



Champagne

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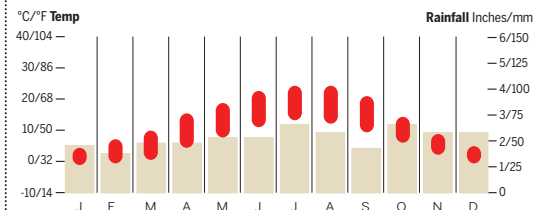
Why Go?

Champagne arouses all of the senses: the eyes feast on vine-covered hillsides and vertical processions of tiny, sparkling bubbles; the nose is tantalised by the damp soil and the heavenly bouquet of fermentation; the ears rejoice at the clink of glasses and the barely audible fizz; and the palate tingles with every sip. The imagination and the intellect are engaged as Champagne cellar visits reveal the magical processes – governed by the strictest of rules – that transform the world's most pampered pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay grapes into this region's most fabled wines.

Happily, despite the prestige of their vines, the people of Champagne offer visitors a warm and surprisingly easy-going welcome, both in the stylish cities and along the Champagne Routes, which wend their way through vineyards and villages to family-run cellars, where perfectly aged sparklers can be sampled, savoured, compared and purchased.

When to Go

Reims



Jun Reims pays homage to Joan of Arc with medieval re-enactments at the Fêtes Johanniques.

Aug Cellars open for free tastings during the Côte des Bar's Route du Champagne en Fête.

Sep Golden autumn days and cork-popping Champagne harvest celebrations.



Champagne Highlights

- 1** Ramble through hillside vineyards along the scenic **Champagne Routes** (p297)
- 2** Toast the end of a **cellar tour** in Épernay (p 301) or Reims (p 291) with a glass of fizz
- 3** Climb the tower of **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (p291) in Reims for 360-degree views across France's flattest region
- 4** Slip back to the Middle Ages wandering the half-timbered backstreets of **Troyes** (p303)
- 5** Tread in Renoir's impressionistic footsteps at **Atelier Renoir** (p 310) in Essoyes
- 6** Marvel at Champagne-making techniques and technology at the **Musée de la Vigne et du Vin** (p 300) in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger
- 7** Revel in the lordly mansions and Champagne houses lining Épernay's **Avenue de Champagne**(p301)
- 8** Experience in mid-20th-century France at the **Mémorial Charles de Gaulle**(p309)in Colombey-les-Deux-Églises

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