

NO. 22 COGNAC



**GUIDE TO WHAT TO SEE AND DO
WHEN YOU STAY AT
FARMHOUSE GITE NO. 22 COGNAC...**



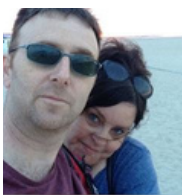
WELCOME



No. 22 Cognac is a luxury farmhouse gite with a gorgeous pool located in the village of Louzignac, in Charente-Maritime. In this most beautiful part of France, steeped in history, where the vines ripen in the sun producing the finest wines and cognac surrounded by fields of sunflowers and orchards, and where the sea laps the soft sandy beaches - you can lose yourself and give in to a holiday that will leave you refreshed and rejuvenated.

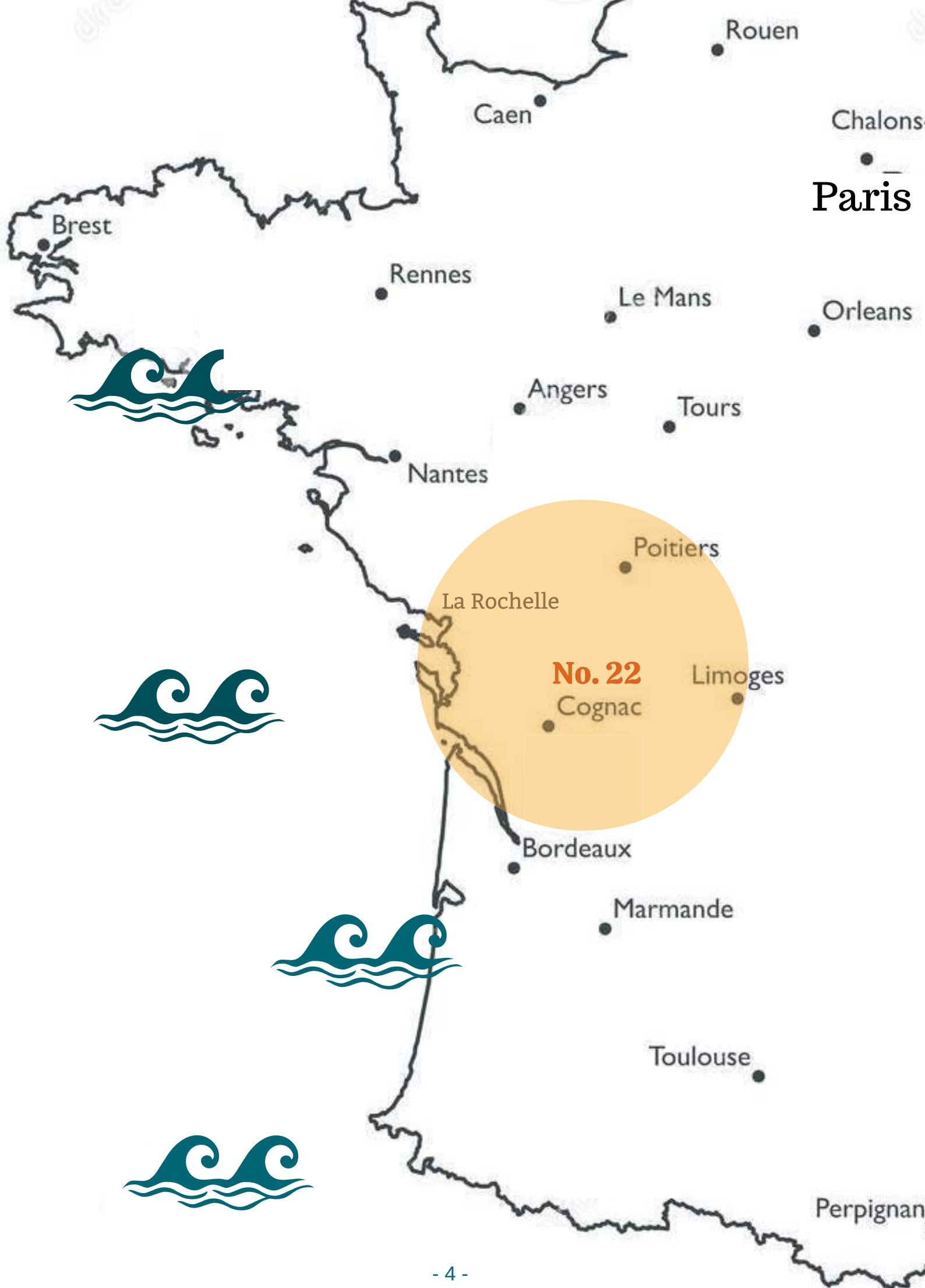
Relax, sight-see and indulge in the local cuisine. Explore the area and discover colourful markets, ancient village, seaside towns, glorious churches, vineyards and a region of outstanding natural beauty.

