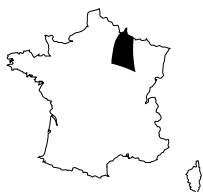


Champagne



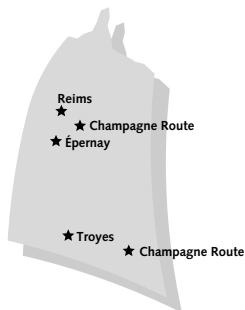
Known in Roman times as Campania, meaning 'plain', Champagne is a largely agricultural region and is celebrated around the world for the sparkling wines that have been produced here for more than three centuries. According to French law, only bubbly originating from this region – grown in designated areas (now being expanded to meet growing demand), then aged and bottled according to the strictest of rules – can be labelled as Champagne.

The production of this prestigious sparkling wine takes place mainly in two *départements*: Marne, whose metropolis is the 'Coronation City' of Reims, and the less prestigious (though increasingly respected) Aube, whose *préfecture* (departmental capital) is the ancient and picturesque city of Troyes, home to several exceptional museums and entire streets lined with half-timbered houses.

The town of Épernay, 30km to the south of Reims, is the de facto capital of Champagne (the drink, that is) and is the best place to head for *dégustation* (tasting session). The Champagne Route wends its way through the region's diverse vineyards, taking visitors from one picturesque – and prosperous – wine-growing village to the next. A number of name-brand *maisons* (literally 'houses', meaning Champagne producers) have achieved international renown, but much of the region's liquid gold is made by almost 5000 small-scale vigneron (wine makers) in 320-odd villages, many of whose family-run facilities welcome visitors.

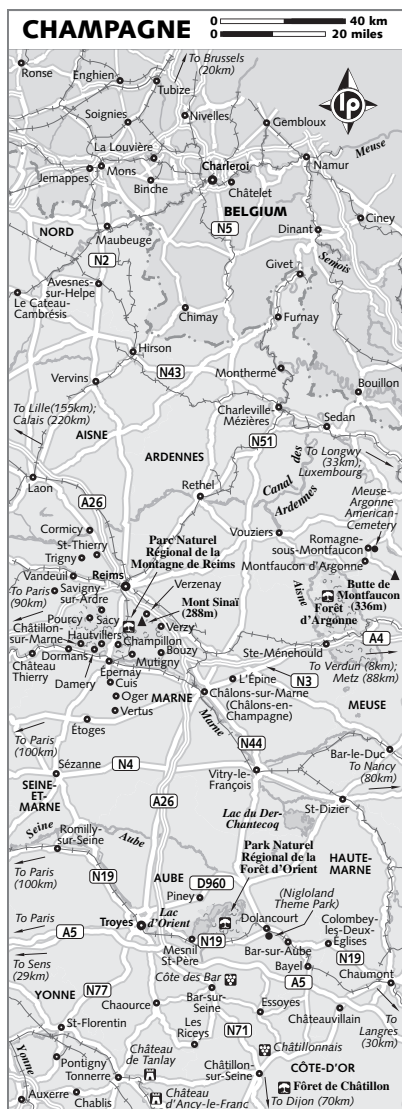
HIGHLIGHTS

- Climb to the top of the tower at Cathédrale Notre Dame in **Reims** (p357) for 360-degree views across France's flattest province
- Sip bubbly and nibble *biscuits roses* (pink biscuits) at the end of a cellar tour in **Épernay** (p363), the 'capital of Champagne'
- Explore the rolling vineyards along the various sections of Champagne's scenic **Champagne Route** (p360) by car or even by bicycle
- Wander through the back streets and alleys of the old city in **Troyes** (p366), one of the best-preserved in Europe



■ POPULATION: 1.3 MILLION

■ AREA: 25,606 SQ KM



History

Champagne's most famous convert to Christianity was the Merovingian warrior-king Clovis I, who founded the Frankish kingdom in the late 5th century and began the tradition of holding royal coronations in Reims. In the Middle Ages, the region – especially Troyes – grew rich from commercial

fairs at which merchants from around Europe bought and sold products from as far afield as the Mediterranean.

The region's name has been associated with bubbly since the late 17th century, when a Benedictine monk named Dom Pierre Pérignon perfected the process of using a second fermentation to make ho-hum still wine sparkle. But while the province may appear to be living the good life now, that hasn't always been the case. Champagne is dominated by an infertile chalk plain 'branded for its poverty and sterility with the unseemly name La Champagne Pouilleuse (literally 'flea-bitten Champagne')', to quote Sir Walter Scott in his *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French* (1827).

Getting There & Around

Champagne (www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com), just north of Burgundy, makes a refreshing stopover if you're driving from far northern France or Paris eastward to Lorraine or Alsace. With the TGV Est Européen line (p975) now up and running, both Reims and Épernay can be visited on a one-day excursion from Paris.

France's rail lines radiate out from Paris like the spokes of a wheel and, as it so happens, Reims, Épernay and Troyes are each on a different spoke (more or less). Although there are pretty good rail connections between Reims and Épernay, the best way to get from Reims to Troyes is by bus.

REIMS

pop 202,600

Over the course of a millennium (816 to 1825), some 34 sovereigns – among them two dozen kings – began their reigns as rulers in Reims' famed cathedral. Meticulously reconstructed after WWI and again following WWII, the city – whose name is pronounced something like 'rance' and is often anglicised as Rheims – is neat and orderly, with wide avenues and well-tended parks. Along with Épernay, it is the most important centre of Champagne production.

Orientation

In the commercial centre (north and north-west of the cathedral), the main streets are rue Carnot, rue de Vesle, rue Condorcet and, for shopping, rue de Talleyrand. The train station is almost exactly 1km northwest of the

REIMS

0 400 m
0 0.2 miles

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cathedral, across square Colbert from place Drouet d'Erlon, the city's major nightlife strip. Virtually every street in the city centre is one-way.

Information

Commercial banks can be found on rue Carnot and at the southern end of place Drouet d'Erlon. The tourist office can change money every day, including Sundays and holidays.

Clique et Croque Cyberspace (☎ 03 26 86 93 92; www.cliqueetcroque.com; 19 rue Chanzy; per min/hr/5hr/10hr €0.07/4/18/30; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun) Internet access opposite the Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Laundrette (59 rue Chanzy; ☎ 7am-9.30pm)

Post Office (2 rue Cérés; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Through the arches on the eastern corner of place Royale.

Tourist Office (☎ 03 26 77 45 00, 08 92 70 13 51; www.reims-tourisme.com; 2 rue Guillaume de Machault; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays mid-Apr-mid-Oct, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun & holidays mid-Oct-mid-Apr) The Reims City Card (€14) gets you a Champagne-house tour, an all-day bus ticket, entry to all four municipal museums and a guided tour of the cathedral.

Sights

All four museums run by the municipality – St-Rémi, Beaux-Arts, Reddition (see the boxed text, p358) and the Ancienne Collège des Jésuites (under renovation at the time of research) – along with the 1966 **Chapelle Fojtita** (☎ 03 26 40 06 96; 33 rue du Champ de Mars; ☎ 2-6pm Thu-Tue May-Oct or by appointment), are covered by the **Pass Découverte** (adult/student €3/free), which is valid for one month. All city museums are free on the first Sunday of the month.

CHURCHES & MUSEUMS

Imagine the extravagance, the over-the-top costumes and the egos writ large of a French royal coronation... The focal point of such pompous occasions was **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (www.cathedrale-reims.com, in French; place du Cardinal Luçon; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm, closed Sun morning), a Gothic edifice begun in 1211 on a site occupied by churches since the 5th century and mostly completed 100 years later. The most famous event to take place here was the coronation of Charles VII, with Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) at his side, on 17 July 1429.

