

## COGNAC: THE ART OF DISTILLATION



As the leaves turn different shades of red and gold and crisp air of autumn settles across the picturesque region of Cognac, why not ditch the summer crowds and scorching heat in favour of cosy fireplaces and beautiful autumnal landscapes in a region made of a rich tapestry of history, culture and most importantly Cognac!

Starting in October and running until March every year, Cognac houses and winemakers across the Cognac area come together to launch a pivotal part of the winemaker's diary. The historic distillation process which has been unchanged since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, combines simple yet key steps to creating the eau-de-vie for Cognac and its winemakers. Being a part of this vital time to the region, offers a unique opportunity for locals and visitors to discover a tradition that is imbedded within the very fabric of Cognac and its people.

### 5 experiences to discover the savoir-faire behind the Distillation process

#### OBSERVATION

Hennessy Destination Distillery - From October to May, one of Cognac's most globally recognised Cognac houses offers visitors a unique [behind-the-scenes look at their historic distillation process](#). Visitors can tour the Groie distillery where the distillation process takes place, explore the working ageing cellars and view their historic 'Paradis' cellar which houses Maison Hennessy's oldest eaux-de-vie. The tour also includes free transportation and a tasting of Hennessy X.O neat and crafted cocktail. The tour is 150EUR per person and is offered in English. Alternatively you can enjoy a 'distillation breakfast' beside the stills at the [Chai du Rouissoir](#), which involves taking part in starting the 'Bonne Chauffe', a crucial moment in the distillation process to make Cognac (22EUR per person). Discover other opportunities to observe the distillation process at other maisons such as [Frapin](#), [Boinaud](#) and [Braastad](#).



#### WOODCRAFT

It is said in the Charentes region that there is no good Cognac without a good barrel, and that is such a saying that cask making has been elevated to an art. It is indeed in the wooden barrels that the spirit grows old, and develops its flavours, its complexity, and its very own signature. Each house of Cognac uses its own barrels, all handmade according to techniques which have been repeated and perfected throughout the centuries. When passing through Cognac, it is possible to dive into the amazing world of barrel making and visit some of the local cooperages such as the [Tonnellerie Allary in Archiac](#).

## BLENDING

We can't talk about the spirit of Cognac without thinking of the magical art of blending, operated with genius by the Cellar Masters of each house. It is possible to slip into the shoes of these incredible artists and blend one's own Cognac – either near La Rochelle at [Cognac Normandin Mercier](#) or in Cognac city centre, with [Camus](#) and [Bache Gabrielsen Cognac](#).

## BOTTLING

Another notable name among the Cognac houses, Maison Martell, is inviting visitors to experience a tour that not only gives further insight into the distillation process but also an exploration of discovery into [the savoir-faire of Martell!](#) Unique to this experience is that visitors get to take part in a 'montre' bottling workshop in an area of the distillery usually closed to the public. At the end of the tour, enjoy a cocktail making session and savour some dry Cognac at Martell's rooftop bar, Indigo by Martell, with picturesque views over Cognac. Guided tour and 'montre' sample bottling workshop with the tasting at the Indigo bar 75EUR per person (two people minimum).

## THE CELEBRATION

To kickstart the official start to the season, the Ban de la distillation returns from 25-26 October 2024 across Cognac. 'Ban' being a term coined as an official declaration of the process, it invites local producers, winemakers and visitors to come together for two days of various events, workshops, concerts and other fun activities.



## 5 unusual ways to explore Cognac and its craftsmanship this winter

### AN ESCAPE GAME

Maison Guillon-Painturaud spans back to three generations, with two sisters currently fronting the independent winemaking process and winery. In 2014 they were among one of the first vineyards in Charentes to be awarded a HVE (High Environmental Value), reflecting their commitment to the preservation of the terroir and natural ecosystem. [The Spirits Escape Game](#) is a fun and unique activity in Charentes that can be enjoyed with friends, family or work colleagues. Use your logic, team spirit and communication to solve puzzles, unlock secrets and retrieve the lost Cognac blend in time for the Cellar Master to meet his customer!

### A JEWELLERY SCHOOL

Located in Cognac's Chateau de Puyguiller, the [Cognac Jewellery School](#) offers various jewellery-making workshops aimed at different levels and inspired by the local countryside and vineyard. Workshops are led by expert jewellery maker Jess who trained and honed her craft in the Cotswolds, UK.

### A BAROQUE ART AND CLAY MODELLING WORKSHOP

Unlock your inner artist and creativity with imaginative workshops offered by [Charentes in Flow](#) and be guided by a local artist in a clay modelling workshop. You will find your own creative rhythm in a relaxing atmosphere, without any strict rules or constraints, and explore modelling

techniques. The creation of an object made by your own hands will make the moment unique and inspiring. From 30EUR per person, for up to 10 people. Alternatively, attend a masterclass on Baroque art. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Master will be honoured to share with you a lecture on this era and its art de vivre, or a practical drawing on your own drawing with period materials. Go home with your Rembrandt-style drawing as well as your quill pen. From 80EUR per person, with spaces for 6-10 people.

### A RESTORATION PROJECT

Discover a slice of local history at the 'Coulisses du Chantier' of the [Porte Saint Jacques](#), the historic fortified entrance to the town of Cognac, whose construction dates back to the 12th century! Having undergone various architectural phases and roles since its inception, the Porte Saint Jacques' strategic position West of Cognac allowed a crucial position for controlling traffic across the Charente River. Not only was the key to its commercial and trading activities, but also for the city's defence. Contributing a small fee of 5EUR to the ongoing restoration project which started this year with the aim of reopening in 2025, this offers a unique opportunity for visitors to learn more about the Porte's history and explore an area of the site that is currently closed to the public.

### A HUB OF MUSEUMS

The Musée des savoir-faire du Cognac and Maison du négociant–Musée d'art et d'histoire are a [cultural hub of museums](#) in the heart of Cognac. Dive deeper into Cognac's ethos through art, history and culture.

### Where to stay & eat

When planning a trip to Cognac, why not stay at the recently renovated [Mercure Angoulême Hotel de France](#), located in the heart of Angoulême? With close proximity to local Cognac houses, this could be the perfect place to unwind after a day of exploring the treasures of Cognac.

Fancy a bite to eat? Discover tasty, fresh local produce and dishes at [Le Tilleul du Gourmet](#) in Chasseneuil-sur-Bonnieure, the new gastronomic vision of chef and president of Tables Gourmands, Pascal Pressac.



### Find out more

For more on this unsung, authentic and creative region, [click here to browse the Explore Cognac Press Kit](#). It includes a large variety of entertaining things to do and experience, hotels and restaurants and, last but not least, suggested itineraries.

**-ENDS-**

**Further information** - [Explore Cognac site](#)

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Pictures 1, 2, 4, 5 - BNIC/Aurélien Terrade

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**About Atout France**

Atout France (France Tourism Development Agency) is responsible for promoting the development of the tourism industry, the country's largest economic sector. Atout France's primary mission is to monitor and analyse the supply and demand in the tourist market. Atout France is also committed to promoting destinations and tourism partners in and from France. This is achieved through marketing campaigns, online promotion, PR and working closely with the travel trade sector. Atout France is represented in the UK and Ireland from its office in London.