

In this week's Tipping's Tipples, MIKE TIPPING chooses light reds that benefit from a chill and suit a summer's day as well as any white



• Côte de Brouilly Chateau Thivin 2006, £9.95 from Great Western Wine (www.greatwesternwine.co.uk) 17/20
 • Chénas Château de Chénas 2005, £8.49 or £6.79 each if you buy two at Majestic 16/20
 • Maydie Tannat Vintage 2006 vin de liqueur 50cl, £10.95 from the Wine Society (www.thewinesociety.com) 17/20

AS BILLY Connolly put it, "there are two seasons in Scotland: June and Winter". Come to think, the climate is not so different here in northern England and it makes a pleasant change to be heading to the fridge for a chilled wine, rather than to the rack for a winter warming red.

But just because it's June and potentially flaming, that does not mean you have to discount all red wines. Lighter styles of pinot noir often benefit from a hour in the fridge and some red wines demand chilling, Beaujolais, for example, made from the gamay grape.

Although you're probably best avoiding the lower price bracket of Beaujolais, as you are with any of the big name French regions, fork out a little more and you can find some good wines. I tasted a couple last week, which will leave you with change from a tenner.

Online vintners Great Western Wine stock Chateau Thivin 2006 from the small Côte de Brouilly appellation. Light, smooth and very quaffable, it opens out into quite a complex wine, with flavours of damson, red cherry and floral notes.

In Beaujolais there are ten villages referred to as crus, with famous names like Fleurie and Moulin à Vent, but Majestic have Château de Chénas 2005 from the lesser known cru of Chénas. Silky smooth, medium bodied and with soft tannins, an hour or less in the fridge will bring out flavours of cherry, raspberry and those floral notes again.

But if you're after something really different, red and best served lightly chilled, head to the Madiran appellation around the base of the Pyrenean mountains in south western France. Here the, not always easy to get on with, tannat grape is used to make the red wines.

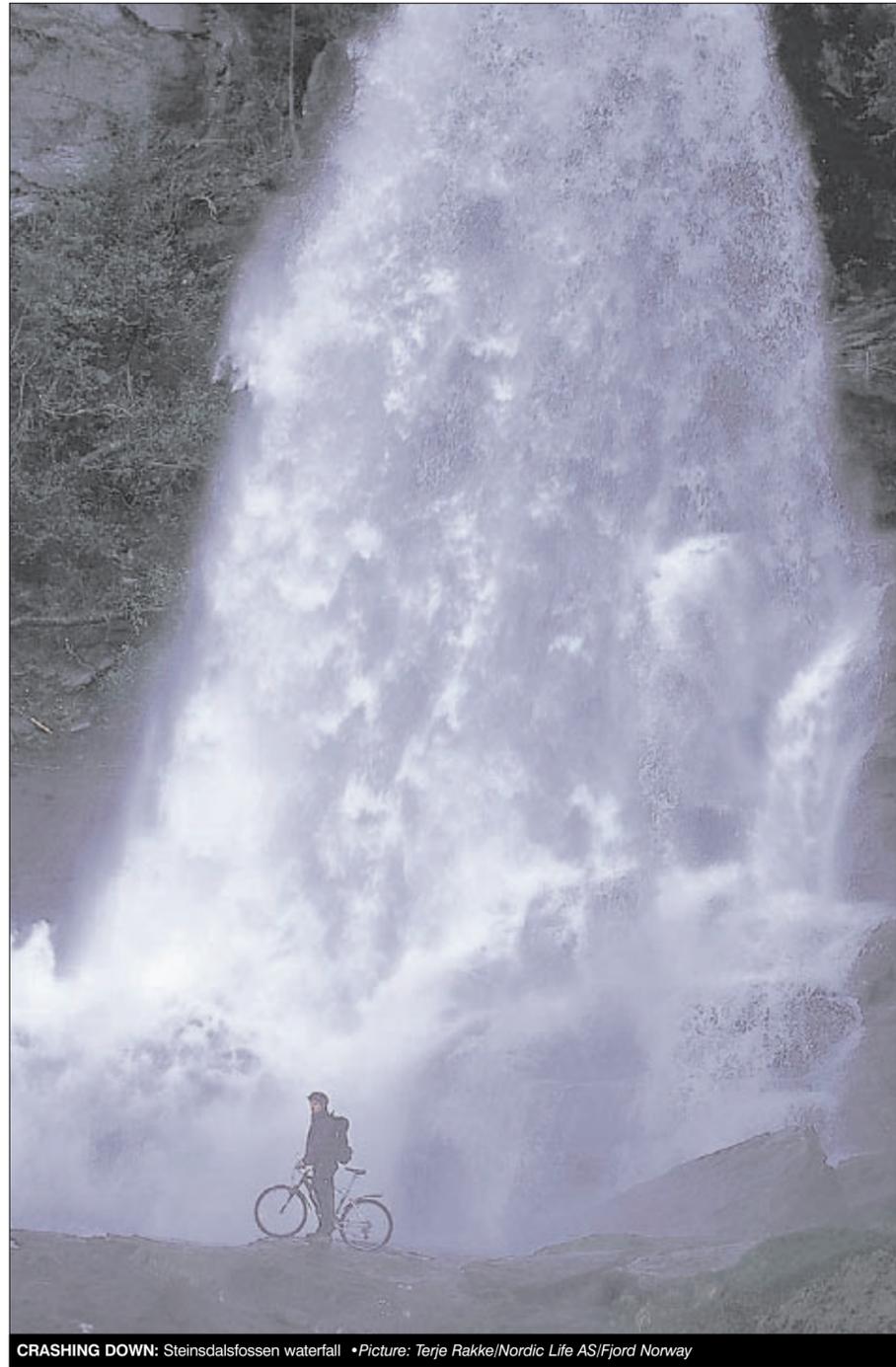
I did get on with the unnervingly named Maydie Tannat Vintage 2006, even though I half expected to see a skull 'n' crossbones on the bottle. Despite Maydie's curious name, the wine ironically is believed to possess a wealth of health benefits when drunk in moderation, as tannat grapes are rich in antioxidants.

