

ATLANTIC COAST COGNAC COUNTRY



INSPIRATIONAL
MAGAZINE

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THE CHARENTES DESTINATION

Population: 1 million inhabitants

Surface: 13,000 km²

Climate: temperate and oceanic

The Charentes, an innovating destination

Main sectors of activity:

- Tourism: The Charentes are the most touristic destination in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine, largest region in France.
- Agriculture: cereals, vines, oysters and mussels farming.
- Industry: aeronautics, yachting – Le Grand Pavois in La Rochelle, top 5 of the major international boating events.
- Entertainment: comics, film making and video games - Pôle Image Magelis in Angoulême.
- Higher education - nearly 700 international students.

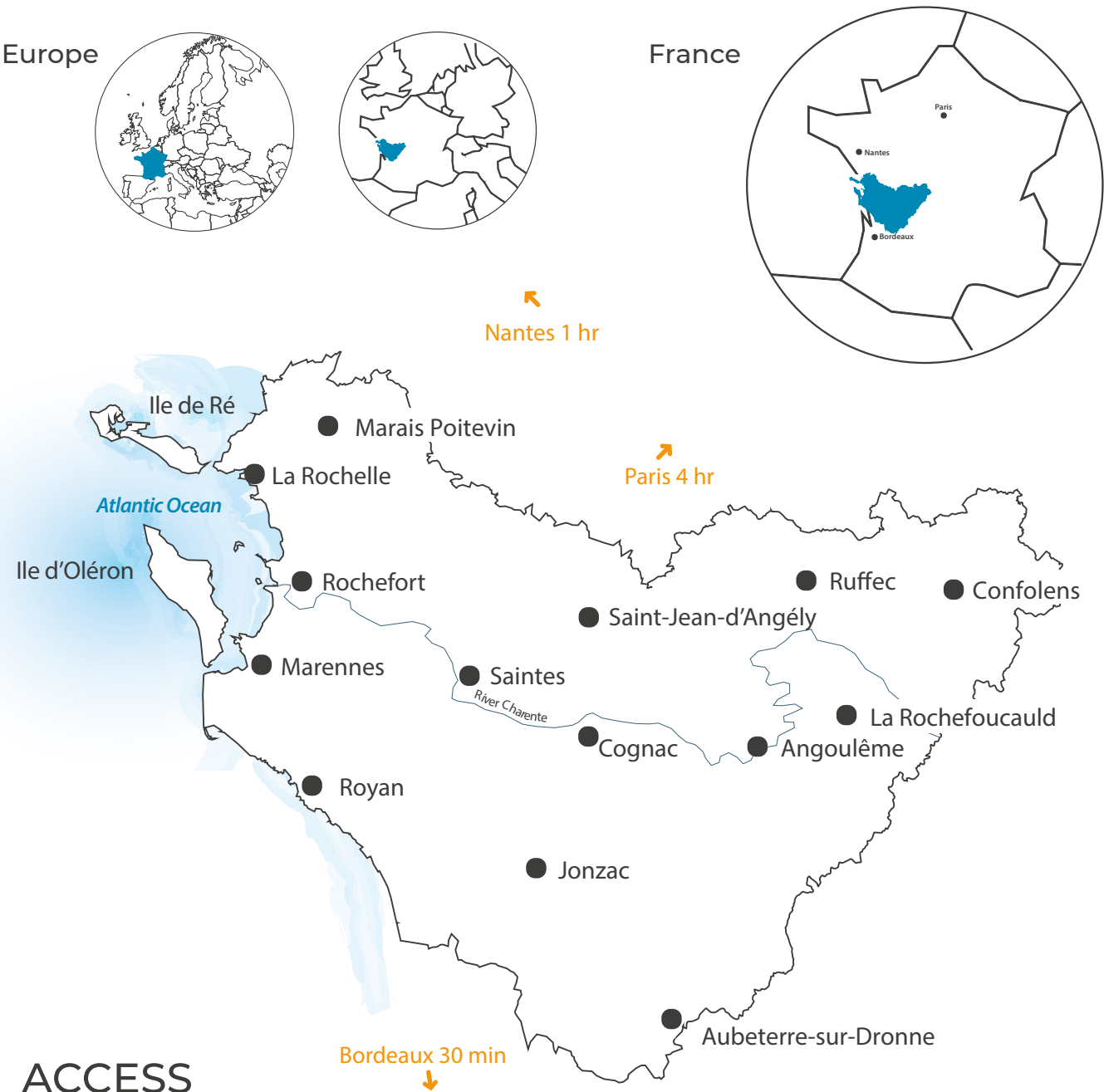
Tourists: 83% of tourists are French and 17% are international.

Internationally, the British are the largest group, followed by the Dutch, German, Belgian, Spanish, Swiss, American and Chinese tourists.

WELCOME TO THE PREMIER TOURIST DESTINATION IN FRANCE FOR FRENCH TRAVELLERS!

The destination of the Charentes is located in the South West of France, at the heart of the Atlantic coast, between Nantes and Bordeaux and enjoys a distinctive light as well as a mild climate. Paris is only 2.30 hr from La Rochelle on the coast or Cognac, the city in which are located the great cognac production houses known throughout the world.