Very badly damaged by artillery and fire during WWI, the 138m-long cathedral, now a Unesco World Heritage Site, is more interesting

for its dramatic history than its heavily restored architectural features. The finest stained-glass windows are the western facade's 12-petalled **great rose window**, its almost cobalt-blue neighbour below, and the rose window in the north transept (to the left), above the Flamboyant Gothic organ case (15th and 18th centuries) topped with a figure. Nearby is a 15th-century wooden **astronomical clock**. There are windows by Chagall (constructed in 1974) in the central axial chapel behind the high altar, one of which portrays Christ and Abraham, and, two chapels to the left, there is a statue of Joan of Arc. The tourist office rents audioguides (€5/9 for one/two people) with self-paced tours of the cathedral.

Those strong-of-thigh might want to climb the 250 steps of the **cathedral tower** (adult/12-25yr €6.50/4.50; ☎ Tue-Sat & Sun afternoon early May-early Sep, Sat & Sun afternoon mid-Mar-early May & early Sep-Oct) on a one-hour tour. Times and frequencies vary. Book at the Palais du Tau.

Next door, the **Palais du Tau** (☎ 03 26 47 81 79; www.palais-du-tau.fr, in French; 2 place du Cardinal Luçon; adult/student/under 18yr €6.50/4.50/free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun early May-early Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun early Sep-early May), a former archbishop's residence constructed in 1690, was where French princes stayed before their coronations and where they hosted sumptuous banquets afterwards. Now a museum, it displays truly exceptional statuary, liturgical objects and tapestries from the cathedral, some in the impressive Gothic Salle de Tau (Great Hall).

The rich collections of the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 03 26 47 28 44; 8 rue Chanzy; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Sun), housed in an 18th-century building a short distance to the west, include one of only four versions of Jacques-Louis David's world-famous *The Death of Marat* (yes, the bloody corpse in the bathtub), 27 works by Camille Corot (only the Louvre has more) and 13 portraits by German Renaissance painters Cranach the Elder and the Younger, lots of Barbizon School landscapes, art-nouveau creations by Émile Gallé and two works each by Monet, Gauguin and Pissarro.

At **Musée Hôtel Le Vergeur** (☎ 03 26 47 20 75; 36 place du Forum; adult/student/under 18yr €4/3/free; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Sun), in a 13th- to 16th-century town house, highlights include a series of furnished period rooms (kitchen, smoking room, Napoleon III's bedroom), engravings by Albrecht Dürer and a stunning Renaissance facade facing the interior garden.

V-E DAY IN REIMS

Nazi Germany, represented by General Alfred Jodl, surrendered unconditionally at 2.41am on 7 May 1945 at US General Dwight D Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims, now a museum known as the **Musée de la Reddition** (Surrender Museum; ☎ 03 26 47 84 19; 12 rue Franklin Roosevelt; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon). On display are military uniforms, contemporary photographs and original Allied battle maps affixed to the walls behind glass. There's a 12-minute film in French, German and English.

The 121m-long **Basilique St-Rémi** (place du Chanoine Ladame; ☹ 8am-7pm) is named in honour of Bishop Remigius, who baptised Clovis and 3000 Frankish warriors in 498. Once a Benedictine abbey church and now a Unesco World Heritage Site, its Romanesque nave and transept – worn but stunning – date mainly from the mid-11th century. The choir (constructed between 1162 and 1190) is in the early Gothic style, with a large triforium and, way up top, tiny clerestory windows. The 12th-century-style chandelier has 96 candles, one for each year of the life of St Rémi, whose tomb (in the choir) is marked by a mausoleum from the mid-1600s. The basilica is about 1.5km south-southeast of the tourist office; take the Citadine 1 or 2 or bus A or F to the St-Rémi stop.

Next door, **Musée St-Rémi** (☎ 03 26 85 23 36; 53 rue Simon; ☹ 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-7pm Sat & Sun), in a 17th- and 18th-century abbey, features local Gallo-Roman archeology, tapestries and 16th- to 19th-century military history in more than a dozen rooms and halls.

CHAMPAGNE HOUSES

The musty *caves* (cellars) and dusty bottles of eight Reims Champagne houses can be visited on guided tours. The following places all have fancy websites, cellar temperatures of 8°C to 10°C and frequent English-language tours that end, *naturellement*, with a tasting session. For details on how Champagne is made, see p77.

Mumm (☎ 03 26 49 59 70; www.mumm.com; 34 rue du Champ de Mars; tours adult/under 12yr €8/free; ☹ tours 9am-11am & 2-5pm Mar-Oct, Sat Nov-Feb) Mumm (pronounced 'moom'), the only *maison* in the

centre of Reims, was founded in 1827 and is now the world's third-largest producer (eight million bottles a year), offering edifying one-hour cellar tours in cellars containing 25 million bottles. Phone ahead for weekday tours from November to February. A tasting session with oenological commentary is available for €14/19.50 for two/three Champagnes.

Pommery (☎ 03 26 61 62 55; www.pommery.fr; 5 place du Général Gouraud; tours adult/student & 12-17yr/under 12yr €10/7/free; ☹ tours 9.30am-7pm Apr-mid-Nov, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Nov-Mar) Pommery occupies an Elizabethan-style hilltop campus (built 1868-78) 1.8km southeast of the cathedral. The year-round cellar tours take you 30m underground to Gallo-Roman quarries and 25 million bottles of bubbly. Phoning ahead for reservations is recommended. The complex often hosts contemporary art exhibitions. Take the E or V bus to the Gouraud stop.

Taittinger (☎ 03 26 85 84 33; www.taittinger.com; 9 place St-Nicaise; tours adult/under 12yr €10/free; ☹ tours 9.30am-noon & 2pm-4.30pm, closed Sat & Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar) The headquarters of Taittinger, 1.5km southeast of the cathedral, is an excellent place to come for a clear, straightforward presentation on how Champagne is actually made; there's no claptrap about 'the Champagne mystique' here. On the one-hour tours visitors are shown everything from *remuage* (bottle turning) to *dégorgement* (sediment removal at -25°C) to the corking machines. Parts of the cellars occupy 4th-century Roman stone quarries; other bits were made by 13th-century Benedictine monks. Take the Citadine 1 or 2 bus to the St-Nicaise stop.

OTHER SIGHTS

Pedestrianised **place Drouet d'Erlon** has almost as much neon as Las Vegas. Southeast of the **Subé Fountain** (built in 1907) – crowned by a gilded statue of Winged Victory – is a delightful covered shopping arcade called **Galerie Condorcet**. In rue Marx Dormoy, 12th- to 14th-century **Église St-Jacques**, the only medieval parish church extant in Reims, has some pretty awful postwar stained glass.

The handsome, mid-18th-century **place Royale**, surrounded by neoclassical arcades, reflects the magnificence of Louis XV's France (that's him as a Roman emperor up on the pedestal).

Roman relics from the 3rd century include the **Porte de Mars** (place de la République), a triumphal arch located just north of the centre, and the **Cryptoportique** (place du Forum; admission free; ☹ 2-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-mid-Oct), one of three galleries below street level thought to have been used for grain storage.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Centre International de Séjour (CIS; ☎ 03 26 40 52 60; www.cis-reims.com; chaussée Bocquaine; bed in s/d/q per person €40.60/24.90/18.90, with shared toilet €26.90/18.20/16.40; ☎ 24hr; ☎ ☒ ☒) The 85 brightly painted rooms are institutional and utterly devoid of charm but the price is right and it's just across the canal in Parc Léo Lagrange. To get there, take bus B, K, M or N to the Comédie stop or bus H to the Pont de Gaulle stop.

Hôtel Victoria (☎ 03 26 47 21 79; hotel-victoria-reims@wanadoo.fr; 35 place Drouet d'Erlon; s & d €30-69, tr & q €59-99; ☎ ☒) It sure ain't the Ritz but this 29-room hostelry on six floors above a friendly little café is central and cheap and there's a lift. Not all rooms have their own WC or air-con; room 52 looks straight onto the Subé Fountain.

Latino Hôtel (☎ 03 26 47 88 89; www.latinocafe.fr; in French; 33 place Drouet d'Erlon; s & d €54-74, apt €130; ☎ ☒ ☒) This almost boutique hotel above a buzzy musical café has a dozen gaily (think fruity) painted guestrooms (think cherry, pumpkin and aubergine) over five floors but no lift. The furnishings are fun, the welcome exceptionally warm and we love the quotes from the great and the good (Gandhi, Boris Vian) sgraffitoed on the hall walls. The apartment on the top floor looking straight onto the Cathédrale Notre Dame can accommodate up to five people.