A holiday at No. 22 Cognac is an inspiration.



Paul and Carolyn

Owners of No. 22 Cognac



THE MUST-SEES

Whatever you look for in a holiday here, there are some places that simply shouldn't be missed. You don't need to go far from your home from home at Cognac No. 22 to have a brilliant time or indulge in fabulous gastronomy - in fact French celebrity chef, Jean-Yves Corvez has opened a restaurant within walking distance of No. 22!

And, though there are literally hundreds of wonderful attractions within easy distance of our beautiful farmhouse gite, we'd love to share with you just a few of the most unmissable.

When you visit - we'll be happy to give you heaps more recommendations for fabulous markets, restaurants, vineyard visits and attractions but for now, we aim to give you a little taster of just how special this part of France is and we hope to see you soon.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6-7: Cognac and its Chais, the great houses of Cognac

8-9: La Rochelle city and harbours, and fabulous aquarium

10-11: Island hopping at Re, Oleron and Aix

12: Royan and its art deco market

13: Gironde Estuary & Talmont-Gironde, one of the most beautiful villages of France

14: Rochefort and the incredible replica ship Hermione

15: Angouleme and its museums and beautiful church full of treasures

16: The great Roman arena at Saintes

17: Theme Parks

18: Bordeaux city

19-21: Local activities and sites

COGNAC



Cognac is a 20 minute drive from No. 22, and here you can visit the world famous Cognac distilleries.

Renowned across the world, Cognac is double distilled from a white wine grape juice and every Cognac house has a master blender who mixes the spirit to best effect. There's nowhere better to enjoy a tasting than the town of the same name.

Tours and tastings can easily be booked online, with visits to cellars, known as chais and some that include boat trips on the River Charente. We particularly like the Baron Otard historical tours at the Royal Chateau de Cognac where King Francis 1 was born in 1494. The castle is wonderfully preserved, you can even see the remains of a 12th century hot water system. And, there's a room where King Richard the Lionheart came to bless the wedding of his illegitimate son Philip of Cognac.



Down in the cellars the 90% humidity and constant 15 deg C temperature are perfect condition for the spiders that are part of the cycle of production. The cognac is matured in wooden barrels, the spiders eat the bugs in the wood and keep it clean. The locals joke that the spiders are drunk in here! Cognac evaporates through the wood and causes a blackened fungus to form on the walls and ceiling. It's known as "the angels share".



The room where Francis 1 was baptised as a baby, is now the dry cellar room. In the dungeons are the oldest bottles of cognac dating back 200 years. It's a totally fascinating visit only made better by the tasting at the end of the tour!

There are also Cognac houses to visit in Jarnac (20 minutes from No. 22), as well as some excellent smaller local producers in nearby Le Chateau Neuvicq.

Cognac itself is a lovely old town with an old quarter of cobbled streets and half-timbered houses, wonderful shops, restaurants and places to visit. The award-winning Musée des Arts du Cognac and the Cognac Discovery Centre are highly recommended.

In olden days barrels of Cognac would be moved up and down the river on flat bottomed boats called "Gabares". Nowadays you can take a trip up the river to Jarnac on a replica Gabare called the Dame Jeanne named after the glass storage jars or "Demi Johns". The boat departs from Cognac Port near the Hennessy distillery founded in 1765 by Richard Hennessy an Irish businessman and military officer.

There is an excellent Tourist Information Office with helpful, English-speaking staff.

Eat out in Cognac:

Le Bistro de Claude: Fresh food and a tasty menu, great atmosphere and lots of cognac to choose from! Friendly staff, English spoken and full of locals who know a great restaurant when they see one...

Le Chai has a great lunchtime menu, mellow atmosphere and lovely staff. They have an amazing range of Cognacs behind the bar, just ask for a recommendation!