Gentle, refined, natural, the Charentes destination is multiple: land-based and oceanic, Atlantic and sunny, fluvial and coastal, lively and full of heritage... The animated, mysterious, seaside, rural, modern and historic character makes it the top-list destination for the French in summer season.



ACCESS

By air
Direct flights to La Rochelle from:
Ajaccio, Bristol, Brussels-Charleroi, Dublin, Geneva, Leeds, London-Gatwick, London-Stansted, Lyon, Manchester, Marseille, Nice, Porto
www.larochelle.aeroport.fr

By train
LGV Atlantique / TGV:
Paris Montparnasse - Angoulême (2h15 / 1h45)
Paris Montparnasse - La Rochelle (2h30)
Bordeaux - Angoulême (0h40)
Bordeaux - La Rochelle (2h10)
https://en.oui.sncf/en/

By road
A10 Paris:
450 km to Angoulême | 430 km to La Rochelle
A10 Bordeaux:
115 km to Angoulême | 190 km to La Rochelle
A83 / N137 Nantes:
250 km to Angoulême | 140 km to La Rochelle

MUST-SEE



LA ROCHELLE

romantic and authentic

The three famous towers of La Rochelle - Saint Nicolas, La Chaîne and La Lanterne lighthouse - are the most famous vestiges of the medieval maritime fortifications of the town, all offering some magnificent views on Fort Boyard, the old Marina and the islands. Follow a guided tour to discover the glory days of La Rochelle, a rich and rebel merchant city, its historical links with England, its monuments like the towers in the Old Port or the magnificent Town's hall... Walk around the arcades and admire La Rochelle heritage, here a church or a temple, there a museum, take a stroll in a park or a patio...



COGNAC

an exceptional brand and land

Cognac is a well-known brand but also a town of Art and History which offers many visiting possibilities along the river Charente: its Royal Castle, birthplace of King Francis I, its cruises on the Charente and the discovery of the great cognac houses - Baron Otard, Camus, Courvoisier, Hennessy, Martell, Meukow and Rémy Martin. The country of Cognac has managed to perpetuate its traditions and know-how and conceals many small Romanesque churches and charming villages in a refined countryside with gently rolling hills but also chapels or abbeys. From the great names of cognac to winegrowers and distillers, from museums to numerous associated festivals, this region remains authentic, its vines and all these exceptional landscapes delight the many visitors who, each year, discover or rediscover the cognac thanks to special visits.



THE ISLANDS

of the Atlantic Coast

The Charentes boast a long coastline of 460 km with 150 km of vast beaches and 4 different islands (Ré, Oléron, Aix, Madame).

There are 10 picturesque preserved villages on Île de Ré such as Saint-Martin-de Ré - a Unesco World Heritage site, its charming harbour and boutiques, La Flotte - one of the oldest villages, its lively market, Loix - mosaic of landscapes between land and sea, its craftsmen's workshops... The flat character of the island makes it an ideal place to cycle on more than 110 kilometres of cycling tracks that lead to many of the unique sites of 'Ré the White'. The magnificent beaches of Ile de Ré are an absolute delight to all fans of wide open spaces. The island is perfect to be discovered by bike and visit oysters producers and salt makers: learn the secrets of the local 'sauniers', producers of the famous 'fleur de sel', the white gold used by the great chefs.

The Ile d'Oléron, commonly nicknamed the 'Luminous' is, with its 175 km², the second biggest island in France after Corsica. Oléron is a paradise for nature and sport lovers and offers visitors a unique experience thanks to its contrasting landscapes, numerous sandy beaches, forests, marshlands and a remarkable heritage made of picturesque villages, ancient citadels... Oléron and the basin of Marennes are one of the biggest traditional production sites in Europe for oysters, the only one in France to benefit from a Label Rouge (Red Label), providing a guarantee of quality. It takes more than 3 years for an oyster to grow before you eat it in a few seconds with a glass of local white wine!

The only real island of the Charentes is Aix as you have to go by boat! Time stands still in this 3 km crescent-shaped paradise, with its whitewashed houses, hollyhocks and few motorised vehicles. There is something for everyone in this peaceful paradise: five beaches, sandy coves, ancient fortifications, forest, marshland, vineyards, boutiques, restaurants and places of cultural interest such as the Napoleon Museum.



ROCHEFORT

the naval dockyard

Explore the exceptional heritage of Rochefort Océan, certified 'Grand Site de France': experience a place made of Nature and History, come and live your own maritime adventure! In the 17th century, Rochefort was chosen as a key place to build, arm and refit warships, frigates and other vessels. Today in Rochefort, enter the factory of legends, welcome to the Arsenal des Mers - A whole panoply of maritime history is unveiled in 4 exceptional places: La Corderie Royale, the longest rope factory in Europe in the 17th century, L'Hermione, a frigate that has gone down in history and travels on all the seas of the world, L'Accro-mâts, an 30m-high adventure park to be enjoyed by old and young alike, The National Maritime Museum with exceptional heritage collections. Close to Rochefort stands the impressive Transporter Bridge in Echillais, recently reopened after 4 years of renovation.



