GUIDING QUESTIONS
Bordeaux and the Dordogne: Great Wine, Fine Cuisine, and History Come Alive
Led by Wendy Allen, Professor Emeritus of French and Rich Allen, Professor of Computer Science
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1. Geography. What is it about the geography of this region of France that explains why wine and gastronomy became and continue to be so important here?

2. History. How did the 100 Years War influence the historical evolution of the Dordogne? What visible signs of that conflict remain today? Who were the owners of the many châteaux we will see tucked into the hillsides? Who own the châteaux today?

3. This region of France is known as the cradle of civilizations. Why? How did it come to be this way? What role do pre-historic sites play in the life of the region today.

4. This region of France is often referred to as “la France profonde.” What do you think this phrase means? (Hint: the phrase implies opposition to a different France.) Does it refer to geography, to history, to attitudes and practices, or to values? Does the term have a positive or a negative connotation?

5. What are the most famous wines emanating from this region?

6. What foods or items of cuisine is the Dordogne region famous for? Do these gastronomic specialties of the region have anything in common?

7. Based on reading you have done or on conversations with others, how would you describe the role of wine and of food in the Dordogne? What role do wine and food play in the daily lives of people and in the culture generally?

8. There is a certain tension between the attitudes of locals and those of departmental authorities, national authorities, the French State? How can these tensions be explained?

9. Forces of change are everywhere present in the Dordogne. Small towns are losing their schools, their bakeries, their cafés; small rural farmers are finding it difficult to compete with industrial-scale agriculture; European Union directives are becoming increasingly invasive and prescriptive; the demographic composition of the region is evolving. One of the big questions is this: What is the future of the Dordogne, with its picturesque small villages, majestic châteaux, rural ways, and pre-historic sites? Will it become nothing more than a “theme park” inhabited by British and Dutch expats, a gastronomic haven for tourists?