Hôtel de la Cathédrale (☎ 03 26 47 28 46; www.hotel-cathedrale-reims.fr; 20 rue Liebergier; s/d/q €54/62/78; ☎ ☒ ☒) Charm, graciousness and a resident Yorkshire terrier greet guests at this hostelry run by a music-loving couple. The 17 tasteful rooms are smallish but pleasingly chintzy and some have recently been renovated. There are four floors but no lift. Go for room 14 with two windows or room 43 with views of Basilique St-Rémi and the hills to the south.

MIDRANGE

Grand Hôtel de l'Univers (☎ 03 26 88 68 08; www.hotel-univers-reims.com; in French; 41 bd Foch; s/d from €77/85, Nov-Apr from €70/79; ☎ ☒ ☒) This venerable three-star place has 42 large rooms, tastefully appointed, with high ceilings and bathrooms big enough to do jumping jacks in. We love the mix of artwork and vintage posters in the hallways and the attached art-deco Au Congrès restaurant. Corner room 222 is filled with light and catches fleeting glimpses of the cathedral.

TOP END

ourpick Grand Hôtel des Templiers (☎ 03 26 88 55 08; http://pagesperso-orange.fr/hotel.templiers; 22 rue des Templiers; r €190-280, ste €350; ☎ ☒ ☒ ☒) Built in the 1800s as the home of a rich Champagne merchant, this luxurious four-star neo-Gothic extravaganza retains its original ceilings, stained glass and furnishings. The sweeping wooden staircase imparts a certain retro theatricality but the 17 rooms and suites come with luscious fabrics and modern marble bathrooms. A bonus is the basement swimming pool. Wheelchair access available.

Eating

Côté Cuisine (☎ 03 26 83 93 68; 43 bd Foch; starters €6-21, mains €11.80-22.50, weekday lunch menus €13.50-16.90, dinner menus €32.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A spacious, modern place with well-regarded traditional French cuisine. Try to get a table giving on to square Colbert.

Brasserie Le Boulingrin (☎ 03 26 40 96 22; www.boulingrin.fr; 48 rue de Mars; starters €6.50-14, mains €13-24, menus €18-25; ☎ Mon-Sat) This place, whose name is derived from the English 'bowling green' (as in lawn bowling), offers a minitrip back in time with original decor and fittings, including an old-time zinc bar, dating to 1925. The culinary focus is on *fruits de mer* (seafood).

L'Apostrophe (☎ 03 26 79 19 89; 59 place Drouet d'Erlon; starters €6.50-15.10, mains €14.50-25, weekday lunch menu €14; ☎ lunch & dinner) This stylish (and sprawling) café-brasserie dispenses some mean *piscines* (enormous cocktails for several people) along with its French and international cuisine. It's a perennial favourite thanks to its chic atmosphere, summertime terrace and good value. Open as a café straight through from 9am to 1am.

Glue Pot (☎ 03 26 47 36 46; 49 place Drouet d'Erlon; meals €7.50-17; ☎ 10am-3am, meals noon-2.30pm & 7-11pm, to 1.30am Fri & Sat) This eclectic pub doubles as a decent Tex-Mex eatery (fajitas are €17) that also serves burgers (the €15 Big Boy has an egg on top) and pizzas (€9.30 to €11.90) to patrons seated on bright red banquettes under ersatz Tiffany lamps.

Le Continental (☎ 03 26 47 01 47; 95 place Drouet d'Erlon; starters €15.90-27, mains €16.90-39, menus, some incl wine, €18.90-55; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) Built in the early 20th century, this classy, marble-floored place with an extravagant golden 'tree' holding up the ceiling serves up panoramic views and classic French dishes such as *magret de canard au miel d'acacia* (duck breast

fillet with acacia honey; €15.90). It's open for drinks all afternoon and is a great spot for a teatime glass/bottle of Champagne (€8/44).

SELF-CATERING

The **Marché du Boulingrin** (place du Boulingrin; ☎ 5am-3pm Sat), a sprawling food market under a tent, may someday move back into the *halles* (covered market) due south, which has been shut tight since telephone numbers had six digits. Along the south side of place du Forum you'll find several food shops, including a *fromagerie* (cheese shop) called **La Cave aux Fromages** (12 place du Forum; ☎ Tue-Sat). There's also a **Monoprix supermarket** (21 rue de Chativesle; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat).

Drinking & Entertainment

Brasseries and cafés line brightly lit place Drouet d'Erlon, the focal point of Reims' nightlife. *Le Monocle*, a free guide available at the tourist office, lists pubs and bars, clubs and cultural venues.

Cinéma Opéra (☎ 03 26 47 13 54; 3 rue Théodore Dubois; adult/concession €7.60/6) shows nondubbed films.

Kilberry (☎ 03 26 88 46 47; 182 rue de Vesle; ☎ 10am-12.15am Mon-Thu, to 1.15am Fri, 4pm-1.15am Sat) Almost at the canal, the Kilberry is festooned with 'olde Oirish' farm implements and has Beamish on tap. Happy hour is 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

ourpick Waïda (☎ 03 26 47 44 49; 5 place Drouet d'Erlon; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Wed-Sun) An old-fashioned *salon de thé* (tearoom) and confectioner with mirrors, mosaics and marble. Waïda is the place to buy a box of *biscuits roses* (€3.30), traditionally nibbled with Champagne.

Le Soft (☎ 03 26 35 78 19; www.softclub.fr; 2bis av Georges Clemenceau; ☎ bar from 5.30pm, club from 10.30pm-late Thu-Sat) Sprawling and *dynamique*, this bar-disco, about 1km southeast of the cathedral, has more flashing blue light than a cop shop. It's House Electro on Thursday, Lady's Night on Friday and free before 1am on Saturday.

Shopping

Vins CPH (☎ 03 26 40 12 12; www.vinscp.com; 3 place Léon Bourgeois; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7.30pm Sat) In the cellar at the end of a courtyard is where locals buy good-value wines.

Le Parvis (☎ 03 26 47 44 44; place du Cardinal Luçon; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Oct, to 7pm Nov-Mar) This excellent bet faces the cathedral and has an enormous range of Champagnes and regularly scheduled tastings (€7 to €10).

Getting There & Away BUS

The best way to get to Troyes (€21.80, 1¼ to 2¼ hours, three or four daily on weekdays, two at the weekend and holidays) is to take a bus operated by **TransChampagneArdenne** (☎ 03 26 65 17 07; www.stdmame.fr, in French). The stop is in front of the train station to the southwest; hours are posted in the bus shelter.

CAR

Rental companies with offices facing the train station car park include **ADA** (☎ 03 26 82 57 81) and **Rent a Car Système** (☎ 03 26 77 87 77).

TRAIN

Direct services link Reims with Épernay (€5.70, 22 to 38 minutes, 23 daily weekdays, 14 daily weekends), Laon (€8.50, 35 to 55 minutes, eight daily Monday to Friday, six on Saturday, two on Sunday) and Paris' Gare de l'Est (€22.70, 1¼ hours, 10 to 15 daily), half of which are TGVs (€28, 45 minutes).

In the city centre, seek information and buy tickets at the **Boutique SNCF** (1 cours Jean-Baptiste Langlet; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat).

Getting Around

An outfit called **Arthemys Véloservices** (☎ 06 25 49 52 57; www.athemys-services.com) will deliver a bike 'ready to roll' wherever you're staying in Reims for €6/10/15 per half-day/full day/weekend.

Two circular bus lines, the clockwise Citadine 1 and the anticlockwise Citadine 2 (single ticket €1, all-day *ticket journée* €3, 10-ticket *carnet* €8.60), operated by **TUR** (☎ 03 26 88 25 38; www.tur.fr, in French; 6 rue Chanzy; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat), serve most of the major sights of Reims. Most TUR lines begin their last runs at about 8.50pm; the five night lines operate until 12.15am.