ANGOULÊME capital of comics

With its International Festival in January, the dedicated museum to the 'ninth art' and the painted murals tour, Angoulême has joined the **UNESCO Creative Cities network**. This town of Art and History offers the visitor a journey through its rich culture, from Cathedral Saint-Pierre, a jewel of Romanesque architecture to the 19th century covered market. The Angoulême Museum holds one of the largest collections of arts from Africa and Oceania in France and an exceptional paleontological exhibition from the local excavation site of Angeac.

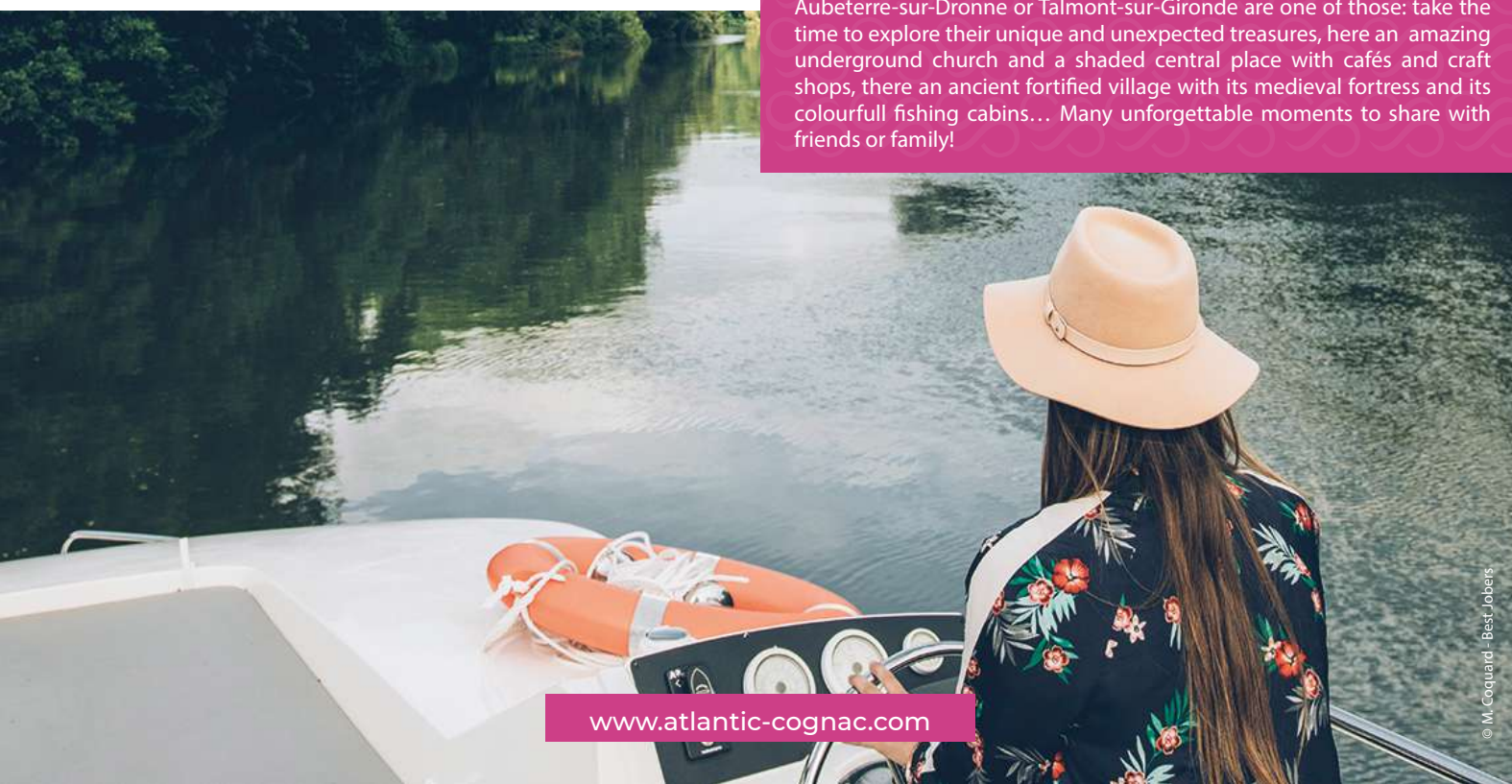
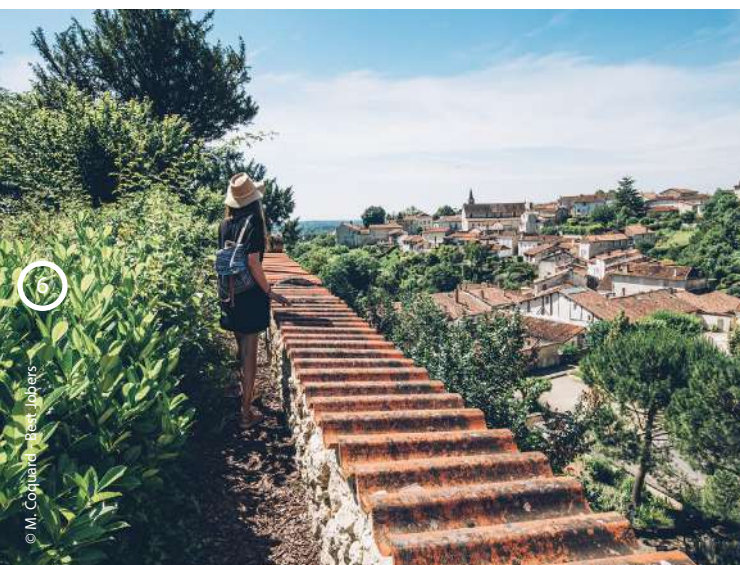
THE RIVER CHARENTE