LA ROCHELLE



La Rochelle, around 1.5 hours from No. 22 has a unique mix of charm and style. Steeped in history and rich in architectural treasures – no wonder it’s one of the most popular seaside towns in France.

The city is home to a pretty harbour surrounded by cafés. Historic twin towers stand watch and usher in the Atlantic. Ancient, covered arcades and narrow streets lead to the fabulous market. On Wednesdays and Saturdays the market spills out onto the square and the side streets where every inch is taken up by a different stall. One stall expertly lays out a variety of creamy goats cheese in all shapes and sizes. The log shaped ‘Chèvre la Coupe’ and cone shaped ‘Chabichou du Poitou’ are specialities in this region. By the square lies an indoor market hall which dates back to the 19th century, and for generations this market has been the place for locals to meet up, shop and catch a bite to eat.

Don't miss:

There are several museums in and around La Rochelle. There's a maritime museum which includes a weather ship, La Rochelle Bunker, a blockhouse in the city centre and Natural history museum. The Museum of the new world is fascinating - La Rochelle was one of the major trading ports and emigration points to the new world. The port of La Rochelle was the last sight thousands of emigrants saw before setting sails for the Americas and Antilles.

And don't forget the incredible 14th century towers, the majestic gateway to La Rochelle plus a medieval lighthouse.

The Aquarium opposite the old port, is one of Europe's largest private aquariums. It holds 3 million litres of sea waters and is home to over 12,000 marine animals.

The Vieux Port, the charming and historic quarter with its market, shops, restaurants, bars. There's masses to see, and far too much to list and well worth a visit.

There are city beaches, water sports and loads of events year-round for the whole family.

Eat out

Not surprisingly, there are numerous restaurants to suit every budget and to make seafood lovers very, very happy.

Restaurant Le Bar Andre is hugely popular for its plateau de fruits de mer, crevettes, langoustines, and fresh seafood.

Push the boat out at Michelin starred Restaurant Christopher Coutanceau - Michelin star, Excellent, sophisticated food.

Enjoy aperitifs onboard France I, a former meteorological ship. It's now a bar and restaurant. Watching the sunset from the wooden deck, you really feel as if you've cast off and escaped.
lefrance1.com



GO ISLAND HOPPING!

Take to the seas to discover the coast of La Rochelle. Head to Fort Boyard or go island hopping to Ile de Ré, Ile d'Oleron and Ile d'Aix. Take a two hour, half-a-day or full day trip. Departure points are the Vieux Port, Cours des Dames or the Esplanade Saint-Jean-d'Acre. You can even take an electric boat ride between the old port and the Minimes Marina.

You can also drive to Ré, as the locals call it, from La Rochelle via the toll bridge and you can drive to Oleron.



Ile de Ré

Small enough to drive from one end to the other in around 30 minutes, Ile de Ré has an intimacy that's alluring but never leaves you feeling restricted. Despite its size, the landscape appears to unfold for miles. Expect fields of flowers, vineyards, salt marshes, the most glorious coastline, and the prettiest little villages. It's what makes this island a favourite with the French

Saint-Martin-de-Ré is the main town on the island, the mini capital of Ile de Ré. This is where you'll find some of the best restaurants, bistros, bars, and ice cream shops. The town is protected by Vauban-built fortified walls. It spreads out around an almost impossibly gorgeous waterfront. Saint-Martin is also a World Heritage site. In the 1670s, Louis XIV's French military engineer Vauban, was commissioned to overhaul the island's defences. The fortifications now have UNESCO heritage status. Climb the bell tower of the church for a panoramic view over the roofs of the terracotta-roofed houses.

You may well spot donkeys dressed in stripy trousers, a local tradition. It's a hangover from the days when mosquitoes were a problem – they're not now but hey, who doesn't love a donkey in a pair of trousers!





Ile d'Oléron

Nicknamed the “luminous island” there are fabulous sandy beaches, pine forests, vineyards and oyster farms. It’s a place to relax, and enjoy the pretty villages with their fishermen's houses and outstanding nature, plus bird spotters will love the marshes.

Don't miss Le Grand Bleu, a converted fishing shack overlooking the bridge and specialising in shellfish and fish.



