

for the sake of the *grape*

Taking advantage of a late-autumnal break, **Peter Lewsey** accompanied his family in spending four idyllic days at Chateau Les Carrasses, located in the popular Languedoc region of Southern France. A former 19th Century wine domaine, it has been extensively restored as a luxury self-catering estate and boutique winery.

The Chateau is absolutely stunning. Its exterior, seen from the driveway, is spectacular and only surpassed once you reach the classically elegant building, to touch its period stonework. A heated infinity pool is located on the terrace, to offer unrivalled panoramic views of the beautiful Languedoc countryside. Alongside is a hot tub, which is surrounded by luxury loungers and all-day pool service is available, which made it an area that, personally, I was unwilling to leave, so relaxed was I, in its warmed waters.

Residing in a simply but elegantly furnished apartment in the main Chateau, its well-equipped kitchen area meant that we could choose between dining in the brasserie, or self-preparing a relaxed meal, to consume as we wished in our charming surroundings. Mind you, as a holiday break, I have to admit that we did resort to the local pizza delivery service one evening, which was arranged for us by the concierge in the Chateau's reception area.

Naturally, we were able to order fresh croissants and bread each day, which were ready to collect from the salon in time for breakfast. Each apartment is equipped with a flat screen television, with English satellite channels and, usefully, an iPod docking station. While the Chateau iPod is loaded with pre-selected playlists and classic albums, the ability to drop one's personal music onto the system was most practical. Continuing the theme of combining the traditional with modern luxury, our bathroom was located in one of the original Chateau turrets and possessed contemporary fittings, including a large, free-standing bathtub.

The range of properties on the estate extends from the apartments and suites in the Chateau to a number of



les carrasses facts:

getting there: by train: We took the Eurostar from Kings Cross to Lille, then travelled down through France on the TGV to Béziers, just 15 minutes from the Château.

www.raileurope.co.uk;

by air: Both Ryan Air and FlyBe offer flights to Béziers from various UK airports.

www.ryanair.com,

www.flybe.com: by car: The high-speed A9, A61 and A75 motorways connect the Languedoc region to the rest of France, which makes it another practical option for travel.

further information:

www.lescarrasses.com

tel: 0845 686 8067 (UK, local rate) or +33(0)4 67 00 00 67 (International)

luxurious villas, converted and transformed from the original outbuildings and cottages, many of which boast private pools and gardens. Each property is individually designed and appointed, however, a theme of understated, elegant French chic is clearly evident throughout.

The salon is home to the brasserie and is at the heart of the Chateau itself. Dinner proved to be a genuine treat and we enjoyed a choice of well-cooked, Mediterranean inspired dishes. There is an emphasis on using locally-sourced ingredients. We even enjoyed a bottle of Les Carrasses wine.

The Chateau grounds are utterly magnificent, with a wide range of facilities and activities, including a floodlit clay tennis court and, naturally, a boulodrome, although we did not play petanque during our all too brief stay, despite the temptation. There is also a large communal barbeque area, which is ideal for sociable evenings spent with other guests.

Les Carrasses offers a range of wine-related events and experiences throughout the year. They include tasting master classes, held both at the Chateau and the premises of local wine makers, half or full-day wine experiences and a discover Languedoc tasting, taking in the major wine-makers of the broader region.

Fortunately, we do enjoy drinking wine, although we felt it important to understand more about the production processes and, most importantly, how to appreciate them, while also educating our palates. We took a tour that included trips to a couple of local winemakers, where we learned about the complexity of the processes and were given copious tasting guidance along the way, which I have to say was highly useful (as well as enjoyable) for the rest of our stay in this wonderful region of France. **10**