The river has its source in the Haute-Vienne and meets the ocean in Rochefort. It winds through 35 villages, the cognac vineyards as well as several towns of Art and History: Angoulême, Cognac, Saintes and Rochefort. Riverboats accommodating 2-12 people can be rented with no license for a week or longer to sail along as your own captain. Cyclists can travel along the valley, stopping here and there to enjoy the local gastronomy or to visit exceptional sites by the riverbanks. The majestic Charente river has something to amuse everyone, whether you're keen on watersports, wildlife, cognac and Pineau des Charentes, Roman heritage, comic books or naval links.

CHARMING VILLAGES the refined nature of the countryside

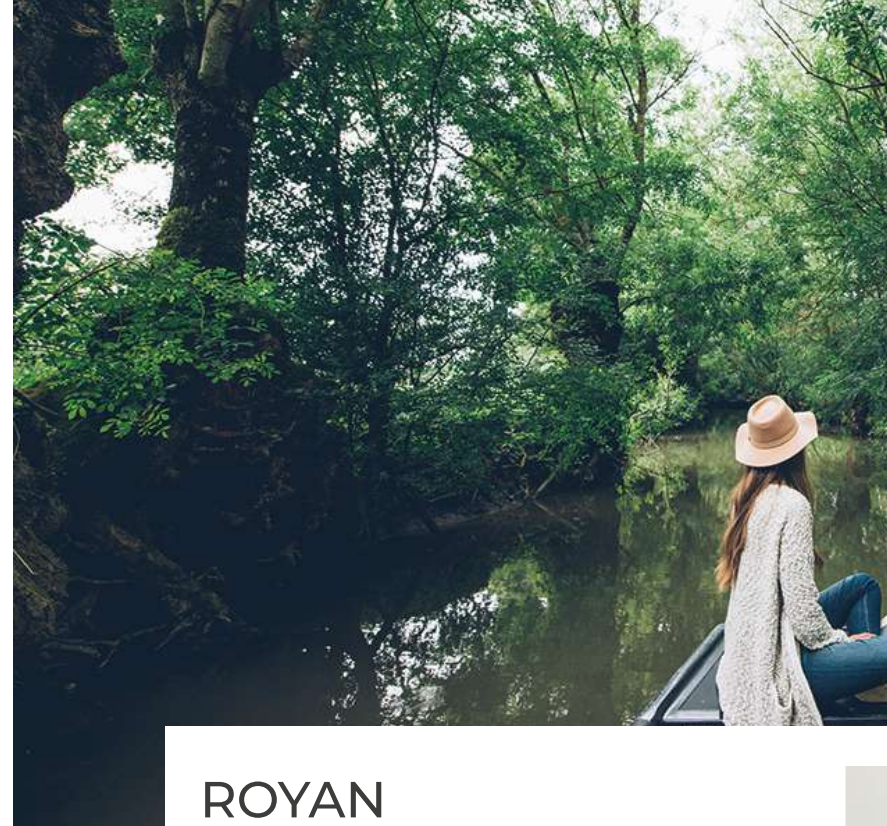
The Charentes offer to visitors to discover many preserved villages listed as 'Plus Beaux Villages de France', 'Petites Cités de Caractère' or 'Villages de Pierres et d'Eau': these certifications reward rural places with exceptional natural and architectural heritage as well as a collective will from inhabitants to touristic development.

Aubeterre-sur-Dronne or Talmont-sur-Gironde are one of those: take the time to explore their unique and unexpected treasures, here an amazing underground church and a shaded central place with cafés and craft shops, there an ancient fortified village with its medieval fortress and its colourful fishing cabins... Many unforgettable moments to share with friends or family!



www.atlantic-cognac.com

© M. Coquard - Best Jobers



ROYAN historical beach resort

The architecture of the city is unique: villas line the shore dating from the Belle-Epoque, rubbing shoulders with classic 1950s buildings, all geometry and colour; the Church of Notre Dame is central for the inhabitants thanks to its style. Royan counts five beautiful beaches and its marina is one of the most important of the Atlantic Coast. An unforgettable place for all the family to enjoy. In the nearby Gironde estuary, the Cordouan lighthouse has been guiding ships for over 400 years. This architectural jewel is candidate to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



