

Travel Journal – Day 5: Saint-Jean-de-Losne to Dijon

A new path revealed itself — and like true adventurers, we embraced it with open arms, curiosity, and a touch of Burgundy elegance.

We woke up in our unexpected refuge hotel, a place that had become a cozy haven after our dramatic, stormy twist the night before. The breakfast room was cheerful, the coffee strong, the croissants warm — and spirits were high. Our crew, ever graceful and attentive, helped us gather our belongings with their trademark calm. Gwen and Timi, working hand in hand with Gate 1 and CroisiEurope, transformed a deviation into an exciting new plan.

And just like that, we were off — setting out in true explorer style, boarding a coach with our fantastic driver Samia, who expertly navigated the rolling hills and storybook villages of Bourgogne. A new path had opened, and we followed it with curiosity and confidence.

Our destination? The grand city of Dijon, where we arrived to discover our new home: the elegant Hotel de la Cloche, a historic monument that has welcomed guests since 1884, blending 19th-century grandeur with modern luxury. Located in the very heart of Dijon, its graceful architecture and leafy gardens offered an instant sense of calm and comfort. It felt like a reward for our resilience — and an invitation to indulge.

We toasted to our journey in the sophisticated hotel lounge, followed by a Burgundy feast that, while almost a betrayal to Chef Bastoche, was undeniably divine:

- Pâté en croûte — a traditional French delicacy of seasoned meat encased in golden pastry, rustic yet refined
- Volaille fermière à la Gaston Gérard — Dijon's iconic chicken dish, created by a mayor's wife: tender free-range poultry in a creamy mustard, cheese, and paprika sauce, both comforting and luxurious
- Clafoutis de cerise with custard foam and tonka bean — juicy cherries nestled in flan-like batter, elevated with the warm, almond-vanilla notes of tonka

All of this, of course, paired with local wines: a bright Chardonnay and a silky Pinot Noir, both unmistakably Burgundian.

Our decadent rooms were ready early, allowing us a moment to unwind — to shower, rest, and enjoy the lush amenities of this luxurious hotel.

That afternoon, some of us sank into relaxation, making the most of the hotel's spa and gardens. Others joined Gwen and Timi for a walking tour with our energetic and engaging guide, Sarah, whose love for Dijon was as bold as its mustard.

Dijon dazzled. We discovered:

- The last remaining city gate and the impressive Palace of the Dukes of Burgundy
- The Notre-Dame of Dijon, with its mechanical Jacquemart clock and famous wishing owl (rub it with your left hand, and make a wish — locals swear by it)

- Charming half-timbered houses, tucked-away courtyards, and narrow medieval lanes that whisper stories of the past
- The origins of Moutarde Fallot, Burgundy's pride
- And the delightful nonnettes — soft gingerbread cakes filled with marmalade, traditionally made by nuns — which Gwen kindly picked up for us to sample

During the tour, Gwen received a call from Dani Pisano, the owner of Gate 1, who personally expressed his concern, support, and appreciation for all of us. He made sure we were well taken care of, and sent his warmest thoughts to the group — a moment of connection and care that meant a lot to us all.

We spent the rest of the afternoon wandering Dijon at our own pace, some visiting mustard shops, others sipping coffee in sunny cafés, and many simply letting the charm of this Burgundy capital sink in.

As evening came, we regrouped in the hotel's luscious garden — a perfect setting for our traditional pre-dinner briefing. Timi shared the next day's plan, while Gwen poured our beloved bubbles. Laughter, clinking glasses, and reflections on the day's unexpected beauty filled the air.

Dinner followed — and once again, Burgundy delivered:

- Maquereaux à l'escabèche, marinated mackerel with tender white asparagus, rich and fresh all at once
- Confit of lamb, slow-cooked to perfection, served with caramelised carrots and a piquant touch of Timmy pepper
- A layered verrine of chocolate and coffee, smooth and intense, the finale to another memorable day

All lovingly paired with regional wines, each glass raising the spirit a little higher.

From storm to sunshine, detour to delight, we had fallen back on our feet — in style. Adventurers don't follow the map — they follow the moment. And what a moment this was.

Voilà, voilà — ready for more Burgundy beauty tomorrow.