



48 HOURS IN

Bordeaux

TASTE · DISCOVER · LINGER

EUROPEAN SERIES

Welcome to Bordeaux.

Bordeaux spent the 2000s quietly transforming itself from a soot-stained provincial wine town into one of France's most elegant cities, and the renovation shows in every honey-colored limestone façade along the Garonne. This is the “Port of the Moon” — named for the crescent bend the river carves through the city — and it earned its full UNESCO World Heritage listing not for a single monument but for the whole 18th-century urban ensemble: uniform stone façades, wide boulevards, and a riverfront that was, until relatively recently, hidden behind a highway.

What Bordeaux has that no other city on this itinerary has: the world's largest reflecting pool at Place de la Bourse, the Miroir d'Eau, turning the square into a mirror twice a day; La Cité du Vin, a genuinely excellent interactive wine museum that makes the subject accessible to total novices; a wine culture so central that a solo glass at a wine bar is the default evening activity, not a special occasion; and Saint-Émilion, one of the world's great wine regions, close enough for a half-day escape.

Bordeaux rewards solo travelers who slow down. Watch the Miroir d'Eau catch the Place de la Bourse at sunrise. Wander Saint-Pierre's medieval lanes without an agenda. Sit at a wine bar counter and let someone pour you a flight. Take the train out to Saint-Émilion for an afternoon among the vines. This is the itinerary.

DAY ONE

Day One — Place de la Bourse · Saint-Pierre · Saint-André Cathedral

Day One covers Bordeaux's riverfront and historic core on foot — the reflecting pool, the medieval Saint-Pierre district, and the city's Gothic cathedral.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Place de la Bourse & the Miroir d'Eau

Riverfront, central Bordeaux. Free, always open. The 18th-century Place de la Bourse is Bordeaux's signature image; the Miroir d'Eau in front of it is the world's largest reflecting pool, alternating between a thin water mirror and a rolling mist every 15 minutes.

INSIDER TIP

Come at sunrise or the very end of the day for the calmest reflection and the fewest people in your photos.

10:00 AM

Saint-Pierre District

The medieval heart of Bordeaux, immediately behind Place de la Bourse. Narrow lanes, small squares, and the district's namesake church. Best explored without a fixed route.

11:30 AM

Saint-André Cathedral & Pey-Berland Tower

Place Pey-Berland. Cathedral free entry; Pey-Berland Tower ~€6 to climb. Gothic architecture and panoramic city views from the freestanding bell tower, separated from the cathedral itself due to the weight of its bells.

12:30 PM

Musée d'Aquitaine

20 Cours Pasteur. €6 adult entry, free the first Sunday of each month. Open Tuesday–Sunday, 11am–6pm. Over 1.4 million artefacts spanning prehistoric Aquitaine through the Atlantic slave trade, including a remarkable Gallo-Roman mosaic floor. Allow 90 minutes.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 6:30 PM

2:00 PM

Lunch: Le Petit Commerce

A cozy seafood spot with an ever-changing blackboard menu. Counter seating available — ideal for solo dining. €20–30.

3:30 PM

La Cité du Vin

134 Quai de Bacalan, Bassins à Flot district. €22 adult (included free with the Bordeaux City Pass). Open daily. An interactive wine museum covering how wine is made, how it travels, and how it's shaped societies globally — genuinely accessible even with no prior wine knowledge. The Via Sensoria multi-sensory tasting experience is a highlight. Includes a tasting on the panoramic 8th-floor Belvedere.

INSIDER TIP

Combine with a wander through the adjacent Bassins à Flot, Bordeaux's revitalized industrial waterfront district.

5:30 PM

Chartrons District

Bordeaux's historic wine-merchant quarter, north along Rue Notre-Dame. Antique shops, wine bars, and a quieter, less touristy alternative to the Old Town for a late-afternoon wander.

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner: La Tupina

An institution, known for hearty southwestern French dishes — duck confit, slow-cooked lamb, garlicky potatoes — cooked over an open hearth visible from the dining room. €35–55.

9:00 PM

Wine Bar: Aux Quatre Coins du Vin

A self-serve wine bar where you pour your own glass from a dispenser — genuinely one of the best solo-friendly setups in the city, letting you sample several styles without committing to a full bottle or feeling out of place drinking alone.