Ile d'Aix

Quaint and quirky, this bijou islet is a perfect place for a get-away-from-it-all break or a fabulous day trip. There are just 40 full-time residents living on the island and most holidaymakers are French. You can reach by ferry only but there's a big car park at the ferry terminal near the seaside resort of Fouras. Hire a bike and chill. Hollyhocks spring up everywhere, wildflowers scent the air. There are tiny cafés where you'll receive a warm welcome, pretty little cottages with pastel-coloured shutters, and a museum dedicated to Napoleon's visit in 1808.

ROYAN



Royan is a classified “Ville d’Art et d’Histoire”. This holiday resort, a little over an hour from No. 22 combines the old world charm of the Belle Epoque with modern architecture, a buzzing port and sea front and plenty to see and do in the town and close by.

Visit the marvellous indoor market, the impressive Church of Notre Dame (ignore the somewhat dilapidated exterior) with its startling architectural interior – a bit like the Starship Enterprise and the museum of Royal which covers local history.

The seafront is great for a promenade, with several excellent restaurants and bars. And there’s a 2km long south facing beach with sheltered waters

You can take a ferry from Royan to Pointe de Grave on the tip of the Médoc peninsula for access to some of the most famous wine chateaux.

TIP: There are plenty of great restaurants in Royan but if you’re a seafood fan, drive a short distance from the town to La Tremblade’s Chez Roberte. Ask for a table on the terrace with a view of La Seudre and watch the oyster boats come in. Sheer bliss.

GIRONDE ESTUARY AND TALMONT—GIRONDE

From Royan which is at the mouth of the Gironde Estuary, there are several great places to visit. The fine sandy beaches of the Gironde Estuary are only about an hours drive from Louzignac. The vast beaches of the Côte Sauvage and Ronce les Bains are a little further and can offer complete seclusion for those seeking it, even in July and August.

Point de Suzac: Around the bay, the Belle Epoque style villas are a great contrast after the city's concrete vibe. Stop at Pointe De Suzac, a short drive from Royan. This natural "balcony" over the Gironde Estuary is a protected natural area with forests and lots of wild birds. There are also WWII bunkers along the coastline. It's not a well-advertised attraction but well worth seeking out. Stop at La Crique-Suzac Beach House bar and restaurant. It's in a stunning location and has a great menu and fabulous holiday vibe. Featured as a top summer pick in Elle magazine, the dishes are seriously tempting, there are music nights and a fabulous Sunday brunch. Details: lacrique-suzac.com

Regulus Caves at Meschers: Around 15km from Royan, Meschers has an extraordinary troglodyte site in a seaside resort. The sea caves show how houses were formed out of the soft limestone and chalk. Guided tours are available from March to November including night-time walks.

Talmont-sur-Gironde: A 'Plus beau Village de France' and 'Petites Cités de Caractère'. Discover the village founded in 1284 by Edward 1st of Aquitaine, on a rocky promontory overlooking the Gironde Estuary, south of Royan. Cobbled streets, pretty houses, artisan studios and stunning views await.

Palmyre Zoo covers a whopping 18 hectares, including 14 beautiful, landscaped gardens. More than 1600 animals, including over 130 different species, live here. You can join in with feeding the penguins and watch the daily sea lion, parrot and cockatoo shows.



ROCHEFORT



An hour from No. 22 Rochefort is home to the former Royal Dockyards. Created in the 1660s, over the next three centuries, 550 ships were built, rigged and launched from these docks. The King commanded that he required it to be the “largest and most beautiful arsenal in the kingdom”. He got what he wanted. Today the area is an incredible heritage site with several museums, mills and traces of historic shipbuilding activity.

Don't miss:

La Corderie Royale. The centrepiece of Louis XIV's Dockyards was the rope factory. It was absolutely critical for the production of rigging for warships. With the tall sails, ropes had to be very long and so the corderie, rope shop, was built to cope with the need. At 374m long, it's an impressive sight to this day. Once dubbed “Versailles of the Sea”, it's now a fascinating museum which shows how hemp fibres were twisted into 200-metre lengths of rigging for 200 years up to the introduction of steel cables. You can also have a go at making rope yourself.

Musée des Commerces d'Autrefois. In a 19th-century former warehouse, you'll find the Museum of trades of yesteryear. 22 galleries recreate the ateliers and shop floors of trades of the past. Step into an old bicycle repair shop, milliners and cognac distillery. The old bistro is particularly fun...