© A. Sarrat

SAINTES art and history by the river

Wedged in a loop of the river Charente, certified 'Town of Art and History', Saintes intrigues for the abundance of its history dating back to antiquity: the prestigious remains of the ancient capital such as the Gallo-Roman amphitheatre, the jewels of Roman art like the Cathedral Saint-Pierre and the contemporary audacity with the Abbaye aux Dames offering its innovative Musicaventure, a visit with spatial 3D sound. Discover the town and the river with guided visits on a 'gabare' - a traditional flat-bottomed boat that used to transport merchandises when the town had a thriving port- or on an electro-solar boat unique in Europe.



www.atlantic-cognac.com

© S. Taval

MARAIS POITEVIN the Green Venice

The Marais Poitevin unveils her verdant countryside: the ferns, the willows and above all the canals that inspire you to take a leisurely boat tour to discover the fauna and flora of the destination. The Marais Poitevin has three labels - Regional Natural Park of Marais Poitevin, 'Grand Site de France' and European Tourist Destination of Excellence - and three landscapes - the Aiguillon Bay and coast, the Dry Marshes and the Wet Marshes. It is the largest marsh in the West and the second largest humid zone in France after the Camargue.

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GASTRONOMY



© BNIC / S. Charbeau

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COGNAC a drink, a town and a vineyard

Making cognac is a complex and subtle process that requires passion, demanding standards and knowledge passed down over generations. The precise characteristics of the soil in which the vines are growing, the quality of the oak used to make the barrels in which the cognac is aged, the double distillation in a red copper still, the experience and talent of the master blender who mixes the different 'eaux-de-vie'; all these are important factors in creating the flavour and balance of a cognac that inspire bartenders and chefs all over the world. Cognac is also an historic town situated on the Charente river where the great houses of cognac opens their doors to visitors - Baron Otard, Camus, Courvoisier, Hennessy, Martell, Meukow, Rémy Martin. The vineyards stretch right from the coast to the south of Angoulême producing cognac and Pineau des Charentes. In summer under the heat of the sun or in winter in the warmth of the distilleries, meet the winemakers who will convey their passion for their craft and unveil the mysteries of cognac.

WORLD-CLASS gastronomy delights

France is scattered with all kinds of culinary heritage: the Charentaise galettes, the oysters, the Charron mussels, wide variety of fish and seafood, caviar, the salted butter caramels, the 'fleur de sel' and even the 'cagouilles' (snails so appreciated by locals) make the reputation of the destination and are not to be missed in many markets or at local producers!

- 7 Michelin starred restaurants will delight your taste buds.
- 4 'AOP' (protected designation of origine): Charentes Poitou butter, Ile de Ré potatoes, Chabichou du Poitou (goat cheese) and noix du Périgord (walnuts)
- 2 'IGP' (protected geographical indication): Vins Charentais (wines) and Marennes Oléron oysters (unique Red Label in France)
- 2 'AOC' (protection designation of origine) : cognac, Pineau des Charentes (fortified wine made from a blend of grape juice and cognac).



© CNPC

PINEAU DES CHARENTES

Pineau des Charentes, a fortified wine made from a blend of grape juice and cognac was awarded AOC status in 1945. The harvested grapes are pressed and the cognac from the previous year is added, then it is stored in oak barrels for a long time to give it the distinctive taste, whether white, red or rosé pineau. So Pineau des Charentes shares much of its history with cognac, both draw on the same traditional skills and expertise. Try it as an 'apéritif' or get inspired by local chefs for tasty recipes!

IODINE FLAVOURS

The Atlantic's precious 'stones' - Marennes Oléron oysters and Charente-Maritime oysters are the result of the perfect marriage of nature and the know-how of the producers. The wide variety of fish and seafood is another authentic delight to be tasted in the Charentes: céteau, sea bass, meagre, red mullet, sole, langoustine, prawn, sea bream, sardine, scallop... and here, from sea to plate, there is only one step!



© LECHIFFRE



© Miles and Love



© Yosh Power Shot - Outdoor

FOOD AND DRINK workshops

Experience something special by attending a cooking class in the kitchen of one of the Charentes' best chefs: you will discover their secrets and learn to use the best raw ingredients from the region... And share a tasty moment with your friends or family! Step into the shoes of a cellar master: under the guidance of a professional, you will learn how to blend the 'eaux-de-vie' to make your own cognac or create your Pineau des Charentes according to a selection and leave with your personalised bottle after an exclusive visit of the cellars.

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© Agence Les Charentes

SHOPPING AND ARTS CRAFTS made in Charentes

In Charentes there are so many boutiques and workshops where you can find souvenirs: local producers, creators and art craftsmen are passionate artists who reinvent traditions and extend the journey...

Discover the donkey's milk soap of the Ile de Ré, the iconic French 'Charentaises' slippers, bags made from recycled sails, gold embroidery, handmade knives, comic books, beers from local breweries, chocolates, terrine and rillettes, Atlantic fish mousse, saffron, nut oil, artisanal French balsamic aged in oak barrels, vinegar made from Pineau des Charentes... ideas are not lacking!

DESTINATION FOR ALL

families or couples, groups or solo

Spending your holidays in the Charentes is a unique experience, whether you stay for a weekend, a week or more. All throughout the year it is a lively destination. The unspoiled region of the Charentes is ideal for family holidays or business trips, offering human-scaled accommodations and sites to visit, for a relaxing stay with health treatment or holiday with the bucolic perfume of the countryside or the fresh air of the Atlantic Coast.



