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Exclusive Champagne Bollinger Estate to Open to the Public With Luxury Hotel

James Bond's favorite bubbly is determined to get the most out of its property assets.



The Bollinger House, which serves as the headquarters for the family-held company. Another building will be converted to a hotel. *Source: Bollinger*

The winemaker Champagne Bollinger has long cultivated a reputation for exclusivity. Whereas tourists are able to hop onto bus tours and stop at visitors centers at other winemakers in the celebrated region in northeast France, the producer of James Bond's favorite bubbly mostly limits tastings to invitation-only gatherings.

Now, in a move verging on revolution, the Champagne house founded in 1829 is preparing to welcome the general public to its property in time for its bicentenary. Bollinger has begun work on a 20-room hotel on its estate in the village of Ay. There will also be tasting rooms, a private dining space and shop, and an extensive refurbishment and expansion of its cellar – but no tours, at least not yet.

The renovation is an attempt to put the producer of Grands and Premiers Crus on the tourist map. “Bollinger still wants to be understated and quiet, but we have to change,” Guy de Rivoire, international sales director, said in an interview. “This is a massive investment for us.”



Societe Jacques Bollinger, the family-owned French group behind the eponymous champagne, has benefited as an official supplier of Buckingham Palace and James Bond movies. Yet economic reality set in a few years ago and forced a change of tack. “We came to the conclusion that we can’t do everything and needed to find new revenue streams,” de Rivoire said.

It’s now determined to get the most out of its property assets. The grand home where the executive has lived for the past nine years will be turned into a hotel with a wellness area and pool. Bollinger is also developing meeting rooms for seminars and a large reception space to seat 200 on the premises. A new “cathedral-esque cellier” will hold 5,000 228-liter barrels. Construction got under way in July; completion is targeted for 2026.

The challenge for the estate is to maintain its place in a relatively crowded market. Bollinger produces roughly 3.5 million bottles annually, putting it among the mid-sized independent champagne houses and competing directly with brands like Pol Roger. Top producer and luxury giant LVMH sold about 67 million bottles of champagne last year through its stable of brands including Dom Perignon, Moet & Chandon, Ruinart, and Veuve Clicquot.

Meanwhile, inflation has pushed up costs for raw materials, transport and labor. An economic slowdown could crimp sales. But Bollinger also has another source of uncertainty: whether the new King Charles III will renew its royal warrant.



For years now, tourists have been able to visit a broad range of estates and vineyards in the region. A search on the Comite Champagne website gives 471 possibilities for tastings and cellar tours.

Bollinger isn't yet one of them. "We like to take our time," de Rivoire said.

One closely guarded attribute that tourists will finally be able to see are the house's two walled plots of "Vielles Vignes Francaises," pinot noir vines that miraculously escaped decimation by phylloxera in the early twentieth century. The Clos Saint-Jacques and Clos des Chaudes Terres are classified Grand Crus and their yield is low. This year Bollinger is selling 2,477 bottles of 2013 vintage from the parcels, each numbered and labeled by hand with a price tag of 1,750 euros (\$1,674.)