Hermione Replica ship. The first Hermione was a frigate launched in 1779. She carried General Lafayette to America where he fought in the American Revolutionary War on the side of the Americans and became a hero. The ship was wrecked four years later, but in 1997 members of the Centre International de la Mer began a 17-year project to build a replica. Often docked in Rochefort you can climb aboard to admire the incredible workmanship which brought a 17th-century ship to life in the 21st century.

Eat out: La Villette – the perfect bar/bistro. It's lunch only and very popular with the locals, so book if you want to be sure of a table.

ANGOULÊME



Angoulême, just 40 minutes from No. 22 is located on a limestone plateau overlooking the Charente River which gives it the nickname: the balcony of the southwest France.

The upper town of Angoulême is a great place to wander, with plenty to see and do – though it is hilly. It’s quite different from the lower part and has more to offer tourists. There are elegant squares, tinkling fountains and grand buildings. Styles range from medieval to Renaissance and it’s got a rather Parisian look in some parts with a neo-classical style. It’s not that surprising really as Angoulême got a makeover in the 19th century from Paul Abadie, the French architect and restorer whose work included the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur in Paris. Next door the Museum of Angoulême has a surprisingly good collection of local artefacts.



Comic and art fans will love the Comic Museum and the fabulous street art. And each September the legendary Circuit des Remparts car race takes place transforming the city into a rolling museum with a feel good atmosphere.

