

The Grape News

Volume XV - Winter 2009



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Read about an original new take on Burgundian biking and running holidays - courtesy of Franck.
- [La Maison des Chaumes](#)
We are now taking bookings for our newest rental - **La Maison des Chaumes** - the house in France that we selfishly designed for ourselves!
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- [The Beaune Cellar](#)
Our Beaune wine cellar will soon be up and running. How would you like to age your precious bottles in a proper 13th Century wine cave?
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- [The Cook's Atelier](#)
A wonderful new option for Grape Rental guests who are interested in incorporating cooking classes, market tours, or culinary excursions into their Burgundian adventures.
- [Winemaker in Residence](#)
Read up on Marc-Olivier Buffet's (from the Domaine Buffet in Volnay) take on the 2008 vintage. Marc-Olivier's report can also be read in its original French version for those of you who want to brush up on your French wine terminology.
- [Restaurant Review](#)
It would be a travesty to come to the Beaune area and not eat at least one meal in a proper wine cellar. Here are two very different, but equally delicious, suggestions.
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- [VI Nations Tournament](#)
If you are planning a trip to France next winter, join in the fun of this legendary rugby tournament.
- [French Favorites](#)
Check out the newest additions to our Amazon "French Favorites" store; new French CDs, two highly recommended French phrasebooks, and the introduction of Laura's (and Clémentine's) pet project - French Baby Essentials. It's time to give those babies in your life an early start in Frenchitude.
- [Grape Seeds](#)
Useful stuff & tidbits
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The latest update on availability for all four properties, plus contact information if you'd like further information or to make a booking.



For a printer friendly version of The Grape News [click here](#).
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Bonjour tout le monde,

Franck and I are very proud of ourselves. Despite having a baby / toddler hybrid roaring around the house we have managed to pull together a Winter edition of the Grape News! Our goal is to get out four issues each year, one per season (because life in Burgundy is all about the distinct seasons, after all). We are delighted to be on track for once.

However, as you can read below the Grape News is far from the only project we've been working on...

I) GRAPE TRIPS - Bike Burgundy Like a Native!

In our New Year's email we introduced Franck's newest venture - "Grape Trips". During a "Grape Trip" guests will stay at one of our four properties for a week and be treated to the following:

- Custom bike rentals for the duration of their stay, delivered to the properties;
- Guided biking from the house to explore the vineyards and villages of Burgundy;
- Biking will be punctuated with exclusive winetastings, guided by Franck and his local winemaking friends. At least one of these will take place in the vineyard where the grapes for the wine are actually grown;
- The discovery of rustic restaurants that are definitely off the tourist track, as well as picnics in beautiful, hidden spots.

As groups will always be kept small, Franck is always able to fully customize Grape Trips according to the interests, fitness levels, and desires of his guests. The first few guests will benefit from a special reduced price just to get the ball rolling. To ask any questions, get a quote, or enquire about availability, just contact us at laura@graperentals.com.

Franck is also planning future trips for runners, or for anyone who wants to participate in one of Burgundy's many wonderful wine-related 10K, half-marathons, or marathons - see Wine & Running in our previous release:

<http://www.graperentals.com/newsletter/Vol14.html#7>

There is also the possibility to build a Grape Trip around hiking and walking. Again, just contact us for further information.



Discovering Burgundy's back roads and working up a thirst for the next fabulous winetasting!

II) LA MAISON DES CHAUMES

La Maison des Chaumes, the house we have selfishly created for ourselves here in Burgundy, is now available for bookings. We are leaving France at the end of July, so availability begins August 1st, 2009. We are finishing the final bits and bobs and fun projects like installing out turquoise *portail* (front gate) so that when we direct people to the house we can just say "turn at the wine press, and it's the house with the turquoise *portail*."

This house has a myriad of fabulous features (we did design it for ourselves, after all) such as a grassy garden area, a huge wraparound deck to enjoy outdoor living and eating during Burgundy's many warm days, a newly renovated gourmet kitchen designed and equipped for passionate cooks such as Franck and I, and much, much more. We've now created a page on our website www.graperentals.com for **La Maison des Chaumes**, and I will keep adding updated photos as we complete all those special, final touches that we are known for. To have a look, just click here:

<http://www.graperentals.com/properties/mdc.html>

We rented **La Maison des Chaumes** last summer while we were in Canada and here is what our first guest had to say:

"Much to our dismay three weeks of a wonderful vacation have come to an end: what a welcoming, well-equipped house amidst the vineyards of Burgundy! Literally everything was extremely well taken care of and the position of the house was truly ideal for walking, visiting, and bike trips... Merci pour tout!!!"

