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NEWS FROM
LA VIEILLE DISTILLERIE



September and October are some of the favourite months in the Charente. The warm, sunny days will last well into Autumn. With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season over, these are ideal months for that peaceful break, time to unwind, time to relax. There is still plenty to do and see. For the more energetic a cycle ride through the beautiful undulating countryside along marked tracks or a walk through the vineyards on a warm autumn day is a wonderful way to see the countryside.



A golf break is also as popular attraction. There are several championship golf courses in the region. One fabulous golf course is Golf du Cognac which offers reasonable green fees and superb facilities including a golf range and a good restaurant. Another excellent course is l'Hirondelle in the centre of Angouleme with stunning views over the ancient city.



The Autumn is also a good time for house-hunting. With its wonderfully varied and colourful landscape, mild climate, the historic towns and villages, the Charente is a great place to live or to own a holiday home.



The Tour de France is over for another year but it is perhaps interesting to look at its origins and connection with the Dreyfus Affair. Alfred Dreyfus was a French Army officer accused and found guilty of passing secrets to the Germans in the 1890s. He was sent to Devils Island. His innocence or guilt became a great cause celebre in France. The editor of the leading sporting paper *Le Velo*, Pierre Giffard, thought him to

be innocent. This so enraged Albert de Dion (owner of the de Dion Bouton motor company) that he set up a rival paper *L'Auto*. In 1903 the new paper was struggling for circulation and hit upon the idea of sponsoring a long distance cycle race The Tour de France.

Following publication of *J'accuse* by Emile Zola Dreyfus was acquitted and reinstated in the Army where he was to have a distinguished record during the Great War. Thus the conjunction of sport and politics led to the founding of this world famous cycle race.



One of the big events in the Charente in September is the fabulous classic car race "Circuit des Remparts in Angouleme. This fantastic classic and vintage 3 day event takes place over weekend 18th-20th. The highlight is the race when the cars roar around the hairpin bends, old cobbled streets and high city walls of Angouleme waved on by cheering enthusiasts. Even if you are not a classic car fan, it is worth a visit to watch some of the amazing characters driving the Bugattis and Bentleys, many of whom come

from all over Europe to race. This year promises to be a special celebration as it is the 70th year since the first race in 1939. The town takes on a carnival atmosphere when some of the exquisitely restored cars with their drivers in period costume line up for the concours d' elegance when the prize for the best exhibit is chosen. During the weekend there is a rally through the Charente countryside. Angouleme sits on top of a hill with views of the valley below.

Another Autumn event is the Walnut harvest. Many local families have a few walnut trees and there are orchards of commercially grown walnuts. Walnuts need to be in perfect condition so there is a rush to harvest them at the right time. Some farmers make their own walnut oil - fabulous for dressing potatoes and salads. During the autumn you will find walnuts on every restaurant menu as part of a salad known as *salade aux noix*.

To make the dressing: mix together 1 tablespoon walnut oil, 50 ml olive oil, 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon dijon mustard and season. Rub 4 thin slices of baguette (large croutons) with a cut garlic clove. Drizzle a little olive oil on each side of the bread, grill and leave to cool.

Pour the dressing over the salad and toss well. Sprinkle with the croutons.

Serves 4 as a starter.



Oyster lovers should try not to leave the Charente without tasting the most famous gourmet product - the oysters. Some say you should only eat oysters when there is an 'R' in the month so what better time is there to try them than in September or October - but this does not apply in France as oysters are eaten all year round! With 500 km of protected coastline in the neighbouring Charente-Maritime, the department is France's largest producer of oysters. The south Charente is just 40 minutes drive from the Marennes where the most esteemed oysters are raised.



A trip to a distillery is always an interesting excursion especially between November and March. It is only at this time of the year when traditional distillers turn the white wine into eau de vie which will become Cognac. This is known as the Bonne Chauffe for which there is no literal translation.

During the winter - November until March - we are offering a Special Short Break: Meet the distillers, watch the best Cognacs being produced and learn about the art of distillation with people who maintain the traditions and pass them on from generation to generation.



What is included:

- meeting with a home distiller in one of vineyards in the Grande Champagne vineyards the area producing the best Cognacs where you can watch and learn about the distillation of the best Cognac crus and enjoy guided tastings
- A guided visit to a cooperage (barrel factory) - optional visit
- Visit to the museum arts and technics in Cognac
- choice of trips to Aubeterre-sur-Dronne to see the amazing 5th century underground monolithic church or visit the Christmas markets

For a couple based on 2 nights stay to include bed & breakfast and 2 four course dinner with aperitif, wine and Cognac

Tariff for 2 nights stay- 280 €

Tariff for 4 nights stay - 390€

Additional nights can be added at our normal bed and breakfast price
of 55 € per couple

With dinner, if required, at 25 € per person