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© Aquarium La Rochelle



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FAMILY FRIENDLY DESTINATION

The choice for adapted visits and activities is wide **all year round for all the generations**: the Aquarium of La Rochelle, the Zoo of La Palmyre, the archeological park of Cassinomagus, the aquatic and recreational centre of Antilles de Jonzac, various animations in medieval castles... And all over the Charentes, explore the thrill of a GPS treasure hunt thanks to the free app Terra Aventura and its more than 60 trails!

The region offers a great variety of accommodations, from top of the range 5-star sites to 2-star rentals, you'll be spoiled with choice: luxury hotels, charming gites and guesthouses, campsites by the seaside or in the middle of the countryside...

The Charentes are the first destination in France for disabled facilities with more than 500 different places branded with the **'Tourisme & Handicap' label**: this national list rewards accommodations, restaurants, beaches, sites to visit or activities that are committed to welcome visitors with disabilities thanks to specific facilities in complete freedom, safety and autonomy.

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© K. Jodeusz

FESTIVE DESTINATION

Our festivals bring the destination of the Charentes to life all year round.

Les Francfolies de La Rochelle - *3rd most important music festival in France with 150,000 spectators* – and the Festival International de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême - *most important comics festival in Europe with 200,000 visitors* – are unmissable and The Charentes offer an eclectic and festive programme for all tastes: dance, street art, cinema, photography...



© Details of Perrine

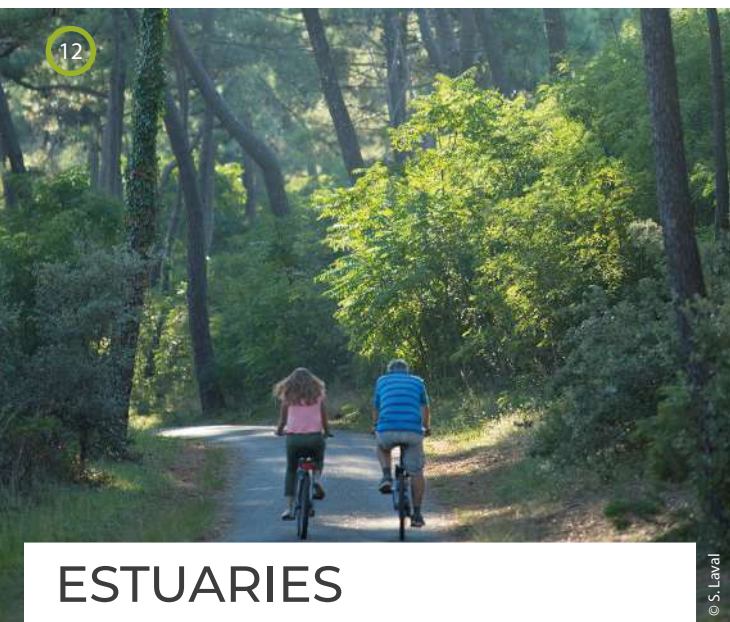
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GREEN TOURISM



ECHAPPÉES NATURE

A network of 14 preserved natural sites, a multitude of small worlds to discover and landscapes to learn about through museums, exhibitions and guided tours: Asinerie du Baudet du Poitou (famous for their donkey breeding), La Pierre de Crazannes (stone carving in old quarries), the natural reserves of Lilleau des Niges, Moëze-Oléron or Marais d'Yves (birdwatching), the Park de l'Estuaire (knowledge of the Gironde estuary), the Maison de la Forêt (traditions related to wood)... Many beautiful encounters between nature and you!



ESTUARIES AND FORESTS

The Charente Estuary is classified 'Grand Site de France' with the Arsenal of Rochefort, as a place ecologically sound and developing durable energy. The Gironde Estuary is the wildest and largest natural river estuary in Europe with astonishing views from natural viewpoints Meschers-sur-Gironde or observation tower in Saint-Georges-de-Didonne. La Tremblade and the Coubre Forest are unmissable for nature lovers, mountain bikers, horseriders, hiker or beach bums! On Oléron island, an integral biological reserve is dedicated to the study of biodiversity.

For sustainable and responsible holidays, the Charentes offer a great choice of accommodations and restaurants with zero-waste approach, natural and local materials or products, renewable energy use... Come and live an ethical experience and recharge your batteries in the respect of the environment.

THE LAKES of Haute Charente

In Charente Limousine, two large lakes, Lavaud and Mas Chaban, are where freshwater sports can be enjoyed: swimming, canoeing, fishing... You will find many cycling or hiking tracks as well as spots for birdwatching and sites for horseriding or the practise of archery.

AIGUILLON BAY wild nature

This is a magical place in the north part of Charentes near the Marais Poitevin – a bridge between the land and the sea, between men and nature: it's a haven for migratory birds from Siberia, Europe and Canada listed as National Natural Reserve, one of the largest sites for wintering and migratory stopover in France. There are also 300 kms of mussel beds where 120 professionals produce the famous local variety known as the 'charron'.

