

EXPERIENCING THE WINE INDUSTRY IN FRANCE

An Excursion for Students of International Wine Business (B.Sc.).

We, a group of International Wine Business students from Asia – Zhichao Li, Fengming Yang and Ruotong Zhao from mainland China, Chi Ching Schöpke from Taiwan and Lilian Hong from Hong Kong –, participated in the excursion to Champagne and Paris last winter semester. We want to share some impression with the reader of PlanG.

Classic & Modern – Starting in Reims, we had the chance to visit two very well known, very prestigious champagne houses. Champagne Louis Roederer and Champagne Taittinger. Both still run by the family that once initiated the business. We were surprised that a high percentage of the grapes used for the champagne production is coming from their own vineyard sides. Controlling the growing process is one of the critical success factors of Champagne Louis Roederer. Champagne Taittinger is the 3rd oldest Champagne house. The prestige Cuvée “Comtes de Champagne” is still filled in bottles having the same shape as the ones the Benedictine monks used in early days. During our visit of Champagne Taittinger, we saw the historical chalk cellar and enjoyed the fantastic UNESCO cultural heritage right below the administrative building.

Big & Small – Regardless of the scale, each champagne house has its credo, which creates at the end a unique Champagnes taste. Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte is the biggest cooperative in Champagne and amongst the tree bestseller brands in France. We saw in the cel-

lar the advanced hightech in combination with modern art. During a presentation of the Responsible Marketing Operationnel International Mrs Chen Chi Song, we learned as well about the new branding strategy of Champagne Nicolas Feuillatte. Champagne Doyard, located in Vertus, is the other end of the scale. The Champagne house is small, and grapes grow only on 10 hectares. Uniqueness and high quality are here vital parts of the production philosophy. Champagne Doyard creates complex and concentrated Champagne. Guillaume Doyard, who is leading the company today, works closely with his father to ensure the consistency in quality and uniqueness, the fingerprint of each Champagne bottle that carries the name Doyard.

Biodynamic – The highlight of this excursion, in our opinion, is Champagne J. de Telmont. Established in 1912, the family-owned house is now run by the fourth generation. When first seeing the premises, we did not expect too much due to the buildings which tend to be not too fancy and serving the needs of the production rather than to please and attract customer. Our doubts grew when we heard their biodynamic production philosophy of „transporting information to their grapes” and “to work with the grapes in a special vibration level” during harvest. However, Champagne J. de Telmont convinced us with the quality of their Champagnes: Damn they tasted so good! All the sudden, we understood the philosophy of the house. Our colleague, Alex, bought a bottle of the Cuvée „Sans Soufre Ajouté” and decided to open it when graduating from Geisenheim.





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The organizational side of the wine industry – The Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (Comité Champagne) is the official trade organization of the Champagne and manages the common interest of the growers and the Champagne houses. During the presentation, we learned that the CIVC sets up winemaking and wine business regulations in the region, focusing on the current market trends. Comité Champagne not only builds up the reputation of the region and the product. It also has a strong focus on preventing other producers out of Champagne from using Champagne as a brand name for their products. All these efforts make Champagne a synonym for very high quality and high class.

At the end of the excursion, we travelled to Paris and visited the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) and FIVS. Both of the organizations deal with the different aspects of the wine industry. Pau Roca (OIV, Directeur General) and Greg Hodson (FIVS, Président) spoke to us about their work, their achievements and the challenges of the future for the wine industry, e.g. sustainability and digitization.

We received a small market research task for the afternoon, during which we learned more about the French wine market and enjoyed Paris simultaneously.

During this tour to one of the most prestigious wine growing areas in the wine world, we learnt a lot about winemaking and wine business in France. This was a fantastic experience. ■

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