Pay-and-display **car parking** (per hr €0.70, maximum 5hr) is in effect from 9am to noon and 2pm to 7pm Monday to Saturday. Construction of a new tram line, scheduled to start running in 2010, was creating traffic congestion at the time of writing, especially in the centre near the Palais de Justice.

For a taxi, ring ☎ 03 26 47 05 05.

AROUND REIMS

The **Champagne Route** (Route du Champagne) weaves its way among neatly tended vines covering the slopes between small villages, some

with notable churches or speciality museums, some quite ordinary. All along the route, beautiful panoramas abound and small-scale *producteurs* (Champagne producers) welcome travellers in search of bubbly, though you should phone ahead before stopping by: many are closed around the *vendange* (grape harvest, ie September and into October). Tourist offices, including the one at Reims, can supply you with an excellent (and free) colour-coded, 210-page booklet, *The Discovery Guide*.

The signposted tertiary roads that make up the Champagne Route meander through the Marne's four most important wine-growing areas. The first two start in Reims, the last two in Épernay.

Massif de St-Thierry (70km; mainly pinot noir and meunier vines) – northwest of Reims, through such villages as Cormicy (WWI national cemetery), St-Thierry (Benedictine monastery with 12th-century chapel), Trigny (where French kings-to-be began their journey to Reims and coronation), flower-bedecked Vandeuil and Savigny-sur-Ardre (where Charles de Gaulle first broadcast his appeal for French resistance).

Montagne de Reims (70km; mainly pinot noir vines) – between Reims and Épernay, through Sacy (the church has an elegant spire), Verzenay (identifiable from afar by the lighthouse), Bouzy (famed for its nonsparkling reds) and Mutigny (has a 2km *sentier de vignoble* 'vineyard walking path').

Vallée de la Marne (90km; mainly pinot meunier vines) – west of Épernay towards Dormans, through Champillon (panoramic views), Hautvillers (see right), Damery (medieval church), Châtillon-sur-Marne (huge statue of Pope Urban II, initiator of the First Crusade) and Dormans (château and park).

Côte des Blancs (100km; chardonnay vines) – south of Épernay towards Sézanne, through Cuis (Romanesque church), Oger (flowers galore), Vertus (fountains and a medieval church), Étoges (church and 17th-century château) and medieval Sézanne.

ON THE FACE OF IT

Louis XVI's attempt to escape from Paris in 1791 ended at **Ste-Ménéhould**, 79km east of Reims, when the monarch, by then known by the commoner name of Louis Capet (all kings since the 10th-century Hugh Capet were declared to have ruled illegally) and his consort Marie-Antoinette were recognised by the postmaster thanks to the king's portrait having been printed on a banknote.

Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims

The Montagne de Reims (see left) section of the Champagne Route skirts the Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims, endowed with extensive forests and a botanical curiosity, the mutant beech trees known as **faux de Verzy** (see <http://verzy.verzenay.free.fr> for photos). To get to the *faux* from the village of Verzy in the northeastern corner of the park, follow the signs up the D34; the first trees can be seen about 1km from 'Les Faux' car park.

Across the D34, a short trail leads through the forest to a *point de vue* (panoramic viewpoint) atop 288m-high **Mont Sinai**.

Hautvillers

pop 865

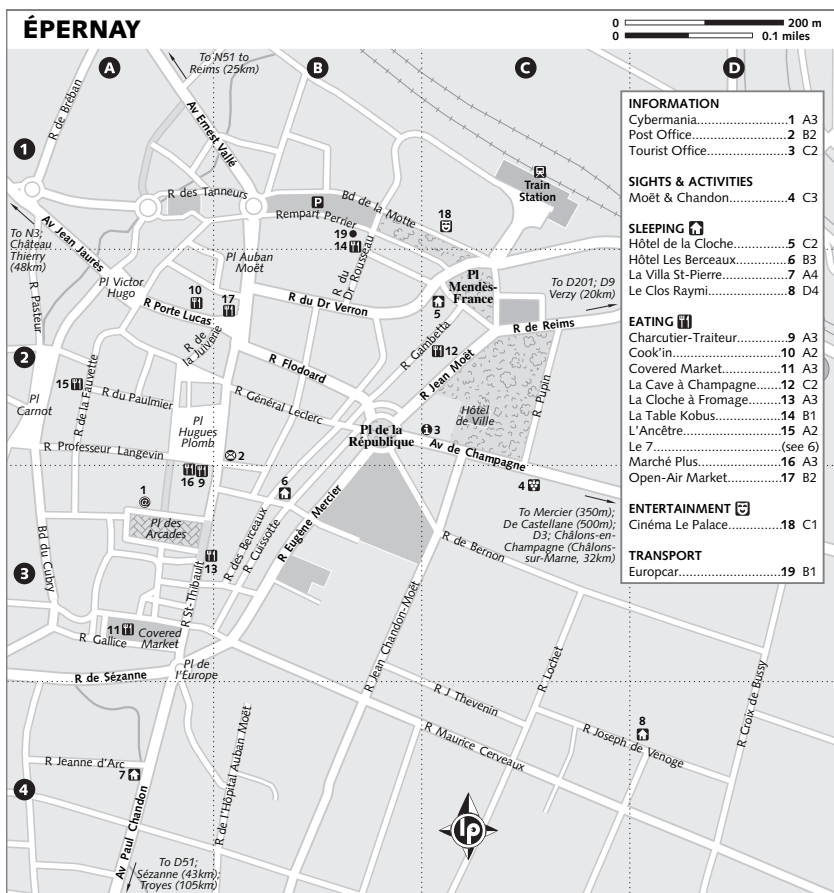
It was in this tidy village, 7km north of Épernay, that, more than three centuries ago, Dom Pérignon (1639–1715) created Champagne as we know it. It thus lays claim to being *le berceau du champagne* (the cradle, or birthplace, of Champagne). The good Dom's tomb is in front of the altar of the hilltop **Église Abbatiale** (abbey church), which has lots of 17th-century woodwork (eg choir stalls); the bones in the box to the right are those of St Nivard, 7th-century archbishop of Reims and the abbey's founder. Astonishing vineyard views await a few hundred metres north of the centre along route de Fismes (D386) and south along route de Cumières (a road leading to the D1). Hautvillers is twinned with the Alsatian town of Eguisheim, which may help explain why two **storks** – Petrus and Leontine, if you must know – live in a *voilière* (aviary) 800m towards Épernay along the D386. They had five *cigogneaux* (storklings) in May 2007, boosting France's stork population of 700 by almost three-quarters of a percentage point. (See the boxed text, p392.)

Details on the village and region are available at the **tourist office** (☎ 03 26 57 06 35; www.tourisme-hautvillers.com, in French; place de la République; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 1.30–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun Apr–mid–Oct, 10am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Sat mid–Oct–Mar).

ÉPERNAY

pop 24,500

Prosperous Épernay, the self-proclaimed *capitale du champagne* and home to many of the world's most celebrated Champagne houses, is the best place in Champagne for touring cellars and sampling bubbly. The



town also makes a good base for exploring the Champagne Route. By rail, Épernay, which is 25km south of Reims, can be visited as a day trip from Reims – or even Paris on the new TGV Est Européen line.

Beneath the streets in 110km of subterranean cellars, more than 200 million bottles of Champagne, just waiting to be popped open for some sparkling occasion, are being aged. In 1950, one such cellar – owned by the irrepresible Mercier (see opposite) – hosted a car rally without the loss of a single bottle!

Orientation

Av de Champagne, where many of Épernay's Champagne houses are based, stretches east

from the town's commercial heart, whose liveliest streets are rue Général Leclerc and rue St-Thibault. South of place de la République are car parks.

Information

Cybermania (☎ 03 26 52 26 26; www.cybermania51.com, in French; 11 place des Arcades; per 30min/hr €2/3;

🕒 2pm-midnight Mon, from 11am Tue-Sat, 2-8pm Sun)

Post Office (place Hugues Plomb; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has currency exchange.

