a \$156, multi-course lunch to a four-course Gourmand dinner priced at \$210. The 32-room hotel is housed in two buildings; be sure to book a stay in the one that's nestled on the banks of the Yonne River to take full advantage of the waterfront views.

Though the decor is a bit dated, rooms are spacious — especially the suites, some of which boast sprawling decks overlooking the river. The bi-level Côte Coon spa features a large heated indoor swimming pool with windows opening to the garden; the Jacuzzi is perfectly situated to soak up the river vistas.

(From \$240)

2) Bernard Loiseau, Saulieu



Chef Patrick Bertron's inventive take on nouvelle cuisine at the three-Michelin-star Bernard Loiseau.

Photo: Relais Bernard Loiseau/Relais & Châteaux

Even if you've never been to Burgundy, there's one person you've likely heard about — Bernard Loiseau. Though not the original owner of the hotel-restaurant-spa property, which has been around since 1930 as Côte-d'Or, Loiseau took over the reins in 1982.

In 1991, the restaurant was awarded three Michelin stars under his tutelage; two years later, under threat of losing a star, Loiseau committed suicide. It's a heartbreaking story, but his widow, Dominique, carried on, and today the five-star property — whose restaurant maintains its three stars — bears the late chef's name.

The current man behind the stove is Patrick Bertron, whose inventive take on nouvelle cuisine features deconstructed, beautifully composed plates. (The kitchen also turns out a la carte dishes made famous by Loiseau, such as frogs' legs with garlic purée.)

The set lunch menu is \$76; the dinner tasting menu runs \$245.

Work off the cheese course in the garden: stroll around the gorgeous oasis of aromatic plants and flowers, take a dip in the outdoor pool (summer only) or try a game of pétanque.

The hotel's 32 French country-chic rooms and suites feature antique wood paneling, wood-beamed ceilings, red-clay tomette-tiled floor and in some cases, fireplaces and terraces.

(From \$260)



Dominique Loiseau and Patrick Bertron.

Photo: Relais Bernard Loiseau/Relais & Châteaux

3) L'Abbaye de la Bussière, La Bussière-sur-Ouche



Croquet grounds at Abbaye de la Bussière.

Photo: Abbaye de la Bussière/Relais & Châteaux

More luxe chateau than ascetic monastery, this 12th-century Cistercian abbey turned hunting lodge turned five-star hotel might be the most grand stay you'll have in all of Burgundy.

The gated property on 17 acres of lush parkland — rolling lawns, manicured hedges, ancient trees, a lake, botanical garden, even ponies — is anchored by the massive, white stone abbey.

Inside, you'll find sweeping stone staircases, impossibly high vaulted ceilings and elaborate, original stained-glass windows; the rooms (just 18 of them, as renovations are gradual) are outfitted with rich fabrics, antique furnishings and large, modern bathrooms with Jacuzzi tubs.



A grand hall is the setting for the property's restaurant, Le 1131.

Photo: Abbaye de la Bussière/Relais & Châteaux

The one-Michelin-star restaurant, Le 1131 (the date of the monastery's founding), is helmed by Emmanuel Hebrard, who changes up the menu based upon what's in season — supplementing his dishes with products from the market in nearby Dijon.

Open for dinner only, the tasting menu starts at \$103, a la carte is also available.

(From \$240)