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Wednesday, March 6, 2002

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Relearn your ABCs with a \$25 French Savings Card

by Robert Haru Fisher

Three of the most popular of France's regions have come up with an elegant way to save money there. Alsace, Burgundy and Champagne-Ardenne are selling an ABC Privilege Card, good throughout all of 2002, for just \$25 (and it covers up to two persons).

When you present your card, you will be granted discounts and privileges from more than 100 "prestigious" participating vendors, including top restaurants and wine cellars, museums and monuments, even golf courses. This card is sold only to residents of the USA and Canada, by the way.

This is the first time any French region has attempted an added-value program on this scale and of such high quality, its sponsors say. You can save up to 20% at such places as top three-Michelin-starred restaurants like [Au Crocodile](#) in Strasbourg (5% off bills over €50) or [La Cote d'Or](#) in Saulieu (10% off bills over €50, only at weekday lunches). Also included are museums such as the [Musee d'Unterlinden](#) in Colmar (group rate; where the fabulous Issenheim Altarpiece is located) or the [Palais du Tau](#) in Reims (€1.50; original treasures and tapestries, as well as sculptures, from the Reims Cathedral).

Bigger savings can be had in many shops and wine cellars, where a 12% discount is in effect (sometimes with a minimum purchase). The biggest offers, two admissions for the price of one, are few, but good, including tickets to the Caves [Patriarche Pere et Fils](#) in Beaune (Burgundy's largest wine cellars, with wine tasting and gift); and river and canal cruises on the Marne through the city of Chalons-en-Champagne Tourism Office (June-September, daily at 2:30).

Among the many festivals and fairs in the ABC regions this year, consider the 14th International Music Festival in Colmar (July 3-14), the Champagne Fair in Troyes (May 3-June 9), the Joanne of Arc festival in Reims (June 22-23), the 39th Tour de

France in Epernay (July 10), the Grand Prix de France in Nevers Magny-Cours (July 19-21) and the 72nd International Gastronomic Fair in Dijon from October 31 to November 11.

To buy a card (again, good for up to two persons traveling together), go to www.euroquestpass.com and purchase online. You can also get the card through selected travel agents, tour operators, airlines and car rental companies.

For more information on Alsace, Burgundy and Champagne-Ardenne, and the Card, go to www.abcoffrance.net.

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Date: *March 6, 2002*