

Travel Journal – Day 6: Beaune, Cluny, Château de la Greffière, Annecy

We left Beaune under a brilliant blue sky, the promise of a beautiful day stretching ahead as we headed south through Burgundy's rolling hills. The drive was nothing short of scenic: gentle slopes carpeted with vines, fields dotted with wildflowers, and picturesque villages tucked into the landscape. From time to time, we passed fortified towns, reminders of the once-contested border between the Comté de Bourgogne and the Comté de Beaujeu—places where history is etched into every stone and watchtower.

The rhythm of the countryside lulled us into a kind of calm, the landscape unfolding like a painted scroll: Romanesque chapels and winding country roads, every turn offering a new view more serene than the last.

Our first stop was Cluny, once the spiritual and cultural heartbeat of medieval Europe. Some of us wandered through the remains of the great abbey, imagining its former grandeur when it was the largest church in Christendom. Others explored the quiet town, enjoying coffee al fresco in the spring sun, taking in the peaceful rhythm of Cluny's cobbled streets and quiet charm.

We continued on to Château de la Greffière, where we were warmly welcomed by Sophie. She led us on a tour of the vineyard, showing us the careful cultivation process and the baby vines just beginning their journey toward becoming exceptional wine. It was one of the cleanest and most organised vineyards we've ever seen—immaculately maintained and thoughtfully run.

Our tasting took place in their 17th-century cellar, cool and atmospheric beneath ancient stone. We sampled:

- Chardonnay La Roche-Vineuse, with notes of ripe pear, acacia blossom, and a delicate, mineral finish.
- Vieilles Vignes Chardonnay, richer and rounder, with hints of hazelnut and honeyed citrus.
- A Crémant de Bourgogne, refreshing and elegant, with fine bubbles, white peach, and toasty almond.
- Gamay Saint-Amour, light and juicy, bursting with red cherry and a gentle touch of spice.
- And a Pinot Noir Bourgogne, delicate and earthy, with soft tannins, raspberry notes, and a graceful finish.

Afterwards, we enjoyed a picnic under the sycamores, shaded and serene. Our spread featured delicious local charcuterie: pâté en croûte, saucisson, saucisson à l'ail, pâté de tête, macédoine salad, cow's milk cheese, and a perfectly flaky tarte aux framboises. It was a feast, and the vineyard setting made it unforgettable. We even had a chance to chat with fellow Canadian travellers, sharing stories and laughter over the shared joy of food and wine.

Back on the road, Alex treated us to one of the most beautiful drives of the trip—through what's often called the most scenic highway in France. We passed through gorgeous valleys, between high peaks, and even caught sight of our first snow clinging to the mountaintops in the distance.

By late afternoon, we arrived in Annecy, the shimmering lake and fresh Alpine air welcoming us like a postcard come to life. We took a scenic walk along the lake, winding our way through the town's meandering streets to our beautiful Hébé Hotel. There, in the warm evening light, we opened a few of our accumulated bottles of wine, shared boards of local treats, and toasted the journey so far.

Then, a well-earned rest on fluffy pillows, ready for the mountains of Chamonix tomorrow.