

Hautvillers â?? the Cradle of Champagne

Description

UNESCO World Heritage Landscape

Hautvillers is part of a **UNESCO listing** called the **Champagne Hillsides, Houses and Cellars**. Inscribed in 2015, this designation recognises the historic vineyard slopes around villages like Hautvillers, along with the Champagne houses and cellars in Reims and Ã?pernay.

> This historic village is closely associated with Dom PÃ©rignon, the Benedictine monk linked to early advancements in Champagne production at the Abbey of Saint-Pierre in the 17th century. For Mukul Manku â?? who sees Champagne as a living legacy â?? a visit to this village was both meaningful and exciting. In this post, he shares his experience on a wintry December day.

I clearly recall that mist-laden winter morning when my better half and I set out for Hautvillers by Uber from the city of Reims. The fog hung low and dense, trimming visibility to barely a few metres, turning the drive into something almost surreal. Every now and then, the haze would part just enough to reveal fleeting glimpses of the sprawling vineyards along the way.



Reims to Hautvillers in the Uber

The entire journey felt as though it had been lifted straight from â??The Hound of the Baskervilleâ?? by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle â?? mysterious, mystical, and charged with anticipation. For me it was simply exhilarating.

Cafe dâ??Hautvillers

In my mind, I had always pictured Hautvillers as a purely rural setting â?? a quiet village built around a beautiful old church, where centuries ago Dom PÃ©rignon refined the art of blending Champagne. As our cab climbed the slopes, glimpses of that timeless mind image did emerge. Yet what we arrived at was not just a rustic hamlet, but a well-kept little town with well laid out streets. We were dropped into its main square, in the compound of CafÃ© dâ??Hautvillers, just opposite the Hautvillers Tourism Office.



Uber dropped us in the compound of Cafe dâ??Hautvillers seen above

It was a a cold noon, so stepping into the cafe felt comforting and warm. The place was lively, with people chatting over wine and **champagne**. We chose hot coffee instead, warming ourselves up for the sightseeing day ahead in this beautiful **Champagne** village.

> Do notice above that when mentioned as a beverage itâ??s champagne (with a small **c**) but as a place itâ??s called Champagne (with the capital **C**).





Bronze Statue of Dom Perignon

With no particularly planned itinerary, we set out to explore the historic village on foot, depending on Google â??places to seeâ?? in Hautvillers and our first stop was the **Pierre Cheval Park** which featured a King size bronze statue of Dom PÃ©rignon, symbolically modelled around a bottle of champagne. The Christmas Cap on his head made him look rather cute that day.


Dom Perignon Statue

The park named after Pierre Cheval, who helped secure UNESCO status for the Champagne hillsides, houses and cellars.

My First Tryst with a Champagne Vineyard

After our stop by the Dom PÃ©rignon statue, we wandered further through the historic village. Wrapped in mist and fog, the streets felt almost mystical.



A champagne vineyard

While walking, a flight of steep stone steps towards the left caught my eye. Curiosity won. I climbed up â?? and found myself standing before a compact vineyard. It was a quiet momentous moment â?? ***my very first champagne vineyard*** â?? it was a plot of *Fernand Lemaire* in the midst of winter pruning.

I clearly remember lifting the clay-limestone earth into my palms, wanting to feel its texture and character for myself. I even spoke about it at the time â?? you can catch that moment here.

The Wrought-Iron Signs of Hautvillers

As you stroll through Hautvillers, the colorful wrought-iron signs hanging from house fronts instantly catch the eye. Shaped like grapes, keys, saints, or tools etc, they add charm to the village streetscape.



Their roots go back to a time when many residents could not read. Instead of street / house numbers, homes and inns were identified through symbolic iron plaques.

Each sign often reflected a family name, profession, or a meaningful motif â?? blending identity with artistry. Over time, they became part of the villageâ??s visual language.



Today, these *enseignes* remain one of Hautvillersâ?? defining features. The village forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage List, and these wrought-iron details add to the charm of this protected cultural setting.

Rue de Cumiere



Next we walked along **Rue de CumiÃ¨re**s towards the **Belvedere Dom Perignon** â?? Hautvillersâ?? most iconic viewpoint.



Rue de Cumiere

The green signboard on right side of Rue de Cumiere (seen above), read **Circuit Historique (Historic Trail**) â?? which is a clearly marked walking route that guides visitors through the villageâ??s key historic landmarks.

While walking on this historic street, we came across a many champagne vineyards including a plot of MoÃ«t & Chandon



A MoÃ«t & Chandon vineyard astride Rue de Cumiere

Belvedere Dom Perignon

Rue de Cumiere finally brought us to *Belvedere Dom Perignon* â?? the prominent view point in the village. It was a misty morning, so we couldnâ??t see the panoramic view of the Marne Valley and its vineyards. Thankfully, the information boards helped us imagine the beautiful landscape that stretches out below.



Thatâ??s me at the viewpoint covered in mist

Shared below is the picture of same place on a clear day â?? where the valley reveals its full Champagne splendour.



View point on a clear day

Abbey of Saint-Pierre



Abbey of Saint-Pierre â?? with Saint-Sindulphe Church in the background

Founded in the 7th century, the Abbey of Saint-Pierre was a Benedictine monastery at the heart of Hautvillers. Here Dom Perignon served as cellar master for nearly five decades, refining vineyard practices and the art of blending that shaped champagneâ??s future.

