



Campsites and vineyards

Ah, wine and camping... Two worlds of an entirely different nature, but nevertheless both could blend rather well together; unite the campsites take on a different charm. An encounter with three Camping Cheque sites...

Starting off, we must admit that an association between wine and camping is not obvious. However, as we take a closer look the similarities become quite remarkable. For example, the desire to communicate this passion to the inquisitive tourist and the campsite guest is very often shared amongst many campsite owners and wine growers. They are passionate about their land and their soil. Wine and camping unite around a number of values, two of which are in the pleasure of sharing and a strong sense of conviviality. Dozens of campsites regularly organise wine tasting and theme stays on the subject of this delightful nectar. Consequently, it is not surprising to discover that a campsite owner also produces his own wines.

This is the story about three Camping Cheque campsites: the Château de Montrouant (p.171 Site Directory 2006), La Colombière (p.173) and Les

Ranchsses (p.194). All three are ideally situated in regions traditionally known for their fine cuisine; strongly respectful of their land (Burgundy, Haute-Savoie and Ardèche respectively). Beyond this common point these campsite owners

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have chosen different paths. From the three only Philippe Chevalier, owner of Les Ranchisses, was predisposed to become wine grower. His vineyards belong to a family-run domain and Philippe himself was the manager of the Largentière cellars. This family estate is divided into vineyards and orchards. "After successive years of frost we were forced to contemplate another type of

activity", confided Philippe. "Thus, we decided to devote ourselves to tourism". We are all aware of his success and today the campsite has taken on a truly large scale! In order not to break with tradition the Chevaliers have,

however, kept 2 ha of vineyards for their passion for wine!

If Philippe Chevalier went from the vine to the world of open-air tourism for pragmatic reasons Jean-François Bussat, also for pragmatic reasons, took just the opposite path. When he founded La Colombière in 1971 he retained in parallel his agricultural activity. However, after



■ ■ ■ Passion is the right word to describe the investment of our next and final campsite owner, Jean-Michel Gruel, owner of Château de Montrouant. Since 8 years his choice has been to run a wine producing business, motivated by a genuine passion for wine. This can be seen in his chosen method of organically growing grapes, exclusively producing *bio* wines. He even goes as far as pressing the grapes in an old *pressoir à écureuil*, or “squirrel press”. To press the grapes a person must climb onto the wheel to turn it, similar to a hamster turning the wheel in his cage (see photo). Although this passion could have been extremely profitable, Jean-Michel’s objective was none other than the philosophical attitude that “A small campsite and a small vineyard; a perfect means by which to fully experience one’s passions”. Le Château de Montrouant, with 45 pitches, is a lovely campsite that extends a naturally warm family welcome to its guests. The wine produced by these site owners is of course proposed to its guests – for purchase or on the menu in the restaurants. The relationship between camping and wine goes beyond sharing a bottle amongst friends. Even before becoming tradesmen in this field these three men were true wine lovers, their faces lighting up every time the topic is brought up. Each expresses his passion in a different manner. At Les Ranchisses Philippe organises wine tasting in a cellar, inviting other wine growers to participate. At La Colombière Jean-François has set up wine tasting and visits to the vineyards. He even shows a video projection on grape harvesting in a new building constructed on-site this winter. At the end of the grape harvest (third weekend of September) the site’s guests are invited to take part in festivities around the theme of grape pressing. As these two campsites Jean-Michel organises commented wine tasting outings from the Château de Montrouant, in a tiny chapel in the heart of his vineyards. He also proposes theme stays centred on wine, such as “Wine and History” or “Wine and Rambling”. As different as these three campsites are, when the owners are asked whether their passion for wine is not too complicated to manage alongside their responsibilities on the sites grounds the replies are similar – the pleasure far outweighs the hard work (much as an athlete would reply when asked why he plays sport). When speaking of wine this pleasure becomes extremely contagious, so raise your glass and take off on a discovery journey into the world of wine! ■

wouldn't you agree? At the moment they

three years in operation he realised that these two activities together were much hard work and “the seasonal responsibilities in the vineyards better adapt themselves to the rhythm of a campsite owner than breeding”. Thus, in 1974 he launched into a new and exciting adventure. ■ ■ ■

**Château de Montrouant
(p.171 Site Directory 2006)**

Camping Cheques accepted: 01/06/06 - 30/06/06 and 25/08/06 - 02/09/06.

La Colombière (p.173)

Camping Cheques accepted : 01/04/06 - 25/06/06 and 03/09/06 - 30/09/06, with supplement of 1€ : 26/06/06 - 10/07/06 and 25/08/06 - 02/09/06.

Sunêlia Les Ranchisses (p.194)

Camping Cheques accepted : 14/04/06 - 27/05/06 and 02/09/06 - 24/09/06, with supplement of 2€ : 28/05/06 - 30/06/06 and 26/08/06 - 01/09/06.