Marlene Kayen and granddaughters - Freiburg, Germany



III) FROM THE 2008 GUESTBOOK

Our Grape Rental properties continue to garner rave reviews, as you can read for yourselves in a few quotes from our 2008 guests:

LA MAISON DES DEUX CLOCHERS

"We had an unforgettable time here. Since the beginning, with your welcome note and bottle of wine, we felt at a special home - cozy and warm.

The silence in the village and the comfort in the house has allowed us to reconnect to ourselves and our family. We enjoyed the village colours, the flowers, the church view, the hens and chickens across the street, the sound of the bell...all those little things that became our distractions and amusements during our stay.

We leave with great memories and thank you for that. Warm regards and "Obrigada!"

Gisleine, Pedro, Luiza e Bruno Silveira - São Paulo, Brazil

"This is a beautiful little spot amidst the wonderful grape vines. I really must say "merci" for such a well-appointed house. Great kitchen and beautiful furniture and fantastic shower. We were wonderfully spoiled! "

Dawna & Yves Berube - Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada



LA MAISON DE LA VIEILLE VIGNE

"We hope to return to La Maison de la Vieille Vigne for much longer than a week. A month in France is not enough! We have loved going to the local markets (Nuits-Saint-Georges on Friday and Beaune on Saturday), bringing home all the lovely food, having a cozy fire, a glass of wine, TV (just a little), a heavenly sleep, awakening late, then coffee and fresh croissants (from just across the street!).

The kitchen has everything to cook and serve a great meal – I have so enjoyed cooking in it. We have made this house our home for 7 days - thank you for all the hard work to preserve the old and yet have all the modern comforts for us."

Carl and Faye Foster - Warrenton, Virginia, USA

"Thanks for providing such a wonderful little fairy tale cottage for our visit to Burgundy. The location of Villers-la-Faye could not be more perfect and having fresh croissants only 50 feet from the front door was a welcome treat every morning. This is such a beautiful and peaceful place...we can't wait to come back for an extended stay some day soon!"

Steve and Rhonda Dunham - Long Beach, California, USA

LE RELAIS DU VIEUX BEAUNE

"Our stay here has been spectacular, and we are already talking about staying a month next time. Thank you for such a lovely place to rest our heads (and cook our blue-footed chickens)."

Meredith Durhin & Collin Wolfe - Chicago, Illinois, USA

"Wonderful stay! Undoubtedly the best place we rented during our stay in France (Alsace, the Luberon, then Burgundy). Beautiful apartment. We are ready to move to Burgundy!"

Erin & Jeremy Ansell - Johannesburg, South Africa

IV) THE BEAUNE CELLAR - Become A Member

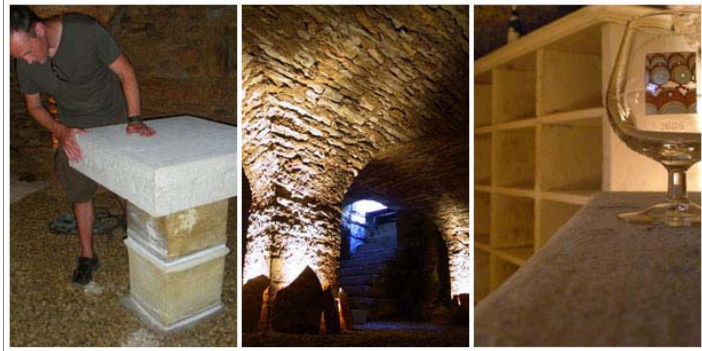
The restoration of our 13th Century vaulted stone wine cellar located under **Le Relais du Vieux Beaune** has been going flat out. The tasting table is mounted, the shelves have been poured and assembled, the ancient stone sink is ready to be mounted, and now the metal gates enclosing each private store of wine have arrived and are just waiting to be installed.

