



Vincent's Birthday at Hotel Chais Monnet and Spa in Cognac



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My partner Vincent's birthday is August 24 and this year I had to be quite creative in planning something special. It was hard to have a party because of Covid-19 and plus many of our friends are away that time of the year. Also, traveling in France in the August can be a challenge because of the crowds during the traditional vacation time and the high prices. I racked my brain for a while trying to come up with a plan and remembered that my friend **Nicolas Zimmerman**, who is the director of sales and marketing at [Heloise's Choice](#), a company that manages and operates a small group of luxury hotels and properties, had told me about a new hotel that had just opened last year

in **Cognac**. I emailed Nicolas to ask if there was availability for one night on August 24 and not only did he say the date was available, he insisted we stay two nights. Needless to say, Nicolas didn't have to twist my arm to agree to staying two nights in a five-star luxury hotel and I am so glad we did.

We took an early train from Paris last Monday from **Gare Montparnasse**, and had to switch trains at **Angouleme**, and take a local train for 45 minutes to **Cognac**, so altogether it took 3.5 hours to get there.

Luckily, we were able to check into our room straight away and they gave us the fabulous **Terrasse Suite** with a living room and dining area, a separate, spacious bedroom, and an oversized bathroom with two sinks and a rain shower. The toiletries with a fig scent were from **Fragonard**. The décor of the suite was in soft neutral tones of beige and off white with retro-style, brass lamps and accessories. The special touch was the hotel management left us a bottle of Champagne, a birthday cake (a delicious *fraisier*, a light as air cake with strawberries, cream, and a wisp of sponge cake), and a handwritten note welcoming us to the hotel and wishing Vincent Happy Birthday.

We downed the cake immediately and got a mid-morning sugar rush. We were so delighted with our room we didn't want to leave but forced ourselves to check out the rest of the hotel and the town of Cognac.

Taking a stroll through the quaint downtown area, we noticed the city was devoid of people and almost all the shops and restaurants were closed. I guess it was the combination of being a Monday and the last week of August, but we found one restaurant open and had a pleasant lunch outdoors.

After lunch we explored the rest of the hotel which was impressive. The site of the hotel was originally a cognac and wine producer named **La Maison Monnet**, founded in 1898 by **Jean-Gabriel Monnet** and remained privately owned by the Monnet family until 1962, when it was sold to the **Hennessy** family and later sold to the city of Cognac in 2018. Even though architect **Didier Poignant** has a remarkable resume in hotel design, including his work on the **Royal Monceau**, the **Grand Hotel Intercontinental**, and **The Hoxton in Paris**, plus the **Hôtel du Jeu de Paume** in **Chantilly**, he had a big challenge ahead of him. **The Chais Monnet** project was the transformation of an industrial structure into a hotel complex, a first in France. **Poignant** took the original industrial buildings and miraculously turned them into elegant and refined hotel rooms and public spaces with a smart, sleek look. The lobby is three stories of glass and steel with two dramatic winding staircases in the center.













The centerpiece of the hotel complex is the newly designed black glass box with a stunning effect of rusted, twisted beams wrapping and extending out from the glass. The building contains hotel rooms, restaurants, the spa, and swimming pool.

After lunch we went down to the pool and it had a super cool design, where part of the pool is inside and then extends to the outside. There were chaise lounges outside on the grass with nice vistas of the city and we relaxed for a few hours.

At 5pm the hotel scheduled facials for both of us at the **Codage Spa**. **Codage** is a fairly new, high-end skin care company whose products have become the new status symbol for well to do Parisians. What was special about the one-hour treatment was when the cosmetician put a mask on my face and was waiting for it to dry, she gave me a brisk and invigorating hand massage.

With our newly glowing skin, we had Vincent's birthday dinner at the **La Distillerie**, the casual bistro in the hotel. The staff sent glasses of Champagne to us and as if the strawberry cake wasn't enough earlier in the day, we had a decadent, crunchy chocolate éclair with a birthday candle on top.

The next evening, we enjoyed a glass of wine at the rooftop bar, **Guinguet**. The layout of tangerine colored lounges, brown metal chairs, and natural wood tabletops, along with a gardenscape of wildflowers and reeds was calming, and above the bar were more of the dramatic rust beams.

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at **Hotel Chais Monnet and Spa** and we highly recommend it if you looking for a side trip from Paris for a few days.

Tomorrow I will write about our visit to the **Remy Martin** factory and other things about Cognac.

Hotel Chais Monnet and Spa

50 Avenue Paul Firino Martell, 16100 Cognac

<https://www.chaismonnethotel.com/en/>

Please note: Our two-night stay at Chais Monnet was complimentary.







Foyeuse
Anniversaire







Vincent, the Birthday Boy!