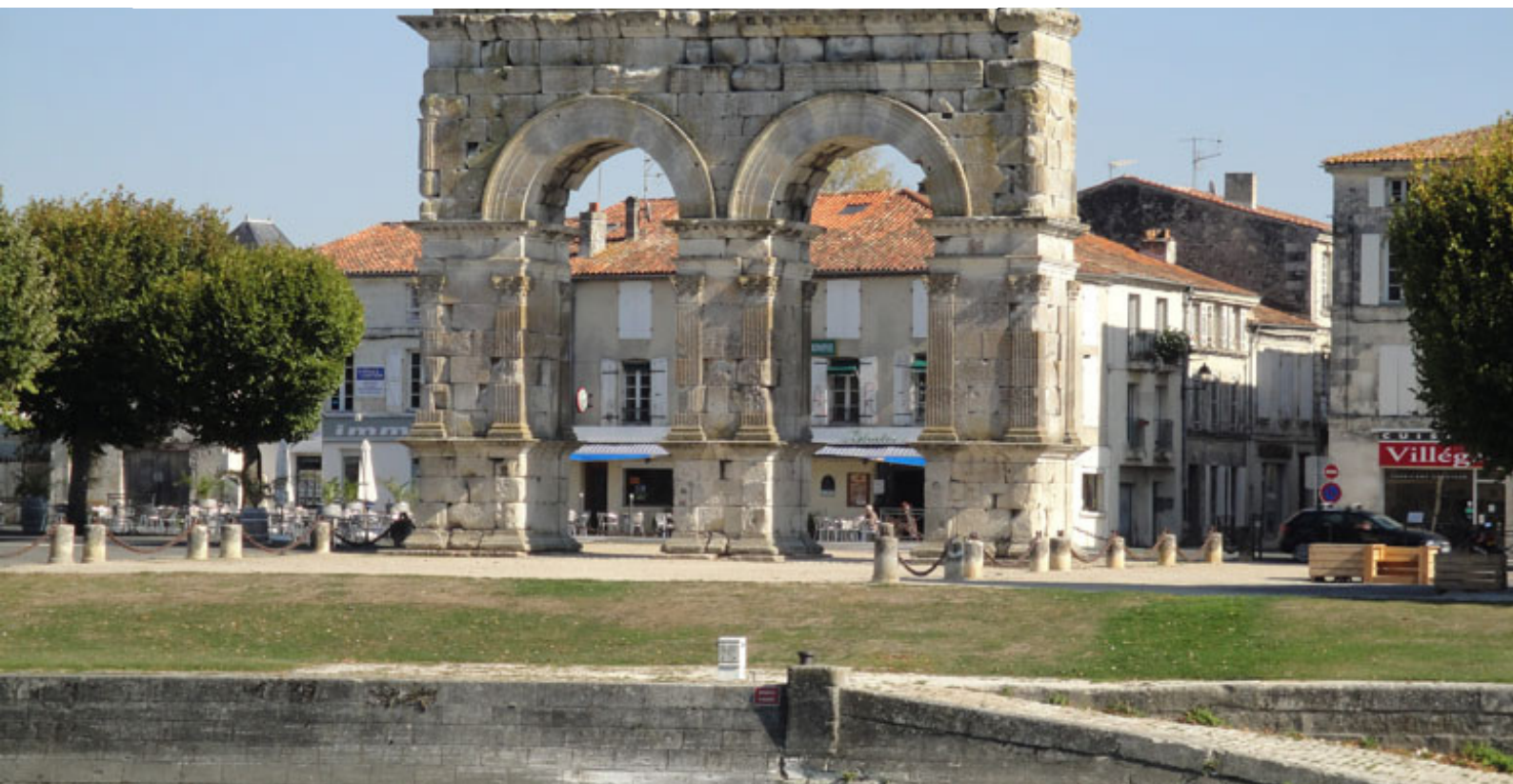


Don’t miss the Cathedral of Saint Pierre where you can book a guided tour of the “Tresors” (at the tourist office). This is an art installation at the top of the cathedral created by artist Jean-Michel Othoniel. Ancient religious relics, including some rather gory body parts of saints, crowns embellished with jewels and diamonds, altar art, candles and more are housed in a modern glass and metal area. It is quite simply dazzling.



Tip: About 15 minutes east of Louzignac, on the road to Angoulême, is the market town of Rouillac where a huge market is held on the 27th of every month. There’s also a Roman amphitheatre where rock and other concerts are held regularly.

SAINTES



Saintes has been a market town since time immemorial. The Romans called it Mediolanum Santorum – the Market Town of the Santones people. If the Romans returned today, they'd certainly recognise some of the buildings. And they'd surely appreciate the truly spectacular market that still takes place to this day.

Just 40 minutes from No. 22, Saintes – an important stop on the pilgrims route to Santiago de Compostela – makes for a terrific day trip. We recommend you park the car and visit on foot or by bike.

Sitting at the Bar de l'Arc de Triomphe in front of the enormous Roman Arch of Germanicus at the side of the River Charente, feels half-way between cosmopolitan and sleepy.

Once the Roman capital of Aquitaine, it was one of the most important towns in Gaul. The remains here are some of the best in France though possibly the 1st Century Arch isn't one of them – it was dismantled and put back together again in 1843. Located at the end of the Roman road, known as the "Via Agrippa", it marked the entrance of a Roman bridge to the city. However, visit the Amphitheatre of Saintes and you're going to be spellbound at the sight that greets you. It was created around 50AD in the reign of Emperor Claudius. Built in the hollow of a natural valley, it is enormous and unmistakably Roman.

There are beautiful churches and the monumental Abbaye aux Dames with its quirky musical carousel – riders play instruments, it's the only one of its kind in the world! Great shops and a brilliant market (don't miss the memorable boulangerie stall), a vibrant events calendar and a pretty town of cobbled streets make this a joyful place to visit.

Eat out: There are lots of restaurants here that are excellent. We recommend Le Bistrot Galant which has a great menu.

THEME PARKS

Futuroscope

It's an hour and a half's drive to Futuroscope near Poitiers, but this award-winning theme park is brilliant for kids of all ages! The attractions are based on multimedia, cinematography and audio-visual techniques, with 3D and 4D attractions, some of which are unique in the world. But that doesn't really do justice to this insanely bizarre and utterly French experience.

Vienne Dynamique is one of the top attractions. If you can imagine being strapped into a seat in a simulator and then taken on a journey which involved a magical spitting tree (yes you will get wet), a bridegroom late for his wedding and a full-throttle journey that has you jumping off a train, flying through the sky over the Vienne, driving a racing car through the back streets of a tiny village and firing down a river in a very small boat at top speed, then you'll get an idea of what Futuroscope is all about.

Puy du Fou

At around 2 hours drive from No. 22, it's a bit of a hike but an utterly brilliant theme park. If you love history, fairy tales, pomp and splendour, ballet dancing horses, birds of prey that love to perform, and shows on a grand scale - you'll love Puy du Fou. Located in Les Epesses, in the heart of the Pays de la Loire, Puy du Fou is a marvellous melting pot of history, a feast of fantasy, and a smorgasbord of sensational special effects. You'll see Roman gladiators, rampaging Vikings, musketeers, Louis XIV and much much more.