ACTIVITIES AND VISITS

100 % NATURE sensations

The Charentes invite you to an invigorating stay, a **paradise to practise watersports** on ocean, rivers, lakes and marshes: surf, windsurf, kite surf or catamaran; stand-up paddle, water ski or canoe... sailing and sliding lovers are welcome all year round for thrills!

Runners and walkers, come and **spend your energy at your own pace in the Charentes**: 11,000 km of hiking trails, marathons by the seaside or in the vineyards and theme walks in protected natural areas, the choice is yours!

3 sites listed as 'Stations Sport Nature': Le Chambon in Eumouthiers, Le Bain des Dames in Châteauneuf and Le Champion in Mansle.



THE CHARENTES land of cycling

6,750 km of bicycle paths all over the area thanks to a rich network of local loops as well as 5 European and national cycling tracks: La Vélodyssée® along the Atlantic Coast, La Vélo Francette® from Normandy to La Rochelle, Le Canal des 2 Mers à Vélo® going to the Mediterranean Sea, La Scandibérique® on the pilgrims route from Norway to St James of Compostella and the most recent, La Flow Vélo® crossing the Charentes from Dordogne to Aix Island.

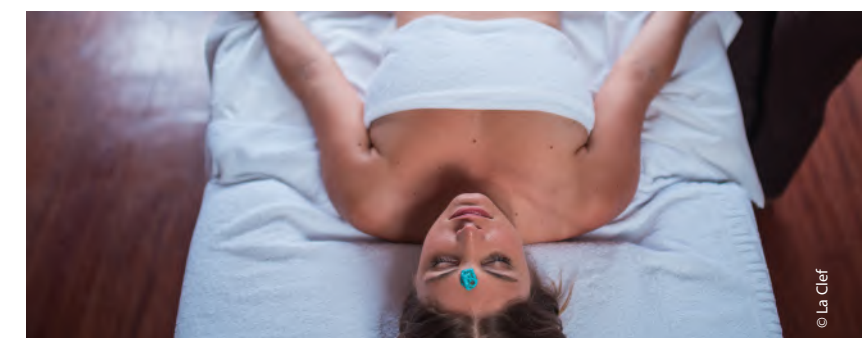
In September 2020, the Tour de France was back on the Atlantic coast! The Charentes welcomed the teams for 3 days and 2 stages between Ile d'Oléron, Ile de Ré and Châtelailon-Plage.

WELLNESS & health benefits

The Charentes are the 1st destination of France for wellness:

6 thalassotherapy centres at the heart of the Atlantic coast (Ile de Ré, Châtelailon-Plage, Ile d'Oléron, Royan) for wellness and rejuvenation with sea water.

3 spa resorts (Rochefort, Saujon, Jonzac) draw their benefits from secret springs, between 200 and 1,850 m underground for medical prevention or for curing.



PREMIUM GOLFS

The Charentes count 6 golfs with 18-hole courses and 8 golfs with 9-hole courses: amongst a pine forest or facing an historic town, in the vineyards or by the sea side... there will always be a perfect place to practise your favourite sport in an exceptional setting.



CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

5 UNESCO Heritage Sites:

- Citadelle of Saint-Martin-de-Ré
- Church of Saint-Pierre d'Aulnay de Saintonge
- Royal Abbey of Saint-Jean-d'Angély
- Pilgrimage Hospital at Pons
- Church of Saint-Eutrope in Saintes

6 villages listed as 'Plus Beaux Villages de France':

- Ars-en-Ré
- Aubeterre-sur-Dronne
- Brouage
- La Flotte
- Mornac-sur-Seudre
- Talmont-sur-Gironde

7 villages listed as 'Petites Cités de Caractère':

- Aubeterre-sur-Dronne
- Confolens
- Nanteuil-en-Vallée
- Saint-Sauvant,
- Saint-Savinien-sur-Charente
- Talmont-sur-Gironde
- Villebois-Lavalette

and Verteuil-sur-Charente, to be approved

More than 600 Roman churches.

460 km of coastline with four islands: Ré, Oléron, Aix, Madame and 42 marinas.

The river Charente.

The **Gironde Estuary**, largest unspoiled estuary of Europe, the **Rocheport Dockyard**, the **Charente Estuary** 'Grand Site de France'.

The **Cognac vineyard**, over 75,000 hectares.

The **Marais Poitevin** 'Grand Site de France', interregional park of 42,200 hectares.



CASTLES AND FORTIFICATIONS

Witnesses of past centuries, the castles wonderfully illustrate the eventful history of the Charentes. They can also host private events such as weddings. Most of them can be visited and some offer special animations like escape games: Château des Enigmes de Pons, Château Fort de Saint-Jean-d'Angle, Chalais, Crazannes, Dampierre-sur-Boutonne, Jonzac, La Mercerie, La Roche Courbon, La Rochefoucauld, Neuvicq-le-Château, Taillebourg, Verteuil, Villebois-Lavalette... You can find 'châteaux' all around the Charentes!

