

The Grape News

Volume VI - Winter 2003 - Jan 15, 2003

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Bonjour!

First things first, we would like to officially welcome the newest addition to our family, little Camille Agnès, who, at almost a year old (has it really been that long?) isn't quite so little anymore. She is, however, along with her older sister Charlotte, keeping us from twiddling out thumbs (or even sitting down very much).

This summer she just had her first trip to Burgundy to meet *la famille* and to become indoctrinated in the Burgundian *joie de vivre*. We had also planned her baptism during our stay, but a sudden outbreak of the measles for little Camille on the appointed day put the kibosh on that. Oh well, *C'est la vie*, and it just gives us another reason to go back!



I) BUZZ airlines introduces direct London to Dijon flight

This time we tried a new routing on our trip to France. While we were planning our trip we stumbled across a new flight that has introduced by a British discount airline called "BUZZ" that goes from Stansted airport (outside of London) direct to Dijon. We thought we'd give it a try, so we planned an overnight stop at Stansted. The idea of arriving in Dijon freshly showered after a good night's sleep and a short 1hour 20 minute flight was too enticing to resist.

Unfortunately, for us, it turned out to be a better plan on paper than it was in reality. The long and the short of it is this:

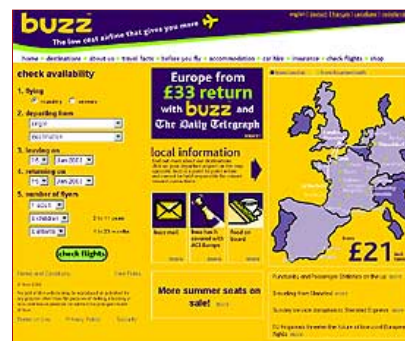
- The airport's name "London-Stansted" is a serious misnomer. It's actually located in the middle of the Essex countryside
- I'd forgotten about London's perpetually snarly traffic. Once we had arrived in Heathrow after a ten hour flight we had to wait for the bus for two hours (stuck in traffic), and then the trip from Heathrow to Stansted took three hours instead of the scheduled hour and a half (road work and traffic).
- Right now there is only one hotel at the airport (a Hilton), which, despite its' small grungy rooms has no compunctions about making the most of its monopoly position and charges a scandalous \$400.00 a night.
- This last point is unique to our set of circumstances - because we were shoehorned into a tiny hotel room with a five month old and a two year old who were still on West Coast time, sleep was, sadly, not in the cards for Franck or I. This made the \$400.00 shelled out for the hotel room all the more irksome

So, for those of you traveling direct from North America with kids, learn from our experience!

However, there were some very good things about the BUZZ flight that made us conclude that if you were already staying in London for a few days on either end of your stay in Burgundy, it might just be the ideal route to travel.

If you are not traveling with children or a lot of luggage, there is a train link to Stansted from London which is supposedly very good and fast.

- Stansted is a lovely, brand new airport with all the amenities one could wish for.
- BUZZ airlines itself was great; clean, friendly crew, nice planes. You have to pay extra for food and drinks as it is an economy airline, but it's such a short flight it really doesn't matter.



A new option for cheap flights to Dijon and Europe from England!

- The ticket was CHEAP, a lot less expensive than taking the Eurostar!
- It is absolutely brilliant to arrive directly in Dijon. Only a half hour's drive and you are at La Maison des Deux Clochers.
- My parents took the BUZZ flight back to London where they were staying with family for a few days on the flight back to Canada after a little *séjour* at the house. They were thrilled with the price and the convenience. For more information, go to BUZZ's website www.buzzaway.com. If anyone is planning on trying this routing out, don't hesitate to give us a call or send us an email and we can help you with any questions you may have.

II) A Little History Lesson



I found out some new things about Magny-les-Villers' history when we were there, thanks to a little insert in the local paper. As I found the little tidbits quite interesting, I thought I'd share them with you. Now inhabited by 240 (236 when the Maison des Deux Clochers is empty!) people, Magny-les-Villers used to be located closer to its' closest neighbour Villers-la-Faye than it is now (the two villages are now only 700 metres apart). Around 761a.d. Magny was located in

the dip between the two villages, just about where you can now find [the little chapel](#) dedicated to the Virgin Mary that was built during the German occupation in WW II. The village was moved to its' present site on the hill sometime after the great plague in the eleventh century.

The church of Magny, *l'église Saint Martin*, dates from the twelfth century and has a unique roof structure that, from the interior, is built like the upside down hull of a boat. The church houses well-preserved wooden statues from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and you will notice that on the floor near the alter there are tombstones that date from the fifteenth and sixteenth century. It is fascinating to try and decipher the old French written on them.

Of course, La Maison des Deux Clochers boasts the best view of the church in all of Magny-les-Villers. The kitchen, Living Room, and Bedroom windows all look directly onto its warm façade. I urge everyone who stays at the house to wander across to the church and go inside and explore. It is a little gem, and it is open almost every day. This summer I watched three weddings from our Living Room window!

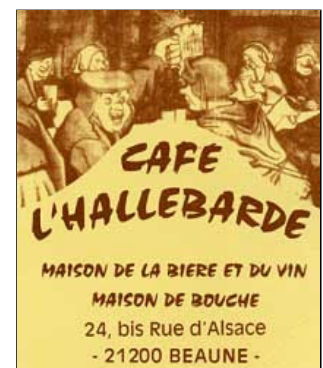


In the next issue of the Grape News, I am going to give a little history of Magny's favorite neighbour, Villers-La-Faye.

III) New Restaurant - L'Hallebarde

Looking for a casual place to go for dinner in Beaune? You can't get much more rustic that L'Hallebarde, a *Maison de la Bière* (beer house), that styles itself as a medieval tavern. Jeans are *de rigueur*, and the waitresses are decked out as "wenches" in peasant skirts and big leather belts with lots of bottle-opening implements hanging off them. It is a fun place, and a refreshing change from the rarified atmosphere that typifies so many restaurants in Beaune.