Tourist Office (☎ 03 26 53 33 00; www.ot-epernay.fr; 7 av de Champagne; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun & holidays mid-Apr-mid-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Oct-mid-Apr) Has details on cellar visits, car touring, and walking and cycling options.

Tours

CHAMPAGNE HOUSES

Many of the *maisons* on or near av de Champagne offer interesting, informative cellar tours, followed by tasting and a visit to the factory-outlet bubbly shop. For details on the Champagne production process, see p77.

Moët & Chandon (☎ 03 26 51 20 20; www.moët.com; 1/2 glasses adult €11/18, 10-18yr €6.70, under 10yr free; 20 av de Champagne; ☎ tours 9.30-11.30am & 2-4.30pm, closed Sat & Sun mid-Nov-Mar) This prestigious *maison* offers frequent one-hour tours that are among the region's most impressive. If you sell your car you might be able to buy a 6L methuselah of superpremium Dom Pérignon *millésime* (vintage Champagne) of 1995, a bargain at €6000 plus.

De Castellane (☎ 03 26 51 19 11; www.castellane.com, in French; 64 av de Champagne; 1/2/3 glasses adult €7/12/18, under 10yr free; ☎ tours 10.30-11.15am & 2.30-5.15pm mid-Mar-Dec, Sat & Sun Jan-mid-Mar) The 45-minute tours take in the *maison's* informative bubbly museum, dedicated to elucidating the *méthode champenoise* and its diverse technologies. The reward for climbing the 237 steps up the 66m-high tower is a panoramic view.

Mercier (☎ 03 26 51 22 22; www.champagnemercier.com; 68-70 av de Champagne; adult/12-17yr €7/3; ☎ tours 9.30-11.30am & 2-4.30pm mid-Mar-late Nov, closed Tue & Wed late Nov-mid-Mar) The most popular brand in France (and No 2 in overall production) has thrived on unabashed self-promotion since it was founded in 1847 by Eugène Mercier, a trailblazer in the field of eye-catching publicity stunts and the virtual creator of the cellar tour. Everything here is flashy, including the 160,000L barrel that took two decades to build (for the Universal Exposition of 1889), the lift that transports you 30m underground and the laser-guided touring train. No gimmick: the *chef de cave* (cellar manager) is a woman.

VINEYARDS

Champagne Domi Moreau (☎ 06 30 35 51 07, after 7pm 03 26 59 45 85; www.champagne-domimoreau.com; tours €20; ☎ tours 9.30am & 2.30pm except Wed, no tours 2nd half of Aug, Christmas period & Feb school holidays) Runs three-hour minibus tours (in French and English) to nearby vineyards. Pick-up is across the street from the tourist office on av de Champagne. It also organises two-hour bicycle tours of the vineyards for €10. Call ahead for reservations.

Sleeping

Épernay's hotels are often full on weekends from Easter to September and on weekdays in May, June and September.

La Villa St-Pierre (☎ 03 26 54 40 80; www.villasaintpierre.fr, in French; 1 rue Jeanne d'Arc; d €33-50, with washbasin €23; ☎ ☎) In an early-20th-century mansion that has hardly changed in half a century, this homey and very friendly one-star place has 15 simple rooms that retain the charm and atmosphere of yesteryear.

Hôtel de la Cloche (☎ 03 26 55 15 15; hotel-de-la-cloche.c.prin@wanadoo.fr; 5 place Mendès France; d from €48; ☎) This rather snooty place has two stars and 19 cheerful rooms with bright, compact bathrooms. Some rooms have park views. The attached restaurant gets rave reviews.

Hôtel Les Berceaux (☎ 03 26 55 28 84; www.lesberceaux.com; 13 rue des Berceaux; d €95-115, ste €130; ☎) This three-star institution, founded in 1889, has 28 comfortable rooms, each different and all with a modern *champenois* ambience. Businesspeople usually stay here.

Le Clos Raymi (☎ 03 26 51 00 58; www.closraymi-hotel.com; 3 rue Joseph de Venoge; d from €100, ste €160; ☎ ☎) Staying at this delightful three-star place away from the centre is like being a

STAY-AT-HOME TIPPLE

Unlike Cognac, 95% of which is consumed outside France, about 46% of the 330 million-plus bottles of Champagne produced each year are popped open, sipped and savoured in France itself. That doesn't leave much for the rest of us, especially when you consider how many bottles are wasted christening ships or showering victorious football players! But help is at hand. The body that regulates the Champagne AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; trademark body for food and wine) label has agreed to expand the wine-growing area for the first time since 1927. An additional 40 very lucky villages will henceforth be able to label their sparkling wine 'Champagne'.

Large *maisons* with global brand recognition, many of them owned by international luxury-goods conglomerates, send a high percentage of their production to other countries (Moët & Chandon, for example, exports 80% of its bubbly), in part because profit margins are higher, but the many small *producteurs* continue to serve an almost exclusively domestic clientele. Just under 151 million bottles left France in 2007, destined for the following countries (among others): UK (38.9 million bottles), US (21.7 million), Japan (9.1 million), Russia (1.03 million) and China (656,000).

personal guest of Monsieur Chandon of Champagne fame, who occupied this luxurious home over a century ago. The seven romantic rooms have giant beds, 3.7m-high ceilings, ornate mouldings and parquet floors. In winter there's often a fire in the cosy modernist living room.

Eating

Rue Gambetta is home to five pizzerias and two kebab joints.

L'Ancêtre (☎ 03 26 55 57 56; 20 rue de la Fauvette; starters €8.30-12, mains €13-22, menus €15.50-29; ☹ closed Mon & lunch Wed) A rustic eatery with a grape-patterned stained-glass door, traditional French cuisine and a mere half-dozen tables. Book ahead.

Le 7 (☎ 03 26 55 28 84; Hôtel Les Berceaux, 13 rue des Berceaux; starters €9-15, mains €19-27, menus €17.50 & €24; ☹ closed Mon & Tue) This bistro at the Hôtel Les Berceaux (it also has a more formal restaurant) has traditional French fare and a relaxed vibe.

La Cave à Champagne (☎ 03 26 55 50 70; 16 rue Gambetta; starters €9-15, mains €12-16, menus €16.50 & €32; ☹ closed Tue & Wed) 'The Champagne Cellar' is well regarded by locals for its Champenois cuisine, including *potée à la champenoise* (poultry and pork oven-baked with cabbage; €14).

Cook'in (☎ 03 26 32 04 23; 20 rue Porte Lucas; starters €10.85-16.85, mains €13.50-18, menus €17.50-27.50; ☹ closed Sun, lunch Mon & dinner Wed) This very stylish bistro with black, white and red leather banquettes near the open-air market serves excellent 'enlightened' French provincial cuisine.

La Table Kobus (☎ 03 26 51 53 53; 3 rue du Docteur Rousseau; menus €20-47; ☹ closed Mon, dinner Sun & Thu) French cuisine in versions traditional and creative, all served amid fin-de-siècle decor.

SELF-CATERING

Covered market (Halle St-Thibault; rue Gallice;

☹ 8am-noon Wed & Sat)

Open-air market (place Auban Moët; ☹ Sun morning)

Charcutier-Traiteur (9 place Hugues Plomb; ☹ 8am-12.45pm & 3-7.30pm, closed Sun & Wed) Sells scrumptious prepared dishes.

La Cloche à Fromage (19 rue St-Thibault; ☹ 9am-12.15pm & 3.15-7pm Tue-Sat) Has wonderful cheeses and other food products.

Marché Plus (13 place Hugues Plomb; ☹ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Grocery store.

Entertainment

Cinéma Le Palace (☎ 08 92 68 07 51; www.le-palace.fr; 33 bd de la Motte; adult/concession €7.50/6.50) Shows nondubbed films just southwest of the train station.

Getting There & Around

From the **train station** (place Mendès France) there are direct services to Nancy (€26.40, two hours, five or six daily), Reims (€5.70, 23 to 32 minutes, 23 daily weekdays, 14 daily weekends) and Paris' Gare de l'Est (€19.40, 1¼ hours, eight to 13 daily).

