



# COGNAC

*country*

The Cognac region in perennially pretty south-west France is one of the most fascinating destinations in the whole of the country. Sure, there's unbridled history thanks to its namesake spirit, but there's also tourist interest in great store – whether you're there to learn more about your favourite digestif, or simply looking for an interesting and beautiful holiday. This year marks the town's 1,000th anniversary, so there will be celebrations whatever the time of year you choose to make your visit.

Let's start with the spirit itself. You'll probably be aware that – like champagne – only spirits made in Cognac can be called such. The town's terroir and appellation are perfect for cognac grapes and you can learn all about it through a spate of fascinating activities. Hennessy's new tour opens on 23 May and you'll want to try the Master Blender workshop at Camus. Visiting the Chateau de Cognac at Baron Otard is a must, as is learning about Martell's 301 years of history. Delight your taste buds by pairing chocolate with cognac at Remy Martin, discover a

sensory experience at Courvoisier and try a cookery class at Meukow.

As you'll discover, there's more to Cognac than the spirit: it's a way of life. The people are relaxed with a unique *savoir faire* that will leave you longing to return. Take a bike to explore the area, stopping at small-label shops and distilleries; it's the real spirit of France. Many vineyards have been passed down through generations and the producers' passion is as infectious as their expertise is impressive. Trace the Charente river and stay at a boutique hotel or B&B.

There are six growing areas or *crus*, all of which produce cognac with a different character; cognacs from the Grande Champagne region are the most prestigious thanks to the soil's chalk and clay content.

Nestled between Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Ile de Ré, the region is an ideal base for exploring south-west France. Airlines fly direct from the UK into Poitiers, La Rochelle and Bordeaux. To start planning your stay now, see [tourism-cognac.com](http://tourism-cognac.com) [lacharente.com](http://lacharente.com) [visit-poitou-charentes.com](http://visit-poitou-charentes.com)

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