There really isn't anywhere quite like this anywhere in the world. It's quite simply magical.



BORDEAUX



Bordeaux is often called France's greatest city. Quite simply, it has everything that makes you fall head over heels in love with France. Great wine – surrounded by some of the world's best vineyards. Great restaurants – it has become serious competition for Lyon, known as the gastronomic capital of France. UNESCO listed architecture, wonderful markets, and museums galore, including the world-famous wine museum. Wall to wall sunshine, fabulous shopping, historic buildings. In short, it's the perfect French city. In fact, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain called it "the very essence of elegance" the last time she visited.

Drive a little further afield to visit Saint-Émilion, a quaint and charming town with cobbled streets, boutiques, restaurants, vineyards and of course lots of wine. Book a tour at the tourist office, access the catacombs and learn about the Saint – Emilion. We love the cool tranquil surroundings of the Lard et Bouchon Restaurant for lunch, blissful on a hot sunny day, but be sure to book as it gets very busy. The authentic and original macarons of Saint Emilion are a must. And if you want to do a wine tasting head to The Wine Buff in the heart of this famous wine village, run by affable Irishman Paddy O'Flynn.

Tip: Return by driving up the Medoc and taking the ferry from Pointe de Graves to Royan.

BRILLIANT ACTIVITIES CLOSE TO NO. 22

You don't have to go far to have a great time when you're on holiday at No. 22!

Here are just a few of our favourite local activities and places:

Boat trips: The beautiful, serene river Charente winds its way through the department. Boat trips are available up and down the river from Jarnac, Cognac, Chaniers, Angoulême, Saintes and Saint-Savinien.

Tip: there's a lovely river path from Jarnac to Bourg-Charente, a picturesque little place with a Michelin-starred restaurant.

Meet the donkeys in Dampierre-sur-Boutonne at the Asinerie du Baudet du Poitou. You can't help but fall in love with the enormous woolly Poitou donkeys. You can also visit the local château with gorgeous gardens. www.bourricot.com/baudetdupoitou/

Beach life: In Fouras, head to the far point of the peninsula - Pointe de la Fumée-Ile d'Aix - and have lunch at La Jetée, relax on the sandy beach and visit the pretty town.

Pretty and fun places to visit

Jarnac: An attractive town on the Charente. In the main square stands the imposing Château de Courvoisier and opposite, the Michelin-listed Restaurant du Château. A labyrinth of pedestrian streets and lanes leads to some charming shops and lesser-known Cognac producers, such as Delamain and Hine.

La Rochefoucauld: An attractive small town overlooked by its impressive château.





Matha: The nearest small town has a good choice of shops and a covered market (mornings, Tues, Fri, Sat and Sun) where fresh fish, oysters and mussels and local produce can be bought, with excellent charcuterie on Tuesday and Saturday and organic bread on Saturday. A big street market is held on the first Friday of every month. There are also tennis courts – key available from the Office de Tourisme.

Mornac-sur-Seudre: This charming little fishing village, between Saujon and La Tremblade, is one of “Les Plus Beaux Villages de France” and is well-known as an artists’ community. Walk in the marshes (see the Randonnées en Charente-Maritime book) and then have lunch in one of the restaurants (we liked Le P’tit Phare overlooking the boats and marshes).



St-Jean-d’Angély

Originally the site of a Roman villa, the towers of the unfinished Abbaye Royale are a landmark for miles around. The old town is very attractive and has charming lanes, alleys and mediaeval houses. On Wednesday and Saturday mornings there is a very good market, in and around the covered marché in the centre of the old town. There is a museum and a base de loisirs for picnics, swimming, boating, pedaloos, canoeing, etc.



South-west of St Jean d’Angély lies Saint Savinien. There is a charming boating lake for children, with scale copies of real boats that they can take out on the lake. Also a swimming pool and tree shaded banks of the river where you can picnic, as well as several good restaurants. There is a terrific foire aux vins in August, which brings together producers from all over France in a charming setting through the streets: www.foireauxvins17.fr

Eat out at Le Petit Bouchon on a corner of the Place du Marché. Charming and just what you expect of a French bistro. Candle-lit in the evening.



