

BORDEAUX: THE PESSAC-LEOGNAN TERROIR

Our map shows for the first time what lies beneath the vines of Pessac-Léognan, the relatively new appellation where starry châteaux stand amid pine forests and suburbs on the edge of Bordeaux city.

Here is the First Growth Château Haut-Brion, set with its neighbours in Pessac at the northern edge of the zone. These are three of the six châteaux inside the city's Rocade ring-road: see the smaller map. Most estates – see the main map – are to the south, where the communes of Léognan and Martillac have a clutch of famous classed growths.

It's notable that Pessac-Léognan is the single Bordeaux appellation that also makes age-worthy dry whites and recognises them with a classification. Many estates make splendid wines in both colours.

The soils here are among the most widely varied in the region – which explains why both serious reds and whites can be produced. The peyrosol gravel terraces of the Médoc are all here, from Terraces 1 to 6, with the main difference being that the elevation is slightly higher than in the Médoc: the highest vines, at 60 metres, are at Domaine de Chevalier. Terraces 6 and 5 are more evident here than in the Médoc, while 3 and 4 are set a little further back from the Garonne river.

The gravel reaches up to eight metres deep in places, across a wave of outcrops that offer excellent drainage and are criss-crossed by small streams such as l'Eau Blanche and l'Eau Bourde.

Between the gravel outcrops are some less high-quality colluvial sands, with particularly light sandy soils to the far west of the appellation. There are frequent pockets of heavy clay, over high-quality Astéries limestone subsoils; it is not at all unusual in Pessac-Léognan to find mollusc and sea-shell fossils extremely visible in the composition of the limestone. Our map highlights these areas of limestone soils alongside the gravel terraces.

As this is a relatively new appellation, the borders are precisely drawn: only land the authorities deem worthy is included. Follow the lines on the map to see what is in – and what is not.

This map is developed from three in my book, *Inside Bordeaux*. At book scale, these are presented as a gatefold trio: the topography, châteaux and AOC borders on one, with the underlying soils and gravel terraces on separate maps. Now with the production of this large-scale map, we have worked hard to add to, enhance and combine the three, and are now able to show you the whole picture for the first time. I hope you find this as exciting as we do.

These notes are to accompany your map: I hope you enjoy it.

Jane Anson, May 2025

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