This vin de liqueur, a sweet dessert red, is fortified in a similar way to port, but it's not as heavy. It's packed full of smooth cherry, blackberry, dried fruit, chocolate notes and spice, with firm tannins giving good structure.



TRAVEL

Falling for Norway



CRASHING DOWN: Steinsdalsfossen waterfall • Picture: Terje Rakke/Nordic Life AS/Fjord Norway



RICHARD JOHNS follows in the footsteps of the Vikings on a coach tour of the Norwegian fjords

World-class: Bergen, a colourful city surrounded by mountains
 • Picture: Bergen Tourist Board/Robin Strand

THE first Vikings I remember seeing had American accents.

Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis battled it out in the 1958 movie as it beamed into our living room from an old Baird television in the 1960s.

As the images of longships and fjords flickered across the 19-inch screen, the magnificent Nordic scenery looked absolutely breathtaking – even if it was in black and white.

In the days before Hollywood, the time when genuine Vikings were in the big picture, warring Norsemen toasted victories by drinking ale from the skulls of beaten foes. Skál is Norwegian for "cheers". Three giant swords set in stone now mark the spot where King Harald The Fairhead united the country's warring tribes after victory in the Battle of Hafrsfjord, in 872.

Avaldsnes, on the strait between Karmøy and Haugesund, is regarded as Norway's birthplace and the seat of ancient kings.

For more than 3,000 years, Norse chieftains levied tolls on ships passing through the narrow sound – the Nordvegen, or North Way, hence Norway.

Today, the atmospheric 13th century St Olav's Church stands sentinel above Karmsundet Sound and the old Viking settlement of Bukkøy.

Further along the coast is the old herring fishing community of Skudeneshavn. This historic tall ships town is one of the best preserved in the country where 125 restored houses and 100 sailors' cottages cluster around the pretty waterside setting.

At 179 kilometres, Hardangerfjord is the second longest fjord in Norway.

The blue-green waters plunge to 800 metres at its deepest point. This area is known as the Orchard of Norway, with its mild Gulf Stream climate ideal for growing fruit such as cherries, apples, pears, plums and berries.

English Cistercian monks introduced fruit growing to the region in the 13th century. I recommend a stop-off at the Steinsto Fruitfarm to stock up.

Or perhaps halt for tea at the Ullensvang Hotel, at Loftus, where the composer Edvard Grieg sought inspiration for his haunting music from the stupendous scenery. His old summer house stands in the "back garden" of the hotel.

Take a walk up to – and under – one of the most famous and photographed waterfalls in the country at Steinsdalsfossen. Marvel at this impressive cascade of water as it tumbles down the mountainside.

The world heritage city of Bergen is the capital of western Norway. This colourful city surrounded by mountains is a buzzing and lively port.

The wonderful medieval wharf houses by the harbour at Bryggen have been restored to their former glory and the district is peppered with bars and cafés where true "Bergansers" tuck into fish cakes and spicy "shilling buns".

A ride on the Floibanen Funicular is a must to take in a great view of the city from the top of Mount Floyen.

Grieg's old house is just outside the city at Trolldhaugen – the Hill Of The Trolls. The pretty building with its 1907 interior is perched high above Lake Nordal and is now a museum to the musical genius. The great composer and his wife are buried nearby in a cliffside vault.