L'Hallebarde has an excellent selection of specialty beers - many of them brewed in monasteries in Belgium. Much to our surprise, the type of beer we ordered came in foot high glasses (they were very thin glasses, so still contain about a pint). We got some very strange looks from the people at the surrounding tables - but thoroughly enjoyed our beverages and felt pleasantly like we were at Oktoberfest. The restaurant also serves an artisanally brewed Mead, not something one gets the chance to try every day! We didn't - preoccupied as we were with trying to figure out how to drink from our towering beer glasses, but I later heard from the locals that it is very good.



The food is made to go along with the beers, and is very rustic and simple as well. This is not a restaurant to go to if you are looking for "lite" cuisine. I had a *salad aux quenelles de chèvre* which was very large and satisfying, followed by melted *époisse* over potatoes with *lardons*. This kind of dish is the Burgundian equivalent of soul food, and it warmed me down to my toes. Franck had a lovely steak, and *moules* for an appetizer. Although we have prodigious appetites, we couldn't ingest another particle of food, so had to take a pass on the dessert menu which looked very interesting. There seemed to be lots of desserts that were based on blackcurrant (*cassis*) and honey.

The bill was not shockingly expensive, about \$40.00 for the two of us. We both felt it was quite reasonable for the quality and quantity of the food (and drink!). So out we rolled onto the Rue d'Alsace, with full tummies and relaxed dispositions. Give it a go!

Café L'Hallebarde

Maison de la Bière et du Vin / Maison de Bouche
24, bis Rue d'Alsace
21200 BEAUNE

Tel: 03.80.22.07.68
Fax: 03.80.24.17.18

IV) The village of Flavigny



Ever since Franck and I saw the movie [Chocolat](#) we have been meaning to visit the Burgundian village of Flavigny. When we sat down on the couch and watched the opening credits, there was an aerial shot of the village, and Franck jumped up and pointed "That's filmed in Burgundy".

Right he was! Flavigny, located in the Northern part of the Côte D'Or, has also recently been voted as one of the most beautiful villages in France. Most of *Chocolat* was filmed there, and it is a fascinating village to visit.

Besides its beauty and medieval remains, the village is also renowned for the production of little licorice candies (anis de Flavigny) which have become famous in France and abroad. Franck has fond memories of driving down from Flavigny, where his parents would occasionally stop to purchase bulk bags of the candies, prodigiously ill as he had eaten too many too fast. Yes, that French *goumandise* will get you every time.

A Bit of History

Settled since the Gallo-Roman era, the *Abbaye* (monastery) that has always been a hub for life in Flavigny was founded in 719. The *Abbaye* quickly became one of the most influential in France, and was visited by many notable figures, including Charlemagne. The monks of Flavigny were renowned for the beautiful illustrated manuscripts they produced.

The *Abbaye* of Flavigny continued to enjoy wealth and prosperity until the Revolution, when the revolutionaries sold the monastery to the inhabitants of Flavigny, who booted out the five remaining monks and moved themselves in.

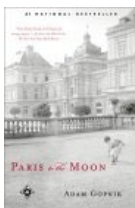
At the end of the 19th Century all of the independent producers of the "anis de Flavigny" grouped together to form one manufacturer centered in the *Abbaye*. Today the manufacturing is owned by the family TROUBAT who produce 250 tones of bonbons every year, 30% of which are exported abroad: America, Canada, Chile, Brazil, Japan and the other EC countries among others.

Flavigny is really worth a halt. The medieval buildings are fascinating remarkably well-preserved, not to mention the fact that you can swan around for hours and pretend you are Juliette Binoche or Johnny Depp. Top this off with delicious local bonbons and how could you resist?



V) New Section of "[French Favorites](#)" on MyBurgundy.com

We have added a fledgling section to our website which list and review our favorite French books, videos, and music. The section includes direct links so that you can purchase any of the items through Amazon.com via our site. In the months to come we'll be adding many more items to this section of the website, but in the meantime we are going to highlight one of my new favorite books about France, destined to be a classic in my humble opinion:



PARIS TO THE MOON by Adam Gopnik

[Buy it now from Amazon.com!](#)

This is my latest favorite book on France. Gopnik, a celebrated writer for the New Yorker was offered a plushy assignment as the writer of "Paris Journals" for that magazine from 1995 to 2000. He is a superlative writer, and expounds on many of the things that make Paris its dazzling and frustrating self: neighborhood brasseries, the café lifestyle, endless administrative hoops to jump through, insane politics, and the gently worn *manège* in the Luxembourg Gardens.

His subtle style is totally different than that of someone like Peter Mayle, and it's a nice contrast to read both Gopnik's and Mayle's accounts of expatriate life in France.

VI) New Articles from Laura & Franck

We have added two more of our published articles about France to the website for your reading pleasure:

The first is about the market in Louhans, where the specialty is blue-footed (or is that feeted!?) chickens

- <http://www.myburgundy.com/burgundy/articles/louhans.htm>

The second is a more general article about Wine Travel on a budget - a subject near and dear to our hearts!

- <http://www.myburgundy.com/burgundy/articles/budget.htm>

VII) Availability

Last but not least, a word about availability for 2003. We have booked about five weeks so far for 2003, but now that Christmas is over we are getting a big jump in inquiries. If the past three years is any indication, we tend to get a flurry of bookings in late January and February. If you want to book for the most popular months (May through to October) we would recommend alacrity!

As always, you can contact us at any time about any questions or concerns, no matter how obscure!

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And, finally BONNE ANNÉE 2003!!!