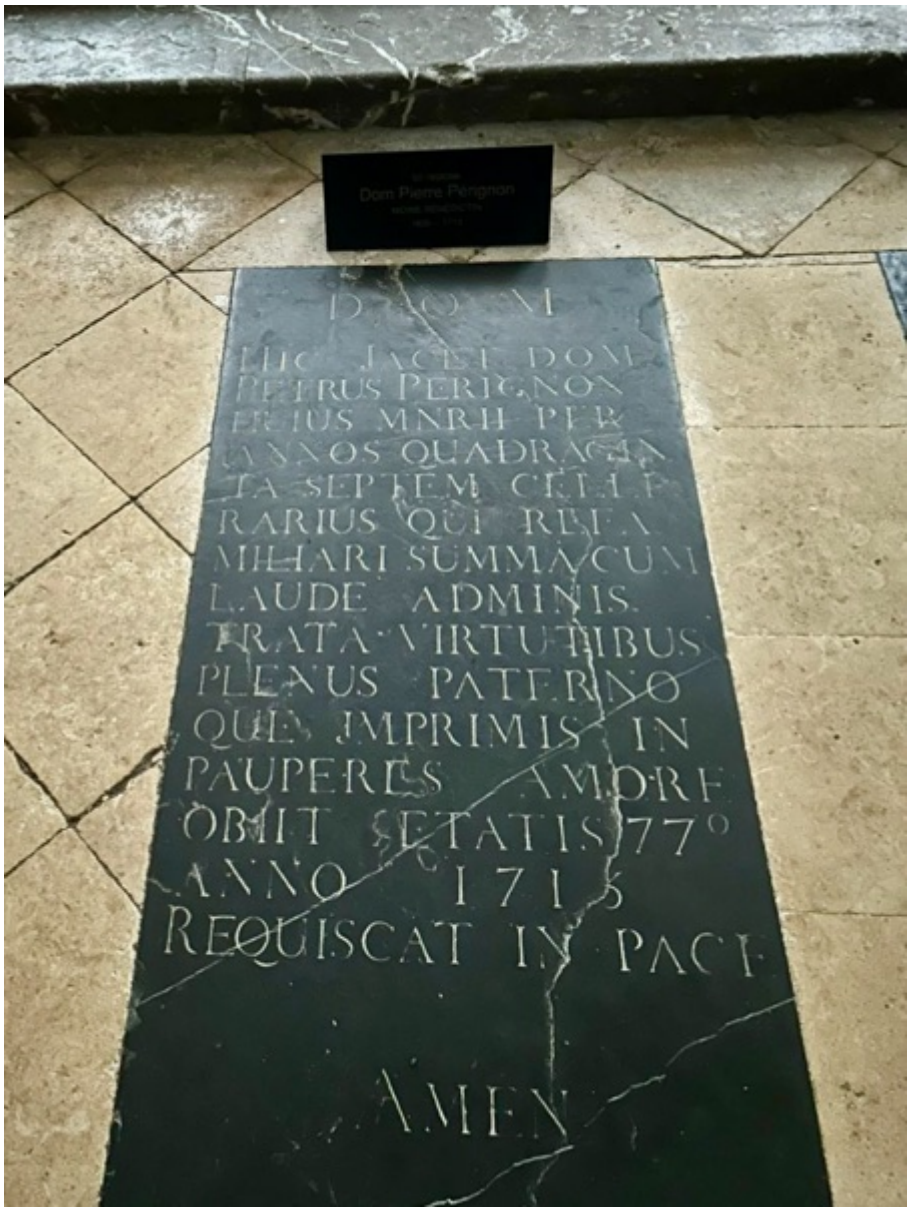
Though the Abbey was largely destroyed during the French Revolution, the legacy of Dom Perignon lives on in Champagne region, particularly in the nearby church where he rests â?? *Saint-Sindulphe Church*

Saint-Sindulphe Church



Approach to the Church

Nestled in the heart of Hautvillers, *Saint-Sindulphe Church* is best known as the final resting place of Dom Perignon. He served here as cellar master of the Abbey of Hautvillers for nearly five decades and was buried in the church in 1715.



Grave Tomb of Dom Perignon in front of the Altar

As we went inside the Church, the interiors felt serene, with soft light filtering through stained glasses. Just in front of the altar was Dom PÃ©rignonâ??s modest grave marker â?? a quiet tribute to a man whose meticulous work in blending and vineyard management helped shape the global legacy of Champagne



Altar of the Church

Champagne Tasting

You canâ??t leave Hautvillers without tasting Champagne. So we headed to the cellar of **JM Gobillard & Fils**, where we savoured three cuvÃ©es in an impressive cellar-style setting just metres from the entrance to the famed Abbey of Saint Pierre.



Comparative tasting of three champagnes

And since champagne is synonymous with celebration and fun, I also made a fun video clip which you can watch here.

A Misty Farewell Under the Monkâ??s Assured Gaze

Finally, we returned to the central square opposite the Hautvillers Tourisme building, in front of CafÃ© dâ??Hautvillers.



Tree branches decorated in shape of wine glasses caught our eye

By this time the evening had settled in and mist lingered. Darkness deepened and soon the cafe also shut its doors. The streets now looked empty and silent â?? only the occasional passing car broke the silence. The air too had turned colder.

A sudden wave of concern set in â?? *what if we couldnâ??t get an Uber back*? A quick online search showed a possible hotel somewhere nearby, though we hadnâ??t seen one.

Then, relief. An Uber from Ã?pernay accepted our ride. As we waited, I suddenly noticed the bust of Dom PÃ©rignon quietly overlooking the square â?? almost as if offering a silent reassurance.



Soon the car arrived, and we were on our way, leaving the village and its misty charm behind.

Authorâ??s Note â?•ï¸•

Writing this post has been deeply satisfying for me as it helped me to relive the wonderful moments we experienced at Hautvillers during our memorable visit there last December. I do hope you liked reading it as well. Till the next time â?? Cheers !!!

Mukul Manku-President Wineglitz India. 14 Feb 26