



Cari Gray of bespoke travel business Gray & Co. offers her favorite places to shop, wine, and dine in Beaune, France.
Photo: Alamy

Know Your Fixer: Gray & Co.

An insider guide to insider guides from around the world

by Andrew Sessa - 05.24.2013



Not only is Cari Gray the kind of gal you want to have plan your next holiday, you want her to come along for the ride, too. So it's a good thing that she personally escorts well over half of the bespoke walking-and-biking adventures she arranges for high-flying guest who include such prominent personalities as newsman Tom Brokaw and a handful of US ambassadors.

A 15-year veteran of the active-travel specialists Butterfield & Robinson, the Canadian-born, Los Angeles- and Toronto-based Gray struck out on her own five years ago, starting with trips to South Africa and Chile. And although she now covers the world, she has a particular expertise in, and excitement about, France. Her favorite part of the country is the prime wine region of Burgundy, where she first led biking trips for B&R back in 1990 and to which **Gray & Co.** ventured on its third outing.

The medieval village of Beaune, the region's capital, remains a Gray favorite. As the epicenter of the Côte de Beaune — one of the best grape-growing districts in a region already known for its incredible terroirs — the town is a must-see, and makes a great home base from which to explore the entire area (and its 33 grand cru wines).

Here, Gray's food- and wine-focused picks for what's bonne in Beaune.

L'Hôtel de Beaune

In the heart of Beaune, this gem of a boutique stay with seven rooms in the main 19th-century maison and three more in a lovely annex excels at highly personalized service. At the terrific **Bistro de l'Hôtel** next door (run by Johan Björklund, the chef-owner of both restaurant and hotel), be sure to have the chicken with mashed potatoes, or the farm chicken, or the poulet de Bresse... or the steak frites. All divine!

Athenaeum

Gray always stops in this store, opposite the **Hospices de Beaune** museum, for books in a variety of languages, plus cards, posters, maps, and an endless supply of wine-related gifts that go well beyond corkscrews (though they have those as well). You'll find a surprising array of toys, too, and they also sell a certain crème de cassis from Lucien Jacob — a Gray favorite.

Caves Madeleine

This warm and cozy restaurant offers a well-curated menu, with Burgundian specialties guaranteed. The simple fare is always great — and reasonably priced. Best of all, the place does double duty as a wine shop. Be sure to lean on the expertise of super-amiable and savvy owner Laurent (Lolo) Brelin: He's the guy to trust when making decisions on pricey Romanée-Conti, La Tâche, and similar high-end wines.

Saturday Market

A gastronomic fantasia of roast chickens, stinky cheeses, cured meats, and fresh seasonal fruit, this weekly morning marché is, in Gray's words, outstanding. She insists it's worth planning your entire trip around.

Pâtisserie Bouché

Tucked away just off the town's main square, Place Carnot, this nearly century-old bakery sells the best sweet confections in Beaune. Madame Bouché makes Gray's absolute favorite almond croissants in the entire world.



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