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## The grape escape

Under pressure, overworked? Need a bit of rest and relaxation? A newly opened chateau in southern France offers a peaceful weekend break – and there's plenty to please wine buffs and foodies, too

Château Les Carrasses in the wine region of Languedoc-Roussillon ticks all the boxes for a weekend away. The approach to the chateau – a long winding road through vineyards – has an enchanting, Disney-like appearance. Although just three kilometres from the nearest town, Capestang, the chateau feels remote and utterly peaceful.

The Irish owner, who has spent the past two years renovating this 19th century wine domain and chateau estate, wanted Les Carrasses to appeal to a wide audience and has blended a five-star hotel with self-catering accommodation – the 28 units each have a kitchenette equipped with stylish appliances.

Visitors can choose between suites in the main chateau, and two- and three-bedroomed apartments in the outbuildings, most with private garden or balcony and some with private pool. All guests may use the 20-metre infinity pool.

While keen to keep traditional floor tiles and wooden beams, the renovation has introduced chic facilities and modern comforts. All units are well

appointed with quality furnishings, spacious bathrooms, flat-screen TVs, iPod docks and high-speed WiFi.

Once a busy winery, Les Carrasses will resume production this year and extensive facilities have been built into the cellars of the chateau. Wine is a major focus of activities here. Master of



### FACT FILE

**Getting there** Fly to Béziers, Perpignan, Montpellier or Carcassonne. Airlines include Ryanair, easyJet, Flybe and Transavia.

**Minimum stay** Two nights.

**Rates** From €114 (£100) a night or €900 a week for a chateau suite. Rates for a barn house with pool are €186 per night or €1,300 per week.

**Wine tastings** €30 for a two-hour session, three-day courses start at €450.

[www.lescarrasses.com](http://www.lescarrasses.com)

wine Matthew Stubbs visits to give tasting sessions in small groups, including a superb two-hour introduction to Languedoc-Roussillon wines.

Stubbs's knowledge of the region is sure to help wine lovers make the most of their stay and he can give tips on where to pick up the best bottles. Along with sommelier Cedric Legros, he will also run two- and three-day courses on harvesting, blending and wine ageing. For serious wine buffs there's the option to take a Wine & Spirit Education Trust qualification.

There are plans to introduce foodie breaks including truffle hunting and learning to cook with chestnuts. The restaurant offers a tapas-style menu using seasonal local produce.

Activities on offer will suit most guests. Laze by the pool or take a cycle for a ride along the Canal du Midi. Sportier guests can use the clay tennis court, and there are four golf courses within an hour's drive. To fully explore the region you need a car, but Les Carrasses alone will be hard to beat for a relaxing break.

Tina Nielsen

### MORE WINE GETAWAYS



#### Hotel Marqués de Riscal

La Rioja, Spain

Variety of packages on offer

Designed by architect Frank Gehry, creator of Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum, Hotel Marqués de Riscal offers a modern place of escape for wine lovers. Set in the village of Elciego in the heart of a prominent wine region, the hotel offers the chance to enjoy the vineyards and ancient cellars, indulge in gourmet restaurants or savour exceptional wines.

[www.hotel-marquesderiscal.com](http://www.hotel-marquesderiscal.com)



#### Three Choirs Vineyard

Newent, Gloucestershire

Two nights from £220

Set in 100 acres of unspoilt countryside, this estate is one of Gloucestershire's main attractions. Visitors can relax in the restaurant and enjoy the panoramic views or stroll around the vineyard and sample award-winning English wines. The 11 rooms are situated in idyllic locations, overlooking a pleasant valley or nestled among vines.

[www.three-choirs-vineyards.co.uk](http://www.three-choirs-vineyards.co.uk)



#### Le Château d'Etoges

Champagne, France

Two nights from €140

Located in the famed Champagne region, historic Château d'Etoges was once a staging post for monarchs travelling east between Paris and Strasbourg. Surrounded by 20 acres of wooded parkland, the chateau has been family-run for more than 100 years and offers a range of one-, two- and three-night packages, including wine cellar tours and tastings.

[www.chateau-etoges.com](http://www.chateau-etoges.com)