Norwegians are justly proud of their heritage and the Stavanger region, along with Liverpool in the UK, has this year been chosen as the European Capital of Culture.

Wooden wharfside buildings huddle around the waterfront in this attractive port – the city has the largest concentration of wood-built houses in Europe. Take a stroll around Gamle Stavanger, the old town, or drink beer at a waterside café.

The fjord scenery of Norway is spectacular and there is so much to see and do, whether you are looking for an active holiday such as hiking, biking or skiing, or if you want to let somebody else do the work by taking a coach tour.

But remember, the natives no longer quaff ale from the cranial cavities of foreign foes – so don't be afraid to pay a visit. Skål!

Fact file

• Richard travelled as a guest of the Coach Tourism Council (CTC), DFDS Ferries and Fjord Norway. The CTC (www.coachtourismcouncil.co.uk) promotes tours and holidays by coach on behalf of more than 150 coach operators from across the UK. They include Eddie Brown Tours of Boroughbridge (www.eddiebrownstours.com 01423 321246) which has a four-day Norway mini-cruise with DFDS visiting Bergen including a scenic drive through the Western Fjords to Stavanger, costing from £209 per person. A longer eight-day to the Sognefjord region costs £789pp.



A lodge with no complaints at all

RICHARD FOSTER enjoys a relaxing break in the Yorkshire Dales where home was a Scandinavian pine lodge complete with its own private sauna

FLOWERY DELL is a family-run business that prides itself on offering guests the ultimate in peace and relaxation deep in rural Yorkshire.

It runs 12 luxury pine lodges that are billed as a charming alternative to the traditional holiday cottage.

The lodges are set in a tranquil valley on the edge of a wood that has a stream running through it. This beautiful area, bordering the Yorkshire Dales National Park, is home to an abundance of flora and fauna and provides the ideal setting for those wishing to get away from it all and unwind.

Just over a mile away is the historic market town of Richmond with its towering Norman castle, cared for by English Heritage.

Flowerly Dell's Scandinavian lodges are a delightful mix of ancient and modern in that they offer the traditional warmth of wood along with a range of high-specification modern appliances that will appeal to the most discerning of paying guests.

The 12 lodges provide a good mix of accommodation, enabling Flowerly Dell to cater for families, with children and pets, as well as couples in search of a luxurious romantic break.

My partner, Janice, and I thoroughly enjoyed our two-night stay in Mulberry, a deluxe single-storey log cabin equipped with a 37-inch plasma digital television, DVD player and hi-fi system. Mulberry also boasts its own sauna room to complement its luxury spa bath and shower.

It was a real treat to relax in the sauna after a day's walking in the dales. It's sacrilege to rush a sauna. You must take your time, exposing your tired, aching body to a gentle routine of water and heat.

As the sauna heats up to the required temperature you take a shower. Then relax in the sauna as the heat sweats out grime and toxins from your body. Cool down in the shower and then repeat the process as many times as you like. At the end you should feel totally relaxed, deeply cleansed and rejuvenated.

As you would expect in a luxury holiday let, Mulberry has a modern kitchen with a washing machine, a microwave oven and electric cooker and a dishwasher. Outside, on a

veranda, is a gas-fired barbecue for those who like dining al fresco. The double bedroom has a wall-mounted television.

Flowerly Dell has its own on-site shop stocked with local produce and regional specialities, including a range of frozen gourmet ready-meals to help holidaymakers keep away from the cooker and kitchen sink, enabling them to make the most of their leisure time.

It also has a website (www.yorkshireholidaytreats.com) where guests can book, in advance, a beauty treatment while on holiday, have local food and gourmet meals waiting for them in their lodge, buy tickets to local attractions and book day passes for a nearby leisure club with gym and swimming pool.

Richmond Castle is well worth a visit. Its picturesque ruins tower above the River Swale. The English Heritage shop features an exhibition that tells the story of the castle and its changing relationship with the town. During the First World War the so-called Richmond 16 were imprisoned in the castle.

They were conscientious objectors being punished for refusing to fight or do anything that might support the war effort. Their stand against the state is an inspirational story that reverberates to the present day.

The ruins of Easby Abbey stand about a mile downstream from Richmond Castle on the banks of the River Swale. According to folklore, an ancient tunnel links the two; but rather than go underground, I suggest you take a stroll alongside the river to the ruins, beside which is a fine parish church that boasts recently-restored medieval frescoes.

Fact file

• Flowerly Dell, Hudswell Lane, Richmond, North Yorkshire DL11 6BD. Tel: 01748 822406. Email: info@flowerlydell-lodges.com Website: www.flowerlydell-lodges.com Advance-ordering website: www.yorkshireholidaytreats.com