There are 18 separate, locked storage spaces in total. We have already had several groups of guests leave us wine to store in the Beaune cellar as soon as it is finished, so if you are interested in renting a spot let us know sooner rather than later as space is limited.

We are officially baptizing the cellar this May and will bestow it a name during the ceremony. We will be announcing the cellar's official name in our Spring issue of The Grape News.

Members of the cellar will have their own key to let themselves in the cellar and access their wine whenever they want. They also will enjoy free and unlimited use of the cellar for tastings and entertaining.

Frequent updates will be posted on my blog, and of course you can always contact Franck and I for more information.



V) THE GRAPE JOURNAL RIPENS

I continue to have, as Camille would say in her heavily accented English, "too much fun!" with my blog, which can be found at www.grapejournal.blogspot.com. I'll be making lots of improvements over the next few months which will make it not only prettier, but easier to find specific posts. I am thrilled to see via my much beloved "dot" map that I am developing a dedicated following for my regular weekly posts; **Authentic France Travel Tips Tuesdays**:

[http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Authentic France Travel Tips](http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Authentic%20France%20Travel%20Tips)

And **Frenchitude Fridays**:

[http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Frenchitude Fridays](http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Frenchitude%20Fridays)

I have also tried to organize my posts into categories as much as possible, and have added two new ones since our last Grape News; **"Parenting the French Way"**:

[http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Parenting the French Way](http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Parenting%20the%20French%20Way)

Which collects all my parenting / children related posts, and **"Snapshots of French Life"**:

[http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Snapshots of French Life](http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/search/label/Snapshots%20of%20French%20Life)

Which is a rowdy collection of miscellaneous posts that reflect our family's life in France in all its chaotic glory.

And *oui, oui, oui*, I definitely will be continuing my Grape Journal blog when we return to Canada this summer. Franck and I always consider ourselves as having one foot in Canada and one foot in France, no matter which country considers us residents for tax purposes! Besides, I have pages and pages of ideas for both the Frenchitude posts and Authentic France Travel Tips that I still have to use. Anyway, the culture shock posts alone could fuel their own blog!

VI) THE COOK'S ATELIER

We have recently made the acquaintance of Marjorie Taylor, an experienced cook and restaurant owner who has relocated to Burgundy in search of culinary and slow food nirvana.

She has created a company aptly named "The Cook's Atelier" which encompasses the range of services she can offer independent travelers, such as our Grape Rental guests, staying in Burgundy. She is the perfect person to take you on a market tour in Beaune or one of the neighboring villages, or to conduct an intimate and fun cooking class at any of the Grape Rental properties which includes a fabulous meal afterwards. Marjorie can also help you live out your dream of an à la carte culinary excursion (exploring the many facets of Burgundian cheese, *par exemple*).

After spending time with Marjorie I can whole-heartedly recommend her to any of our guests. I am convinced that for food-lovers taking her up on one of her fabulous offerings really adds a tasty dimension to a stay in Burgundy.



Have a look at Marjorie's beautiful website for the offerings of "The Cook's Atelier" and to find out rates. You can either contact Marjorie directly or contact us and we will pass on your email or message to her.

Here is the link to Marjorie's website: http://www.thecooksatelier.com/Site_1/Home.html

VII) WINEMAKER IN RESIDENCE

We meet up again with our winemaker in residence, Marc-Olivier Buffet, who shares his opinion on the 2008 vintage. To brush up on your "wine" French and read Marc-Olivier's original report, just click on the link at the bottom.

IN VINO VERITAS

by Marc-Olivier BUFFET

Domaine François Buffet, Volnay

<http://www.bourgogne-buffet.com>

"2008 was certainly the "Year of Living Dangerously" but it was also a year of great rewards. Growing grapes and making wine in Burgundy was an extremely complicated affair in 2008 due to constant humidity, but fortuitously the windy, cold, and dry weather just before the harvest saved the vintage. This exceptional harvest weather could be, according to the older "specialists" in Burgundy, explained by the fact that 2008 is a year with 13 moons.

The winter was generally wet and mild, however there were a few nights when the thermometer dipped below zero which meant that the growing season did not take off fast or early.