The Charentes count numerous fortifications along its 460 km of coasts such as the network of Vauban with the ramparts and fortress in Brouage, the Citadel in Château d'Oléron or the star-shaped fort in Saint-Martin-de-Ré...

Another exceptional site to see by boat during a sea cruise with Croisières Inter-îles: Fort Boyard built by Napoleon and now known all over the world for its TV game show!

La Rochelle - Île de Ré AIRPORT

Ajaccio Nice Lyon
Dublin Brussels-Charleroi Marseille Bristol
Geneva London-Stansted
Leeds-Bradford Manchester
London-Gatwick Porto

AIR FRANCE / CHALAIR / EASYJET / JET2 / RYANAIR



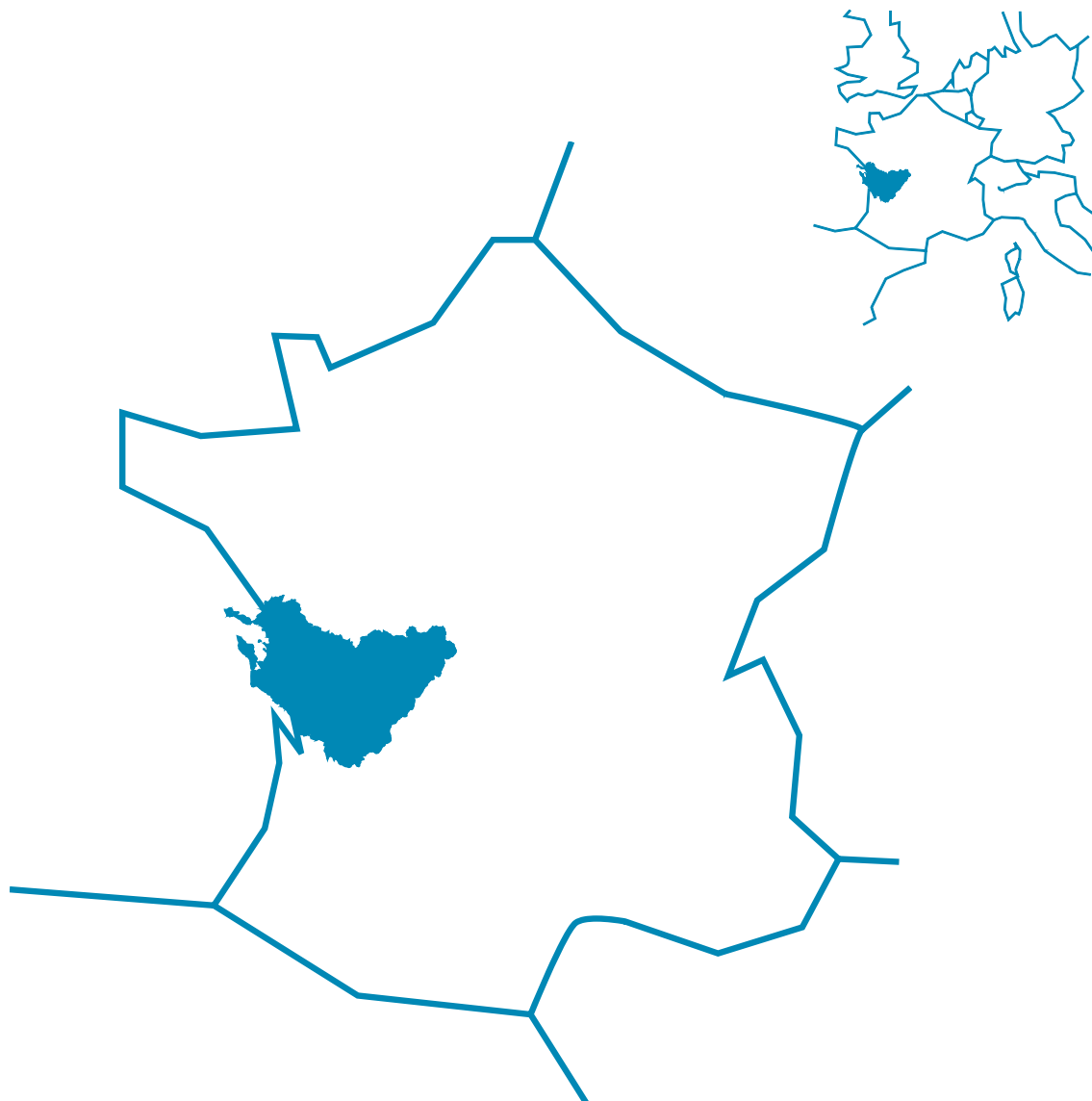
SYNDICAT MIXTE DES AÉROPORTS DE LA ROCHELLE - ÎLE DE RÉ ET ROCHEFORT - CHARENTE-MARITIME

www.larochelle.aeroport.fr

www.atlantic-cognac.com

CHARENTES

T O U R I S M



www.atlantic-cognac.com

• Charentes Tourism

• Site d'Angoulême
• 21, rue d'Iéna
• CS 82 407
• 16 024 Angoulême Cedex

• Site de La Rochelle
• 85, boulevard de la République
• 17 076 La Rochelle Cedex 9



CHARENTE
LE DÉPARTEMENT