Cars can be hired from **Europcar** (☎ 03 26 54 90 61; 20 rempart Perrier; 8am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat).

Parking in the lots south of place de la République is free for the first hour and costs €1.10 for the 2nd and subsequent hours.

TROYES

pop 60,500

Troyes – like Reims, one of the historic capitals of Champagne – has a lively old centre that's graced with one of France's finest ensembles of Gothic churches and medieval and Renaissance half-timbered civic buildings. It is one of the best places in France to get a sense of what Europe looked like back when Molière was penning his finest plays and the Three Musketeers were swashbuckling. Several unique and very worthwhile museums are another lure.

Troyes does not have any Champagne cellars. However, you can shop till you drop in its scores of outlet stores that carry brand-name clothing and accessories, a legacy of the city's long-time role as France's knitwear capital.

Orientation

Although the Aube was almost strong-armed out of the Champagne trade (see Côte des Bar, p369), Troyes' medieval city centre – bounded by bd Gambetta, bd Victor Hugo, bd du 14 Juillet and the Seine – is, cruelly, shaped like a Champagne cork (*bouchon*). The main commercial street is rue Émile Zola.

Information

The tourist office annexe changes money when the banks are closed but the rate is poor.

Cyber Café Viardin Micro (8 rue Viardin; per 1/10/20hr €2/6/14; ☹ 2-7pm Mon, 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Tue, to midnight Wed-Sat)



Post Office (38 rue Louis Ulbach; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Has currency exchange.

Tourist Office (www.tourisme-troyes.com) Train Station (☎ 03 25 82 62 70; 16 bd Carnot; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat year-round except holidays, 10am-1pm Sun & holidays Nov-Mar); City Centre (☎ 03 25 73 36 88; rue Mignard; ☎ 10am-7pm daily Jul-mid-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun & holidays Apr-Jun & mid-Sep-Oct, closed Nov-Mar) Faces the west facade of Église St-Jean. Pass' Troyes (€12), on sale at the tourist offices, includes free entry to all seven of the city's museums, a Champagne tasting session, a tour (with guide or audioguide) of the old city, a horse-drawn carriage ride (July and August) and discounts at various factory outlet shops.

Sights

OLD CITY

Half-timbered houses line the streets of Troyes' old centre, rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1524. Lanes worth exploring include **rue Paillot de Montabert**, **rue Champeaux**, **rue de Vauluisant**, **rue de la Pierre** and **rue Général Saussier**.

Off rue Champeaux (between No 30 and 32), a stroll along tiny **ruelle des Chats** (Alley of the Cats), as dark and narrow as it was four centuries ago, is like stepping back into the Middle Ages. The stones at intervals along the sides were installed to give pedestrians a place to stand when horses clattered by. An hour-long tour of the old city by audioguide, called the **Cat Trail** (adult/concession €5.50/3), is available from the tourist offices.

CHURCHES

Known as *la ville aux 10 églises* (the town with 10 churches), Troyes sees its most important house of worship in **Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul** (place St-Pierre; ☎ 10am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun & holidays Sep-Jun, closed Mon Nov-Mar), a 114m-long hybrid that incorporates elements from every period of *champenois* Gothic architecture. The Flamboyant Gothic **west facade** dates from the mid-16th century, whereas the choir and transepts are more than 250 years older. The interior is illuminated by a spectacular series of about 180 **stained-glass windows** (dating from the 13th to the 17th centuries) that, on a sunny day, shine like jewels. Also of interest: a fantastical baroque **organ** (from the 1730s) sporting musical putti (cherubs) and a tiny **treasury** (☎ Jul & Aug) with enamels from the Meuse Valley. Back in 1429, Joan of Arc and Charles VII stopped off here on their way to his coronation in Reims. A

TROYES & HISTORY

Chances are Troyes has already played a role in your life:

- If you've ever enjoyed a story about Lancelot or the search for the Holy Grail you owe a debt to the 12th-century poet and troubadour Chrétien (Chrestien) de Troyes, who was, well, a local boy.
- Every time you've purchased gold bullion you've done so using the troy ounce, a unit of measure derived from exchange standards established in Troyes in the 12th and 13th centuries.
- Whenever you've bought a Lacoste shirt, Petit Bateau kids clothing or sexy Dim underwear, you've paid homage to a brand name created in what has traditionally been France's knitwear capital.

block to the west, the **rococo wrought-iron gate** (rue de la Cité) of a one-time hospital – now part of the university – and dating back to 1760 glitters in glamorous gilded glory after a complete overhaul in 2000.

Église Ste-Madeleine (rue Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm, closed Sun morning), Troyes' oldest and most interesting church, has an early-Gothic nave and transept from the mid-12th century; the choir and tower weren't built until the Renaissance. The main attractions are the splendid Flamboyant Gothic **rood screen**, which dates from the early 1500s, and the 16th-century **stained glass** in the presbytery portraying scenes from Genesis. In the nave, the statue of a deadly serious **Ste-Marthe** (St Martha), around the pillar from the wooden pulpit, is considered a masterpiece of the 15th-century Troyes School.

The Gothic **Basilique St-Urbain** (place Vernier; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm, closed Sun morning) was begun in 1262 by Pope Urban IV, who was born in Troyes and whose father's shoemaker shop once stood on this spot. It has some fine 13th-century stained-glass windows. In a chapel on the south side is *La Vierge au Raisin* (Virgin with Grapes), a graceful, early-15th-century stone statue of Mary and the Christ Child.

MUSEUMS

Some 10,000 centuries-old hand tools, worn to a sensuous lustre by generations of skilled hands, bring to life a world of manual skills

made obsolete by the Industrial Revolution at **Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière** (Museum of Tools & Crafts; ☎ 03 25 73 28 26; www.maison-de-l-outil.com; 7 rue de la Trinité; adult/student & 12-18yr/under 18yr €6.50/3/free, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☹ 10am-6pm). Run by a national crafts guild, this unique and – if you'll excuse the expression – riveting museum is in the magnificent Renaissance-style Hôtel de Mauroy (built in 1556). Videos show how the tools were used and what they produced. Definitely worth a visit, even if you're not a 'boy'.

Musée d'Art Moderne (☎ 03 25 76 26 80; place St-Pierre; adult/student under 25yr, under 18yr €5/free, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☹ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) owes its existence to all those alligator shirts, whose global success allowed the museum's benefactors, Lacoste entrepreneurs Pierre and Denise Lévy, to amass this outstanding collection. Housed in an erstwhile bishop's palace (from the 16th to 18th centuries), the museum focuses on glass (especially the work of local glassmaker Maurice Marinot), ceramics and French painting (including lots of fauvist works) created between 1850 and 1950. Featured artists include Derain, Dufy, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso and Soutine

Musée St-Loup (☎ 03 25 76 21 68; 1 rue Chrestien de Troyes; adult/student under 25yr, under 18yr €4/free, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☹ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), across the street from the cathedral, has a wide-ranging and sometimes surprising collection of medieval sculpture, enamel, archeology and natural history. In the same building is the **Museum d'Histoire Naturelle** (Museum of Natural History), which is

included in the Musée St-Loup entry fee and keeps the same hours.

If you come down with an old-fashioned malady – scurvy, perhaps, or unbalanced humours – the place to go is the **Apothicaire de l'Hôtel-Dieu-le-Comte** (☎ 03 25 80 98 97; quai des Comtes de Champagne; adult/student under 25yr, under 18yr €2/free, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☹ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), a fully outfitted, wood-panelled pharmacy from 1721. The empty ground storey of the building across the little courtyard, now a herb garden, once served as a morgue.

Hôtel de Vauluisant (☎ 03 25 73 05 85; 4 rue de Vauluisant; adult/student under 25yr, under 18yr €3/free, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☹ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), a haunted-looking Renaissance-style mansion-turned-museum, has two sections. **Musée de l'Art Troyen** (Museum of Troyes Art) features the evocative paintings, stained glass and statuary (stone and wood) of the Troyes School, which flourished here during the economic prosperity and artistic ferment of the early 16th century. **Musée de la Bonneterie** (Hosiery Museum) showcases the sock-strewn story of Troyes' 19th-century knitting industry. Some of the machines on display look not unlike enormous Swiss watches.

