



A GOOD VINTAGE INVESTMENT

If you enjoy indulging in a good glass of wine, why not indulge a little further and buy your own vineyard?

Whilst vineyards have been in existence for hundreds of years, the opportunity rarely arises for an outsider to become involved, as businesses have tended to pass from father to son etc. However, all that is about to change, as it is now becoming easy to buy your own vineyard – starting from relatively small places where you can gain experience to the large, highly commercial properties that exist. You can even buy shares and partnerships in vineyards, giving you the opportunity to learn at first hand before committing yourself to a large investment.

History

The wine industry in Bordeaux dates back 2000 years, when the forests around Bordeaux were first cleared and planted with vines. The original vineyards were planted haphazardly until the mechanisation of farming in the horse-drawn era made it worthwhile to plant in rows.

The Gironde estuary, notably on the Médoc side had many small ports from which the wine was exported, mostly to Britain.

Bordeaux was, and is, the centre of the wine trade and is the only town on earth which has enjoyed continuous prosperity for so long thanks to trading in a single product. As such, it holds a unique place in the world for commerce, and in particular the world of wine.

Bordeaux vineyards were wiped out at the end of the 19th century by the phylloxera virus which was eventually cured by grafting vines on to American root stock. Many vineyards never re-established themselves after this and suffered further setbacks from lack of reinvestment during two World Wars in the first half of the 20th Century.

In France, the wine industry is very closely controlled. The type of grape used, how many plants per hectare and how much wine per hectare that can be produced are all under close supervision.

Wine was for centuries fermented in open wooden vats. These were replaced by huge stainless steel or concrete curves with the rise of the co-operative. The hit and miss business of fermenting grape juice into good wine is now a much better understood process and all vineyards use an oenologist who controls every aspect of the winemaking process right from the budding of the plant to the fermentation of the juice at a closely controlled temperature.

Bordeaux's appellations include; St. Emilion, Pomerol, Médoc and Sauternes. These are places of pilgrimage for wine lovers and the wine tourism trade is growing.



FINDING THE PERFECT PROPERTY

If you have been well and truly bitten by the skiing bug this season, perhaps it's time to think about buying your own property in the Alps.

Annabelle Ormond from France 23 years ago and brought up her family in the French Alps. Her children are past or present members of the British or French national ski teams and she has forged close links and intimate knowledge of all the ski resorts of the Northern French Alps. She now runs a French-based property search company, ALPS (Alpine Location Property Search), working closely with all the main agents and property developers in the resorts to find property for clients. She helps people to find the perfect place to suit their budget and requirements by sending clients details and comments on properties she visits on their behalf. She will send photos by email and videos if they wish, visit the property with you, negotiate the price on your behalf, translate and advise you right through the purchasing process, including the financial and legal side. Annabelle offers clients a complete service, including property maintenance and advice on potential rental income. Her many satisfied clients will testify that her service is well worth the 1 per cent of the purchase price which she charges if you buy through her.

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Vines and the Anglo Saxon

If you are seriously thinking of investing in your own vineyard, the good news is that there is no need to speak French.

Vintage Investments is a property company in France who have branched out into selling vineyards. They will guide you through all aspects of your purchase, from the choice of property, organising loans, transferring funds, restoration of buildings, engaging staff, winemaking, French administration and eventually the marketing and export of your wine. For further information contact: Colin Ferret on 00 33 2 99 47 83 47 or visit website:

www.homesinfrance.com