

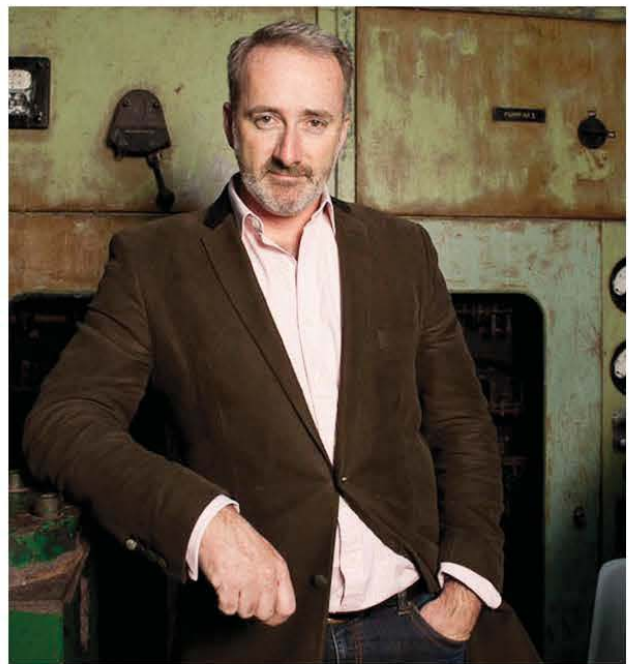
WINE DIARIES

Bespoke travel planner Brown + Hudson teams up with iconic Mayfair-based Hedonism Wines on international tours that will drive you to drink – in the best possible way.

Mayfair wine boutique Hedonism Wines is to the bottle shop what Brown + Hudson is to the travel agency: superlative. It made perfect sense for these two exclusive British companies to join forces in the curation of once-in-a-lifetime wine tours for everyone from enthusiastic newcomers to the most discerning oenophiles. Brown + Hudson owner Philippe Brown lets us in on the journey.

Q. How did the collaboration with Hedonism come about?

A. The idea of a partnership came to us, as is often the case, over a glass of wine: Domaine du Pegau Da Capo 2003. We began by proposing two concept trips, but what surprised us the most was the demand for bespoke wine journeys. Bearing in mind the very personal nature of taste, it made sense. Clients wanted journeys that are as unique as



■ PHILIPPE BROWN



DRINKING WINE WITH A COUNT IN THE MIDDLE OF A VIRGIN RAINFOREST WHILST WAITING FOR BEARS TO SHOW UP IS A TRULY MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

their palates and as personal as their cellars. Today our partnership is perfectly balanced. Hedonism is the custodian of its clients' evolving tastes, while Brown + Hudson's travel sensibility and contacts allow some of the world's most discerning wine aficionados the most seamless and insightful journey from the bottle to the vine.

Q. Does a client have to be a connois-



seur to take this trip?

A. Not at all. Each trip is handcrafted to suit individual tastes, interests and experience. The beauty of wine is the debate and discussion that so often surrounds it. Regardless of how much or how little you know, there is always more to learn. The creation of each bespoke experience begins with a trip-planning interview. Here we establish our client's interests, wine and travel history, quirks, preferences, motivations and goals for the trip. They might tell us about particular wineries that they wish to visit or avoid. We'll also be able to gauge the balance they seek between tastings, winery visits and encounters that broaden their knowledge of the culture and traditions surrounding the appellations. At the same time, we find out about other members of their party who might have other interests and who seek an experience that meets their particular needs.

Q. What are some of the highlights that can be arranged on the itinerary?

A. These are just a selection to inspire: There is a private visit to Alcatraz in which you and your guests explore the infamous prison with a former inmate before enjoying a Michelin-starred dinner prepared within its walls. There's an exclusive, invite-only access to Bill Harlan's Napa Valley estate, and the rare op-

portunity to meet the man himself. Other trips allow you to either sprint across San Francisco Bay on an America's Cup sailing yacht with its crew, or drive supercars down the Pacific Highway before ending with 18 holes alongside a PGA Tour golfer at Pebble Beach.

Q. In what way is the client's palate accounted for in the planning?

A. The pre-planning tasting session with the experts from Hedonism suggests the kinds of wine the client enjoys, what others she or he might like to explore, as well as the regions these tastes might point to for the trip. They are then introduced to their Brown + Hudson Trip Planner who carries these insights and any others he gleans into the trip-planning process. Months prior to departure we might propose a series of tastings, meetings, encounters or lectures to prepare the clients for their journey and to build engagement with other members of their party. Lastly we present the story of the journey as a unique itinerary, written from scratch, hand-bound and individually printed.

Q. Are there any under-the-radar wine destinations you're currently excited about?

A. Romania is great but underrated, and the wines are not very well known. Still



developing compared to established rivals, it presents some fantastic opportunities for trips going beyond the vine. Drinking wine with a count in the middle of a virgin rainforest whilst waiting for bears to show up is a truly memorable experience. Sicily is also a rarely told wine story, one that I would want to discover in the company of Michael Madrigale, the head sommelier of Daniel Boulud's New York gastronomic empire.

brownandhudson.com //

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