DAY TWO

Day Two — Chartrons in Depth · Saint-Émilion Day Trip · Riverside Evening

Day Two offers a half-day escape to the vineyards of Saint-Émilion, with the city's riverfront reserved for a relaxed final evening.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Breakfast: L'Alchimiste

Chartrons. Excellent coffee; pair with a cream puff from Dunes Blanches chez Pascal next door.

10:00 AM

Train to Saint-Émilion

Bordeaux Saint-Jean station to Saint-Émilion, ~35–40 minutes, regional TER train. A UNESCO-listed wine village built into limestone hillsides, home to some of Bordeaux's most prestigious appellations.

11:00 AM

Saint-Émilion Village & Monolithic Church

Wander the medieval village; the Monolithic Church, carved from a single block of limestone beneath the village, is the standout sight (guided tours required for the underground portions).

INSIDER TIP

Smaller châteaux around Saint-Émilion welcome solo visitors for “dégustation privée” (private tastings) if you email ahead — a quieter, more personal alternative to a group bus tour.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

1:00 PM

Lunch & Wine Tasting in Saint-Émilion

A village café or a small château tasting room. Many offer lunch alongside a flight of local reds.

3:30 PM

Return Train to Bordeaux

Back to Bordeaux Saint-Jean, ~35–40 minutes.

4:30 PM

Quai des Chartrons Riverside Walk

The Quais de Bordeaux stretch for kilometers along the Garonne — benches, bike paths, open space. A good decompression walk after the day trip, especially near Pont de Pierre, Bordeaux's iconic stone bridge, where the Old Town rooftops catch the evening light.

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner: Le Bouchon Bordelais

Veal chop with herb butter and Bordeaux wine pairing — a classic, unfussy introduction to Bordelais cooking. €30–45.

9:00 PM

Final Night: Quai de Paludate or Place de la Victoire

Bordeaux's nightlife centers here — bars, live music, a young university-driven energy. A lighter, earlier wind-down at a Chartrons or Saint-Pierre wine bar is the better solo choice if an early train or flight awaits.

WHERE TO EAT

Bordeaux's Table

RESTAURANT	NEIGHBOURHOOD	PRICE
La Tupina	Saint-Pierre	€35–55
Le Petit Commerce	Saint-Pierre	€20–30
Le Bouchon Bordelais	Old Town	€30–45
Aux Quatre Coins du Vin	Chartrons	€15–25 (wine flight)
L'Alchimiste	Chartrons	€5–12
Chez Dupont	Chartrons	€30–50
Le 7 (Cité du Vin restaurant)	Bassins à Flot	€28 (2-course lunch)

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Bordeaux

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Historic center is entirely walkable; UNESCO-listed core is compact.
Tram (TBM)	€1.70–1.80/ride	Well-lit, camera-monitored stations; runs until 1am, night buses (TBNight) 1:30–5:30am.
Bordeaux City Pass	€45/48hr, €55/72hr	Unlimited tram + free Cité du Vin entry (worth €22 alone) + museum discounts.
Train (TER) to Saint-Émilion	~€10–12 each way	~35–40 min from Bordeaux Saint-Jean.
Taxi	Metered	Gare Saint-Jean to Place de la Bourse runs €12–18.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Before You Go

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Bordeaux–Mérignac Airport (BOD), ~30 min from center via tram/shuttle. TGV from Paris–Montparnasse: 2h10, €30–100.
Best Time	April–June and September–October: vineyard season, warm but not scorching, fewer crowds. July–August: hot, can exceed 35°C — plan outdoor sightseeing before 11am or after 5pm.
Solo Dining	Excellent — bistros and wine bars with counter seating make solo dining genuinely comfortable, not an exception.
Language	French; English widely spoken in tourist-facing businesses.
Useful Apps	TBM (local transit), SNCF Connect (regional trains), Google Maps (offline download).

Bordeaux awaits.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Final Checklist

- ❑ Book La Cité du Vin online, or via the Bordeaux City Pass, especially in peak summer
- ❑ Book Saint-Émilion train tickets ahead on SNCF Connect during peak season
- ❑ Bring comfortable flat-soled shoes — historic cobblestones are uneven and slippery when wet
- ❑ Carry a light waterproof layer year-round — Atlantic showers arrive without warning
- ❑ Watch bags at Place de la Bourse and Gare Saint-Jean — the city's main pickpocketing hotspots
- ❑ Avoid Place de la Victoire and the area right around Gare Saint-Jean late at night
- ❑ Download offline maps before arrival

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

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