After that, the Spring was very humid which multiplied problems with mildew, especially near the end of the growing season. While walking through the vineyards one could see that many of the vine's leaves had a burnt look and colour to them.

The 2008 harvest began on September 25th. Thankfully the dry pre-harvest weather allowed for a normal period of maturation. The 2008 vintage was not only saved, but is also looking to be of very high quality. Some say it might be as notable as 2005, although it is still a bit too early to tell. In any case, its colours are very rich and the tannins very mature.

Now, off to tend to the 2009 vintage!"

In French click here:

http://www.myburgundy.com/burgundy/grapenews/vol15_french.htm



VIII) RESTAURANT REVIEW

This month I will review two Beaune restaurants that are located in traditional vaulted stone cellars. Though these two restaurants are very different, I personally think it would be a bit of a travesty to visit Burgundy and to not experience eating in a wine cellar at least once.

Le Caveau des Arches

10 Boulevard Perpeuil

21200 Beaune

Tel: 03.80.22.10.37

E-mail : info@caveau-des-arches.com

Website : www.caveau-des-arches.com

Reservations recommended / Closed Sundays and Mondays.

We've been to this restaurant several times with guests, and it is a fine address for a taste of traditional Burgundian fare in a refined, though not at all snobby, atmosphere.

The double vaulted stone cellar has been beautifully renovated, and the food is prepared and served with the same elegant simplicity. Budget around 15-20 Euros for a *prix fixe* menu, and definitely try their *escargots*, which although delicious at the best of times seem to taste even better underground.



Le Caveau Saint-Jacques

3 Place Saint-Jacques

21200 Beaune

Tel: 03.80.22.84.66

This is, to put it simply, a French pizza joint. However, two things set it apart from most other pizza joints. First, you can nosh on your pizzas inside a vaulted stone cellar which is lovely and cozy in the winter and refreshingly cool in the summer. Secondly, the pizzas are freaking amazing; thin crusted, generously topped, and served piping hot. If you're a goat's cheese maniac like I am, I can highly recommend that one.

We took Charlotte here for her last Birthday dinner and we all had a delicious pizza meal. Despite the fact that Charlotte, being my daughter, ordered one of their towering ice cream creations for desert the bill was eminently reasonable. You should budget the pizzas as being around 10.00 Euros or so, depending on the toppings you choose. They also have good *prix fixe* menus for lunch and dinner with pizza / salad combos, etc.

A bonus for any guests staying in our ever-popular **Relais du Vieux Beaune**, you can call and order a pizza to be delivered to your door by moped.



IX) ALEX GAMBAL WINERY

We have discovered this local Beaune winery during the past year and we really feel that it is worth highlighting. Alex Gambal's story is fascinating. First of all, he's an American. Anyone who knows Beaune can tell you that any American who succeeds in penetrating into the closely defended local wine industry deserves a doff of the hat.

He fell in love with Burgundy and with Burgundy's wine in the early 1990s, came to learn everything he could about it at the prestigious wine school in Beaune, and then with an admirable tenacity went about setting up his own Domaine.

We have been to two tastings at Alex Gambal, and both times we were thoroughly impressed with the wines which, right from the most basic "Bourgogne" to the *Premiers Crus*, expressed their unique *terroir* in a pure, unadorned way. Despite being such a roaring success that you have to pre-order Alex's wine several years ahead of time, he insists on keeping his output small. This way he never risks losing the high quality that has become emblematic of his wine or adversely affecting the Burgundian vineyards and countryside that he fell in love with almost twenty years ago.

Sophie, the wife of Alex's winemaker Fabrice, heads up most of the tastings. She is French but speaks superb English. Much of the tasting done at Alex Gambal are from the barrel (where the wine is drawn directly out of the barrel with a glass pipe, called a *pipette*) which are a lot of fun. Check out his website for more information and the phone number to call to make an appointment for a tasting.

Here is the link to Alex Gambal's website: <http://www.alexgambal.com>



X) CHATEAU DE LA ROCHEPOT

If I have family or friends visiting us here in Burgundy, I always try to take them to visit the nearby **Chateau de la Rochepot**.

