

Best Champagne houses to visit

Decanter's Champagne correspondent picks the best Champagne houses to visit for a truly memorable experience.



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There has never been a better time to visit Champagne. The region's hotels, restaurants and visitor experiences are finally catching up to the reputation of the wines themselves.

There's plenty to see around Reims and Épernay, both possible as day trips from Paris on the train, although it's certainly worth getting out into the villages to escape the tour groups.

Ayala, Aÿ

Aÿ is one of Champagne's most important grand cru villages, opposite Épernay in the Grande Vallée de la Marne. Its Pinot Noir has been renowned for centuries, although the house of Ayala (sister house of better-known Aÿ stalwart Bollinger) works increasingly with Chardonnay to create attractively delicate, refreshing Champagnes. Sitting at the top of the village, the property boasts a terrace with superb views. Deeply atmospheric and beautifully lit cellars lie beneath the house, and the lineup of wines is increasingly impressive, especially the Blanc de Blancs and Perle d'Ayala.

