



EDUCATION ABROAD CENTER
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Dear Parents,

If you are reading this letter, your student has expressed an interest in traveling to France this July to learn about wine. I thought you might be interested in who I am, my goals for the class, and how I deal with the issue of alcohol.

I am a California native and the father of 2 adult children (one an English teacher at a middle school in the San Francisco Bay Area, the other an R.N. in the cardiothoracic unit of the UCD Medical Center). My wife of 38 years was a special education teacher for 30 years who, in retirement, now supervises student teachers. My specialty is the history of wine and wine business. As an Adjunct Associate Professor, I teach the introductory class on campus to about 300 students, and I co-teach an upper-division class on wine economics with a colleague from the Department of Agriculture Economics. I started making wine at home in 1972, made wine commercially from 1980 to 2002, and now am a homewinemaker again. I am passionate about the culture of wine and have traveled, lived, and lectured in wine regions in France, Italy, Spain, and South America.

I first taught the Summer Abroad class in Dijon in 2008 and am eager to return. I very much enjoyed the scale of the class, which allowed me to get to know each student as an individual, and the fact that the students could learn to taste wine in a culture where alcohol is an accompaniment to meals. I view moderate alcohol consumption as both healthful and enjoyable and I want to communicate to my students how to enjoy wine in moderation. Our very first lecture will discuss alcohol metabolism, health aspects of consumption, and alcoholism. Students will learn to calculate their blood alcohol concentration for various amounts of wine or beer. That lecture will immediately be followed by a lecture on sensory evaluation of wine—how to consciously appreciate wine and how to behave when we visit wineries. We will taste wines in class, at wineries and when we enjoy group lunches and dinners. I will impress on the students that I expect them to objectively evaluate each wine that we taste and that they must take notes to capture both their sensory impressions of each wine, as well as the social context of its setting.

My goals for the class include not just that your child will learn about how wine is made, but that he/she will also learn about the French culture that surrounds wine. This process will be encouraged by having each student keep a journal of their time in Dijon. Although they will be expected to keep track of the wines they taste, they will also be expected to place those wines in a context: Where were we? What was the winery or restaurant like? How did it differ from our other experiences? I will review the journals at least once a week and use them as a basis for class discussion about cultural differences.

The class is extremely intensive (8 units in 30 days), is a great deal of work for both the instructor and the students, and is definitely not a “vacation in France.” But it is quite pleasant work. We will enjoy several full day tours to surrounding regions such as Alsace, Jura and Burgundy, complete with meals, as well as a 3

day trip to Provence. These trips are arranged by my colleague at the University of Burgundy, Professor Pascal Durand, who accompanies us on all the trips and delights in sharing French culture with the students. In addition, students will have some afternoons off to visit downtown Dijon (about 1.5 miles from the university where they will stay), the delightful capital founded by the Dukes of Burgundy, to see the farmer's market, shop in the local stores, and sit in cafes. Dijon is quite a safe city and I encourage students to explore it on their own or in small groups. We will not be visiting Paris as a class, and I recommend that if your student has not had a chance to see Paris, that he/she schedule a few days after the class ends, since they will have become more familiar with France by then.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jtlapsley@ucdavis.edu.

Sincerely,

Jim Lapsley
Adjunct Associate Professor
Viticulture and Enology