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France’s flagship wine tourism event drew record international turnout in Cognac

The 2026 edition matched 170 French exhibitors with 161 buyers from 43 countries, the highest turnout since launch.

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Cognac hosted one of France’s main wine tourism trade events on October 6 and 7, bringing together a record number of international buyers and French exhibitors as the country tries to expand the global reach of travel linked to vineyards, cellars, and regional drinks traditions.

According to Atout France, the state-backed tourism development agency that organizes the event, the 2026 edition of Destination Vignobles drew 170 French exhibitors and 161 international buyers from 43 countries. The agency said that was the highest participation level since the event began. The meetings took place in Cognac and across the Charentes and the wider Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, an area known for Cognac, Pineau des Charentes, and Charentais IGP wines.

Atout France describes Destination Vignobles as its flagship event for promoting wine tourism. The format is built around pre-arranged business meetings between exhibitors and buyers, along with professional visits that let participants see wine regions on the ground. This year’s program included 4,860 scheduled business meetings, according to the agency, as well as 19 educational tour programs organized across France before the main trade show. Nine of those programs were held in Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

The event was anchored in a territory that already has strong international name recognition because of Cognac, a product with deep export ties and a long-established identity in the global drinks market. Atout France said local industry groups tied to Cognac, Pineau des Charentes, and Charentais IGP wines played a central role in the edition, supported through the Explore Cognac destination contract, a framework meant to promote the area as a tourism destination as well as a drinks-producing region.

The scale of the attendance underlines how wine tourism is being treated in France not just as a leisure segment, but as a commercial channel that links producers, tourism boards, travel designers, and international distribution networks. By putting wineries, destination managers, and tour operators in direct contact, the event can help French wine and spirits regions secure new travel products, longer-term partnerships, and broader overseas exposure. For the beverage sector, that matters because tourism often serves as an entry point for brand discovery and for direct contact with vineyards, estates, and houses that also compete in export markets.

Atout France said the event aims to create targeted and lasting business relationships rather than general promotion alone. That reflects a broader shift in wine tourism toward packaged experiences that combine tastings, heritage visits, local food, and

overnight stays. In regions such as Cognac, where production history and place identity are tightly linked, that model can support both destination marketing and the visibility of the drinks categories tied to the region.

The agency also presented the event as part of a larger national strategy. It said Destination Vignobles helps structure a sector that reflects a distinct part of French identity and serves as a major tool for international attractiveness. Atout France added that its work is aligned with an ambition to make France the leading wine tourism destination in Europe. To support that goal, it said it is focusing on innovation, environmental transition, quality of visitor reception, and accessibility.

Those priorities reflect pressure on wine tourism operators to modernize while responding to changing consumer expectations. Innovation can range from digital booking tools and new visitor formats to transportation solutions and more flexible itineraries. Environmental transition has become especially important for vineyard destinations that market landscape, authenticity, and agricultural know-how as part of the visitor experience. Accessibility and service quality are also increasingly important as regions try to appeal to a wider international audience beyond traditional wine travelers.

The event’s partner list also showed the close relationship between tourism promotion and the drinks industry. Atout France said Air France served as the official carrier, while Hennessy and Pernod Ricard were among the companies supporting the edition. Their involvement points to the weight of major brands in promoting visits to production regions and in connecting hospitality, travel, and beverage marketing.

Innovation in the sector was also highlighted through the Wine Tourism Innovation Challenge, an international competition organized by UN Tourism with the involvement of France’s Directorate General for Enterprises and support from Atout France. Awards were presented to three winners during the event at the France Pavilion: La Bulle verte of France, Wine Train Vipava Valley of Slovenia, and Sächsisches Staatsweingut Schloss Wackerbarth of Germany. Atout France said the awards recognized projects that are helping renew industry practices and shape the future of wine tourism.

While Destination Vignobles is centered on tourism, its business implications extend into wine and spirits more broadly. Vineyard visits and producer-led experiences can influence how international travelers and trade professionals understand a region’s products, and they can open routes for future sales, partnerships, and destination-based branding. In that sense, the strong turnout in Cognac suggests continuing international interest in travel built around wine regions and in the producers and beverage categories that give those places their identity.