Sleeping

A number of two- and three-star hotels face the train station.

Hôtel Le Trianon (☎ 03 25 73 18 52; 2 rue Pithou; d with washbasin/shower €25/34, tr/q €72/82; ☹ reception 11am-8pm Mon, 6.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) At this gay-owned very convivial place, the rainbow flag flies proudly from the balcony. The eight

RASHI

During the 11th and 12th centuries, a small Jewish community was established in Troyes under the protection of the counts of Champagne. Its most illustrious member was Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (1040–1105), better known as Rashi (Rachi in French).

Rashi's commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud, which combine literal and nonliteral methods of interpretation and make extensive use of allegories and parables as well as symbolic meanings, are still vastly important to Jews and have also had an impact on interpretations of the Christian Bible. Rashi's habit of explaining difficult words and passages in the local French vernacular – transliterated into Hebrew characters – has made his writings an important resource for scholars of Old French. In 1475 (a mere three decades after Gutenberg), Rashi's Bible commentary became the first book to be printed in Hebrew.

The striking **Rachi monument** (next to the Théâtre de Champagne), a white and black globe with Hebrew letters, stands very near the site of a medieval Jewish cemetery where Rashi is believed to have been buried. A local institute of Jewish studies, the **Institut Universitaire Rachi** (2 rue Brunneval) and the new **Centre Culturel Rachi** (☎ 03 25 73 53 01; 5 rue Brunneval) just opposite are named in his honour.

rooms, above a jaunty yellow bar, are spacious but ordinary, though most have fireplaces.

Hôtel Les Comtes de Champagne (☎ 03 25 73 11 70; www.comtesdechampagne.com; 56 rue de la Monnaie; d/q from €50/70, d with washbasin €33; ♿ ☒) For centuries, the same massive wooden ceiling beams have kept this superwelcoming place from collapsing into a pile of toothpicks. We love the bright courtyard lobby and the flower boxes; a huge and very romantic double goes for €83. Bicycles (see opposite) are available for rent.

ourpick Hôtel Arlequin (☎ 03 25 83 12 70; www.hotelarlequin.com; 50 rue de Turenne; d with shower/shower & WC from €41/58; ☎ reception 8am-12.30pm & 2-10pm Mon-Sat, 7am-12.30pm & 6.30-10pm Sun & holidays; ♿ ☒) The 22 cheerful rooms at this charming and very yellow two-star hostelry come with antique furnishings, high ceilings and commedia dell'arte playfulness. The whole place, lovingly kept and efficiently run, is furnished in exceptionally good taste, from the smart custard facade to the lemony breakfast room. Rooms on the top floor (numbers 304, 305 and 307) are the cheapest and there is no lift.

Le Relais St-Jean (☎ 03 25 73 89 90; www.relais-st-jean.com; 51 rue Paillot de Montabert; s €85-130, d €95-135; ♿ ☒ ☒) On a narrow medieval street in the heart of the old city, this four-star hotel has 25 rooms that were the last word in ultramodern back in the 1980s – gotta love the marble, black leather and glass-covered surfaces! The hotel has its own little conservatory with tropical plants and good wheelchair access.

Eating

The people of Troyes are enormously proud of the local speciality, *andouillette de Troyes* (pork or veal tripe sausage). As far as most non-French are concerned, it's an acquired taste.

Rue Champeaux (just north of Église St-Jean) is lined with restaurants. Student-oriented eateries can be found just west of the cathedral along rue de la Cité and rue Georges Clemenceau.

L'Aquarelle (☎ 03 25 73 87 82; 24 rue Georges Clemenceau; lunch menu €12.50; ☎ noon-late, closed dinner Mon & Sun Nov-Mar) Delicious savoury gallettes (€3.30 to €7.80), sweet crêpes (€2.80 to €6.50), salads (€6.50 to €8.50) and local Pays de l'Othe *cidre* served by a softly spoken chap from Belfast.

Le Mandarin (☎ 03 25 73 01 54; 14 rue Turenne; starters €4-11, mains €5.60-10.80, menus €8.90-13.50; ☎ closed Mon & Tue lunch) If like us you can't go for too

long without a fix of rice and noodles even in provincial France, the Mandarin can oblige. Dim sum is a snip at €4.10 per serving.

Le Grenier du Trappeur (☎ 03 25 73 21 86; 24 rue Louis Ulbach; starters €4.50-12, mains €9.50-18, menus €11-16; ☎ lunch & dinner to 9.30-10pm Mon-Sat) Pancake-flat Champagne is a long way from the mountains but this Savoyard restaurant with its chalet decor will whisk you back to the Alps with its all-you-can-eat *raclette* (€18) and *gratins*.

Au Jardin Gourmand (☎ 03 25 73 36 13; 31 rue Paillot de Montabert; starters €9-14, mains €17-25, weekday lunch menu €17; ☎ closed Sun & lunch Mon) Elegant without being overly formal, this intimate restaurant uses only the freshest ingredients for its French and *champenois* dishes, including no fewer than 13 kinds of *andouillette*. The estimable wine list offers more than two dozen vintages by the glass. There's a terrace in summer.

Valentino (☎ 03 25 73 14 14; 35 rue Paillot de Montabert; starters €15-22, mains €24-34, menus €22-50; ☎ Tue-Sat) This is a modern restaurant whose chef takes the *fusionista* approach, combining classic French ingredients and savoir faire with East Asian spices and textures. It's in a quiet medieval courtyard.

ourpick La Mignardise (☎ 03 25 73 15 30; 1 rue des Chats; starters €18-28.50, mains €27.50-32, menus €26-53; ☎ closed dinner Sun & Mon) An elegant restaurant whose traditional French cuisine is served beneath ancient wooden beams, 19th-century mouldings and ultramodern halogen lamps. The menu changes every six to eight weeks. The chef is a particular fan of fish, with more than half of the 15 mains on offer from the briny deep.

SELF-CATERING

Covered market (place de la Halle; ☎ 8am-12.45pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Thu, 7am-7pm Fri & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun)

Monoprix (1st fl, 71 rue Émile Zola; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Supermarket upstairs in this half-timbered house.

Marché Plus (37 rue Raymond Poincaré; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Grocery store.

Drinking

Le Bognat des Pouilles (☎ 03 25 73 59 85; www.bougnatdespouilles.com, in French; 29 rue Paillot de Montabert; ☎ noon-3am Mon-Sat) A funky wine bar that doubles as an art gallery. Attacks of the munchies can be overcome with plates of cold cuts and cheese (€7.50) or *tartines* (open sandwiches; €3.80 to €4.20). There's live music two or three times a month, often on Thursdays from 8.30pm or so.

WAY TO GO

A 42km-long bike path called **Vélovoie** (☎ 03 25 42 50 00; www.aube-champagne.com) links the southeastern Troyes suburb of St-Julien-les-Villas with Lac d'Orient and two adjacent lakes (Lac du Temple and Lac Amance) further north. The lakes are known for their birdlife (cranes, kingfishers), and there's a hide on a narrow isthmus between Lac d'Orient and Lac du Temple for budding birders. At least 15 daily trains a day from Paris' Gare de l'Est (up to a dozen at the weekend) allow passengers to transport their bicycles. Ask the tourist office in Troyes for the brochure-map *Vélovoie Troyes > Les Lacs* or download it from the Aube-Champagne website.

Le Gainz' Bar (☎ 03 25 80 60 76; 37-39 rue de la Cité; ☹ 10am-3am Mon-Sat) Named in honour of the legendary balladeer Serge Gainsbourg (that's him in the shades on the wall), this friendly, rambling place is Troyes' most popular student hang-out. There's a student night on Thursday, a DJ on Friday and a theme night on Saturday.

Shopping

Troyes is famous across France for its **magasins d'usine** (factory outlets; ☹ generally 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, from 9.30am Sat, closed Sun), a legacy of the local knitwear industry. Brand-name sportswear, underwear, baby clothes, shoes and so on – discontinued styles, unsold stock, returns, prototypes – attract bargain-hunters by the coachload.