Granted, as far as chateaux visits go we are spoiled for choice in this area of Burgundy. So many of the nearby chateaux are wonderful; the Chateau de Savigny with its huge airplane, motorcycle, and plane collection, the majestic **Chateauneuf** which overlooks the Burgundy Canal, or the neighbouring **Chateau de Gilly** for a nightcap in the most refined atmosphere imaginable.

Still, I always end up taking people to Chateau de La Rochepot. *Pourquoi?* First of all, the drive there isn't very long – only about 15 minutes from Beaune. Secondly, the route winds through our beautiful local winemaking villages, vineyards, and past rolling verdant pastures where white *Charolais* cattle munching the green, green grass. Thirdly, it is such a typically Burgundian chateau with its polished coloured tiles and imposing medieval battlements. Lastly, the scale of the chateau and the length of the excellent tour which lasts about an hour is just perfect; long enough so that you feel like you have learned something fascinating, but not so long that you are completely saturated by information.

To find out more just visit the website <http://www.larochepot.com>, or you can always contact Franck or I for more information.



XI) VI NATIONS TOURNAMENT

Franck and I are still on a high from attending our first (but certainly not our last) VI Nations Rugby game at the Stade de France. The trophy of this classic rugby Tournament is fought over on the pitch by the national teams of France, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Italy.

The beauty of the VI Nations is that these games are not only about rugby, but about the cultural clashes and centuries old rivalry between these European nations.

Although the France vs. Scotland game we watched was not the most spectacular of matches, the atmosphere is worth the ticket price alone, no matter what the score.

Imagine beret-wearing Frenchmen and kilt wearing Scots sitting side by side, each roaring at their team in their respective languages, and competing in rousing renditions of "The Flower of Scotland" and "La Marseillaise". Let me tell you, it is an experience not to be missed.

Now that we have done it ourselves, Franck and I can tell you all of our tips for finding the best priced tickets, where to sit, and the easiest way to get back and forth to the Stade de France. Besides the lower winter rates, the VI Nations Tournament is another great reason to visit France in January, February, and March!



Laura in Paris at the VI Nations Scotland-France match, reconnecting with her Scottish brethren.

XII) FRENCH FAVORITES

We continue to add our favorite French items; movies, books, CDs, and even French baby essentials to the "French Favorites" Amazon shop on our website - see: <http://www.graperentals.com/store.html>. This month here are some of our new additions:

Avenue Montaigne

originally entitled "Fauteils d'Orchestre"

I just watched this film for about the fourth time recently, and it has to be one of my favorite French films of the moment (and that's saying something).

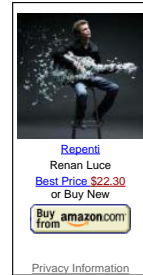
Cécile de France, who you may have met in the fabulous "L'Auberge Espagnol" plays a down-on-her luck girl from near-by Mâcon who tries to find a new life for herself in the rarified surroundings of Avenue Montaigne in Paris. On her way she meets a frustrated TV actress (the French comic goddess Valerie Lemerrier), a disenchanted concert pianist (the riveting Albert Dupontel) and the intellectual son of a millionaire...

**Repenti**

Renan Luce

Renan Luce is one of France's hottest new music stars. His songs, like "Les Voisines" and "La Lettre" are as light and fanciful as lace underthings drying in a soft spring breeze.

You cannot stay in a winter funk for long listening to this fabulous breakthrough album.

**French: Lonely Planet Phrasebook**

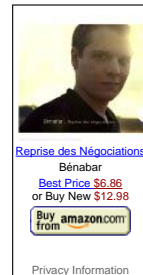
One of the most efficient and compact phrase books around, written in that typical no-nonsense, down-and-dirty style that we all love from Lonely Planet.

**Reprise des Négociations**

Benabar

Benabar is one of my very favorite French singer-songwriters. His social commentary is always mordant but never cynical.

Just TRY listening to one of his perfectly etched songs such as "Le Dîner" without having a smile plastered all over your face.

**French Phrase Book (Eyewitness Guides)**

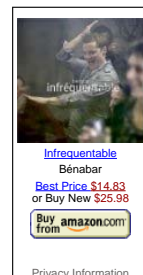
Definitely one of the most beautiful phrasebooks around, and pretty effective too. A pleasure for the eyes and the mind - just as the French like it!

