

POINTS NORTH *atlanta*

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Les Carrasses is an authentic 1800s French country chateau that has been renovated to the highest standards. Every building on the property is an original part of a working winery community. Now these buildings provide the suites, apartments and villas that guests of the chateau live in relaxed luxury. Each suite has a fully equipped kitchen and is furnished with everything you need to be self-sufficient. Many guests combine a degree of self-catering while enjoying the hotel's facilities and services as well.

We were led to our apartment, which was called the "Grand Salon." It was a huge and supremely elegant apartment, decorated in a modern yet classic French style. Massive windows overlooked the terraces and infinity pool to the vineyards beyond. Our fully equipped kitchen could be completely hidden behind over-sized pocket doors. Two massive bedroom suites were beautifully appointed and each en suite bathroom had all the features and amenities one could ever want.

We started our experience with lunch on the terrace, protected from the sun by wide white sails stretched from one end to the other. To accompany the three-course prix fixe lunch that featured asparagus, goat cheese, grilled fish and a dessert of mint-enhanced fresh local strawberries, we enjoyed a bottle of Les Carrasses' own light and fruity rose wine.



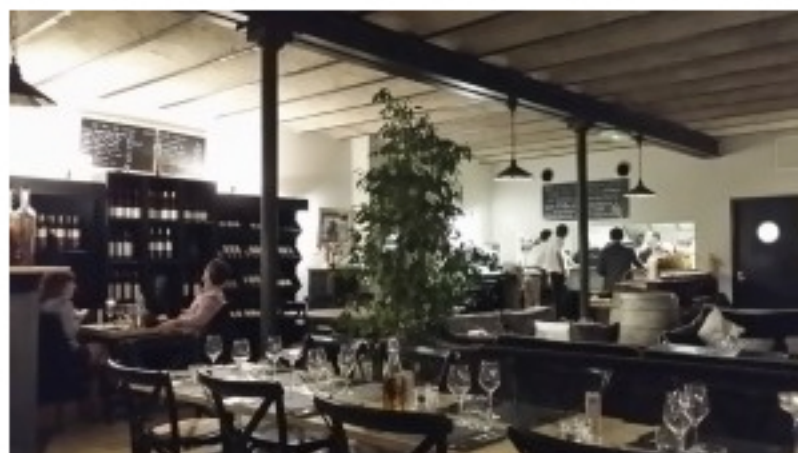
While my son and his friends spent the afternoon lounging by the heated infinity pool, I elected to sit and read in 'La Serre,' the glass-walled conservatory sitting room said to be designed by Monsieur Eiffel himself!

Dinner that night was a tapas style meal comprised of generously laden platters of seafood, cheeses, olives, breads and meat later followed by dessert platter.

Life was beautiful at Les Carrasses, which made it difficult to leave even for brief excursions. One day we managed a trip to the small winery Chateau Capitoul. Built in the late nineteenth century, the Château Capitoul is nestled in a grove of tall pine trees, offering a magnificent view over a landscape of vineyards and lakes, with the Pyrenees in the background.



We tasted an array of their wines. Stand-outs among the reds include Rocaille, a warm, spicy Languedoc blend of syrah, grenache and carignan; and Maelma, a refined and polished wine with flavors of cherries and berries, balanced with spice and minerality. We also had a chance to try their late-harvest sweet wine called "Les Oubliees" which means "forgotten," as the grapes are left long on the vines to concentrate the sugars.



As we left the "secret south of France" we were filled with happy memories of long, tranquil days offering an incredible variety of sensory experiences to soothe body, mind and spirit.