

The Orangery at Citadelle Gin distillery in SW France



We recently visited the Citadelle Gin Distillery, which is the creation of Alexandre Gabriel who at 22 came to Cognac from Burgundy to buy his own Cognac house, Maison Ferrand, and who still owns and drives the business forward. In 1996, after persuading French Customs and Excise to change the law, he started distilling gin in the Cognac region. Citadelle became the world's first craft gin distillery and now also owns a rum plantation in the West Indies.

The visit itself was fascinating as related by our guide, Yohann who is well-versed in the art of gin-making and the history of the distillery, which is situated in a beautifully renovated château in the countryside about 20 minutes' drive from Cognac. We enjoyed a gin and rum tasting, followed by a generous buffet lunch made with local produce and wines from the renowned Domaine de Garancille and finished with a digestif.

The time flew by as we learned how the business was developed from nothing by one man driven by his passion. If you think you know how a distillery works, think again. This is nothing like a Cognac or Whisk(e)y distillery tour and the process is completely different. We learned the difference between commercial factory-produced gin and genuine craft gin. There is a juniper plantation on-site and local produce is used wherever possible. We all had a fabulous day out and a totally different distillery experience in the heart of the Cognac region. Our next event is the annual charity barbecue on Sunday 31st August.