Most stores are situated in two main zones. The first is **St-Julien-les-Villas**, about 3km south of the city centre on bd de Dijon (the N71 to Dijon), where you'll find **Marques Avenue** (☎ 03 25 82 80 80; www.marquesavenue.com; av de la Maille), which boasts 230 name brands. The second is **Pont Ste-Marie**, about 3km north-east of Troyes' city centre along rue Marc Verdier, which links av Jean Jaurès (the N77 to Châlons-en-Champagne) with av Jules Guesde (the D960 to Nancy). There you'll find **McArthur Glen Troyes** (☎ 03 25 70 47 10; www.mcarthurglen.fr), a huge strip mall with more than 100 shops, and **Marques City** (☎ 03 25 46 37 48; www.marquescity.com), which brings together another 50 or so stores.

Getting There & Away

The **bus station office** (☎ 03 25 71 28 42; ☹ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri), run by Courriers de l'Aube, is in the train station building. Schedules are posted next to each bus berth. For details on getting to Reims see p360.

Cars can be rented from **National Citer** (☎ 03 25 73 27 37; 18 rue Voltaire; ☹ 8am-noon & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Sat) south of the station.

Troyes is on the rather isolated train line linking Basel (Bâle; €40.20, four hours) in Switzerland and Mulhouse (€37.50, three hours) in Alsace with Paris' Gare de l'Est (€22.20, 1½ hours, 12 to 15 daily). A change of trains gets you to Dijon (€27.10, 2½ to four hours, three to five daily) via Chaumont.

Getting Around

The **Hôtel Les Comtes de Champagne** (see opposite) arranges **rental bikes** for €8/12/20/60 per half-day/full day/two days/week. The local bus company, **TCAT** (☎ 03 25 70 49 00; www.tcatt.fr, in French; place de la Halle; ☹ 8am-12.45pm & 1.35-7pm Mon-Fri, to 6.30pm Sat) has its main bus hub, known as Halle, next to the covered market.

To order a taxi, call ☎ 03 25 78 30 30 or ☎ 03 25 76 06 60.

CÔTE DES BAR

Although the Aube *département*, of which Troyes is the capital, is a major producer of Champagne (it has 6813 sq km of vineyards, 85% of them pinot noir and 15% chardonnay), it gets little of the recognition accorded the Marne *département*. Much of the acrimony dates back to 1909, when winemakers of the Aube were excluded from the growing area for Champagne's AOC. Two years later, they were also forbidden to sell their grapes to producers up north, provoking a revolt by local *vignerons*, months of strikes and a situation so chaotic that the army was called in. It was another 16 years before the Aube growers were fully certified as producers of genuine Champagne but by then the Marne had established market domination.

Today, Champagne production in the southeastern corner of the Aube (about 35km southeast of Troyes) – just north of Burgundy's Châtillonnais vineyards (see p473) – is relatively modest in scale, though the reputation of the area's wines, especially rosés, has been on an upward trajectory in recent years.

The Côte des Bar section of the **Champagne Route** (p360) 30km east of Troyes passes through **Bar-sur-Aube** (☎ tourist office 03 25 27

THE TROUBLE WITH DROPPING YOUR 'H'

Like him or leave him, Charles de Gaulle was a patriot, a man of valour and knew something about his compatriots. Who can ever forget his famous lament: *'On ne peut pas rassembler à froid un pays qui compte 265 spécialités de fromages'* (You cannot easily bring together a country that has 265 kinds of cheese)? Ah, but what about his wife Yvonne, known as 'Tante Yvonne' (Aunt Yvonne) for her reserve and conservatism? Didn't she once say something, well, unforgettable too?

It's an apocryphal story and has many variations, and even the time frame is unclear, but it goes something like this. The de Gaulles are lunching with the British prime minister (Harold Wilson?) and his wife on the eve of the general's retirement from political life (in 1969?). Mrs Wilson apparently turns to Mme de Gaulle and asks her – in English – what she is most looking forward to in the coming months of new-found freedom. To the shock, horror and, no doubt, amusement of everyone within earshot, *la tante* replies: 'A penis'.

After what is the most pregnant of pauses, de Gaulle turns to his wife and says '*Chérie*, in English it eez pronounced "Ap-piness".'

24 25; www.barsuraube.net, in French; place de l'Hôtel de Ville), graced by a medieval quarter and two churches, notably the 13th-century **Église St-Pierre** (rue St-Pierre). The town is on the rail line linking Troyes (€8.80, 30 minutes, five to 10 a day) with Langres (€11.40, 31 to 54 minutes, five or six daily). Nearby **Bayel** (tourist office ☎ 03 25 92 42 68; www.bayel-cristal.com; 2 rue Belle Verrière) is known for crystal; tours of the **Cristallerie Royale de Champagne** (Royal Champagne Glassworks; ☎ 03 25 92 37 60; place de l'Église) next to the tourist office begin at 9.30am and 11am weekdays.

The Champagne Route also takes you to **Colombey-les-Deux-Églises**, where Charles de Gaulle is buried in the village-centre churchyard. **La Boisserie** (☎ 03 25 01 50 50; adult/12-18yr/under 12yr €4/4/free, incl memorial €7/6/free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.15pm daily mid-Apr–mid-Oct, to 5.15pm Wed-Mon mid-Oct–Nov & Feb–mid-Apr), the general's home from 1934 to 1970, is now a museum. Nearby, the ugly 43.5m-high **Croix de Lorraine** (Lorraine Cross; built in 1972), symbol of the Resistance, was paid for by public subscription.

Also along the route is **Essoyes** (☎ tourist office 03 25 29 64 64; place de la Mairie), where Renoir spent his last 25 summers and is buried; the **Atelier Renoir** (☎ 03 25 38 56 28; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 2.30-6.30 daily Easter-Oct) in the centre is where the great Impressionist worked. **Les Riceys** (☎ tourist office 03 25 29 15 38; place des Héros de la Résistance) is a *commune* noted for its three churches, three different AOCs and exceptional rosé wines.

Langres

pop 9500

Langres, 75km southeast of Bar-sur-Aube and about the same distance north of Dijon (it's 125km to Troyes), is both an elongated hilltop

bastion, with six towers and seven fortified gates, and a pungent cheese with a concave orange-yellow crust. The town's most famous son is Denis Diderot (1713–84), the great encyclopedist; his statue graces place Diderot, the main square in the centuries-old town centre.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 25 87 67 67; www.tourisme-langres.com; square Olivier Lahalle; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-7pm daily May-Sep, to 5.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) is next to one of the **Porte des Moulins**, the town gates dating from 1647.

Two blocks northeast of place Diderot is **Cathédrale St-Mammès**, whose classical facade (built in 1758) and two monolithic towers hide a late-Romanesque and early-Gothic interior. The modern **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire** (☎ 03 25 87 08 05; place du Centenaire; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2pm-5pm or 6pm Wed-Mon), two short blocks west of the cathedral, has a collection that ranges from Gallo-Roman archeology to 17th- and 18th-century painting and sculpture. Circumambulating the **ramparts** is a 3.5km affair.

The two-star, Logis de France-affiliated **Grand Hôtel de l'Europe** (☎ 03 25 87 10 88; www.relais-sud-champagne.com; 23 rue Diderot; s/d/tr/q from €55/67/86/96; ☎ reception to 11pm daily), in a one-time post house two blocks north of place Diderot, has 26 rooms that boast 'bourgeois comfort'. The rustic French **restaurant** (starters €8-20, mains €18-28.50, menus €17.50-47) specialises in game (in season) and dishes made with local cheese.

Langres' train station, on the flats about 3km west of the old town centre, has services to Dijon (€12.90, one hour, three or four daily) and Troyes (€18.80, 1¼ hours, five or six daily), Chaumont (€22.70, 20 minutes, up to 12 daily) and Paris' Gare de l'Est (€34.60, 2½ to three hours, up to eight daily).

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