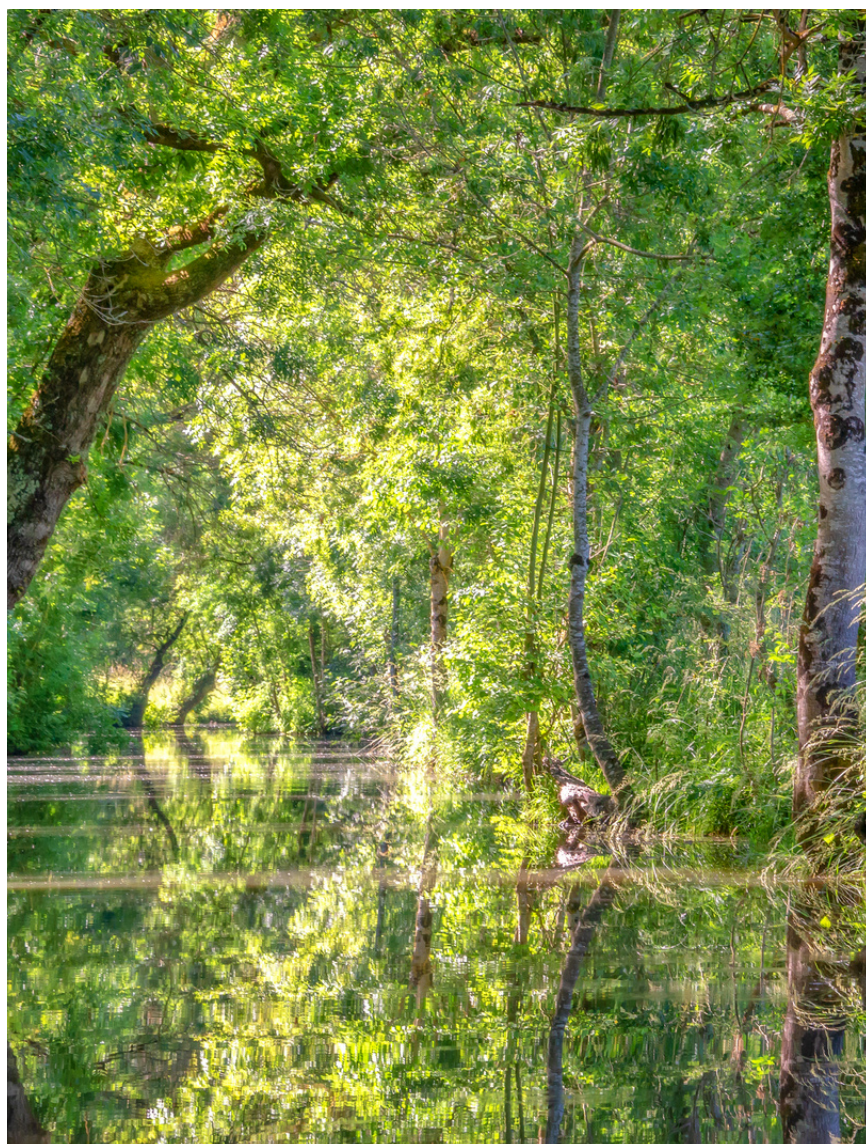
La Roche Courbon: Charming small château situated near St Jean, with restored gardens in the style of Le Nôtre, Louis XIV's favourite gardener.

Marais Poitevin: Surrounding, and just north of Niort, is a natural marsh and forest area criss-crossed by drainage canals known as the Venise Verte - Green Venice. Take a trip on a punt to get the full experience.

Moutarderie Charentaise: Situated in Gourvillette (follow signs to Beauvais sur Matha, initially). Jérôme makes his own mustards and sauces and carries a range of good quality items, such as vinegar and oils. Good for gifts.

Zoo: At Chizé (between St Jean and Niort) and the biggest in France at La Palmyre (north of Royan).

Forests of Chizé, La Boutonne and Aulnay. Lovely areas with plenty of attractions.



COGNAC NO. 22

FARMHOUSE GITE WITH LUXURIOUS HEATED POOL



Book at: www.cognac-no22.com

Email: pauljsaunders1971@gmail.com

Tel: +33 7 84 71 39 06