**Infrequentable**

Benabar

Benabar's previous CD is a masterpiece of wry humour set to catchy melodies. This follow-up; "Infrequentable" is no different.

I bought this CD for the hilarious tongue-in-cheek title and cover shot alone. Who hasn't, under the influence of one too many drinks, put on what we believed at the time was a rockin' show on the dance floor, thinking we look like Beyoncé when in fact we look like a complete arse? Benabar has been there.

**French Baby Essentials**

And last but not least, my favorite category – French Baby Essentials. Since putting out our last Grape News I have been slowly adding what I feel are essential French baby items; divinely soft Petit Bateau onsies, a plastic Sophie *la giraffe*, and of course lovely soft *doudous*. Perfect if you have a new baby in your life and want to introduce them to [Frenchitude](#) as early as possible.

Sophie la Giraffe Teether

My very French friend Charlotte buys only one thing for her new babies-to-be when she is pregnant - this classic squeazy giraffe named Sophie, which no French child would be without.

**XIII) GRAPE SEEDS - useful things & tidbits**

- The ground has now been broken and building has commenced for the new inter-village school just a five minute walk behind **La Maison des Chaumes** in Villers-la-Faye. This complex will house playschool through to Grade 5, a lunchtime cafeteria, before and after school care, and holiday activity programs. As always, I encourage people to consider taking a sabbatical year to France, especially if they have young school-aged children. Just email me directly if you have any questions at all about one of life's greatest adventures.
- Jacky's has been purchased by a young family in the restaurant business! They are beginning work and are planning on opening a new restaurant in the old Jacky space...stay tuned.
- If you enjoy tennis or basketball, Magny-les-Villers had refurbished their basketball / tennis court and it is a great place to go and while away a few sweaty hours before retiring with a chilled glass of *Aligoté*.

XIV) AVAILABILITIES

I'm hearing lots of dirges lately about how the trans-galactic economy is going to hell in a handbasket, but from where I sit it seems to me that independent travelers the world over still need their France fix and understand the wonderful value that self-catering vacation rentals provide. Even though we are barely into 2009, the year is filling up very quickly.

You can now consult our online availability calendar for all four houses, including **La Maison des Chaumes** which is available for rent as of August 1, 2009, here:

<http://www.graperentals.com/availability/vvavailability.html>

I'm trying my best to update this at least once a week, however during busy periods like I have been experiencing since Christmas it is challenging to keep up with all the new bookings. Cancellations and changes are part of the game, so if you have any doubts or questions, or would like a definitively up-to-date answer on availability, just email me directly at laura@graperentals.com. We are also beginning to take bookings for 2010 now. As always, if you want specific dates or are planning on a longer stay, the earlier you can book, the better!

Here is the remaining availability for 2009 as it stands at the time of publication:

LA MAISON DES DEUX CLOCHERS

(2 bedroom village house in Magny-les-Villers / between 450 and 650 Euros a week)



Availabilities:

- February, March, and up until April 22nd
- May 4th – 10th
- June 30th – July 7th
- July 20th – August 26th
- From October 29th into the Fall

LA MAISON DE LA VIEILLE VIGNE

(1 bedroom village house in Villers-la-Faye / between 500 and 600 Euros a week)



Availabilities:

- February 15th – April 5th
- April 25th – May 2nd
- June 9th – September 2nd
- September 29th into the Fall

LE RELAIS DU VIEUX BEAUNE

(2 bedroom apartment in heart of medieval Beaune / between 600 and 800 Euros a week)



Availabilities:

- February 15th to March 5th
- March 17th to March 26th
- April 21st – 28th
- August 7th – 23rd
- September 22nd – October 7th
- October 27th into the Fall

LE MAISON DES CHAUMES

(2-3 bedroom village house with attached deck and garden in Villers-la-Faye / between 600 and 900 Euros a week)



Availabilities:

- August 1st – September 4th
- October 2nd into the Fall

To find out any further information about any of the properties, traveling to Burgundy, or making a booking, don't hesitate to contact me at any time by email at laura@myburgundy.com

Or by phone in France at (33) 3.80.62.72.17

A Bietntôt!

Laura & Franck