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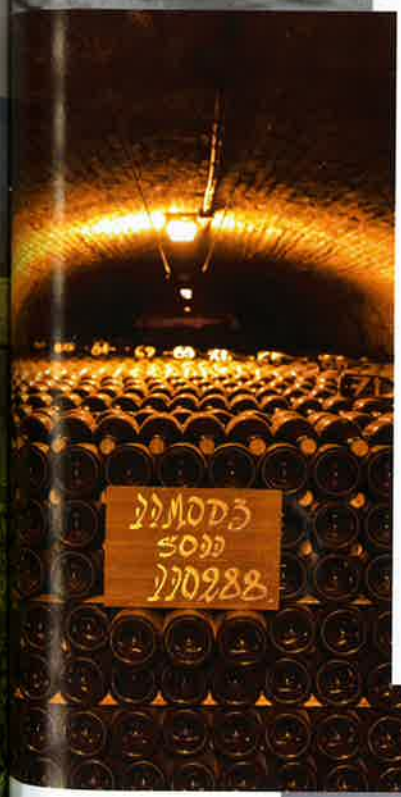


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# YOUR LUXURY GRAND TOUR OF CHAMPAGNE

Seductive, elegant and always up for a good time, Moët Impérial turns 150 this year, taking us to the birthplace in France to celebrate the world's most toasted fizz



**O**n the bubble trail in Champagne, in north-eastern France, we're looking for effervescence and a balance of richness, elegance and crispness – all qualities the region has in spades. The birthplace of good fizz is a natural beauty with and without the wine goggles worn so elegantly in these parts. Misty, vine-lined hills offset historic manors, rustic cottages and a quality of fresh air that goes straight to the head. The local climate is chilled and often drizzly – all the better for grape production and huddling around fires. “In Champagne, the sunshine is in the bottle,” says Moët & Chandon chef de cave – or head winemaker – Benoît Gouez (also our driver, the pharmacist and hotel receptionist). But when the sun breaks through, Champagne sparkles.

Meanwhile, as corks pop and golden liquid cascades into Riedel crystal, the tastings begin. It's Moët Impérial's 150th anniversary this year, so the pouring starts with this good-time drop. “You'll experience bright fruitiness, a seductive palate and elegant maturity,” says Gouez as he swirls, sniffs, sips and spits. At Moët, he says, the challenge is consistently hitting that mark year after year despite the ever-changing >



**CLOCKWISE  
TOP LEFT**  
Actress Dany Robin at Moët & Chandon in 1955; the rooms at Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa; cast-iron statues in Town Hall Garden, Épernay; the historic Moët & Chandon House; and underground in the Moët champagne cellars.



growing conditions; rain, hail, frost or shine. “Non-vintage Moët Impérial tastes the same everywhere around the world.” Except it tastes better at the source, in the gilded mansion where Napoléon Bonaparte and his first wife Joséphine resided.

The Champagne region sits on limestone. At the surface, the chalky texture is ideal for growing chardonnay, pinot noir and meunier grapes. Deeper down, the rock is hollowed into more than 200km of caves, providing the dark, damp and temperature-controlled conditions that are perfect for the fermentation and ageing processes – the keys to killer fizz.

In the commune of Épernay, the caves weave below Avenue de Champagne, a Grand Cru walk of fame including Perrier-Jouët, Pol Roger and Napoléon’s favourite, Moët & Chandon. The street is said to be one of the world’s richest thanks to the excess of 200 million bottles stowed underground.

Champagne is less than two hours from Paris by car or train, making it workable as a daytrip but even better as an overnight stay. Our pick is the Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa with its rooftop bar, two pools and stellar breakfast. Oh, and tastings start at 10am – by noon, Formula One podium mode is in full swing.



“MISTY, VINE-LINED HILLS SET A PICTURE-PERFECT BACKDROP TO HISTORIC MANORS, RUSTIC COTTAGES AND A QUALITY OF FRESH AIR THAT GOES STRAIGHT TO THE HEAD”



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP**  
One of two pools at Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa; Moët & Chandon House, founded in 1743; actress Catherine Deneuve gets into the Champagne spirit.



## BUBBLE HOPPING CLOSER TO HOME



### DOMAINE CHANDON, VIC

It’s not Champagne, but it doesn’t try to be. The cellar door, revamped by Foolsap Studio, is elegant eye candy in rose and burgundy. Visit [chandon.com.au](http://chandon.com.au)



### BAY OF FIRES, TASMANIA

Down by Pipers River, the cellar door for House of Arras, Eddystone Point and its own label is the home of Tasmanian bubbly. Visit [bayoffireswines.com.au](http://bayoffireswines.com.au)



### CLOVER HILL, TASMANIA

This Tassie sparking specialist embraces modern times with an architectural monument for a cellar door and views for days. Visit [cloverhillwines.com.au](http://cloverhillwines.com.au)

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