THE CHALK SEA

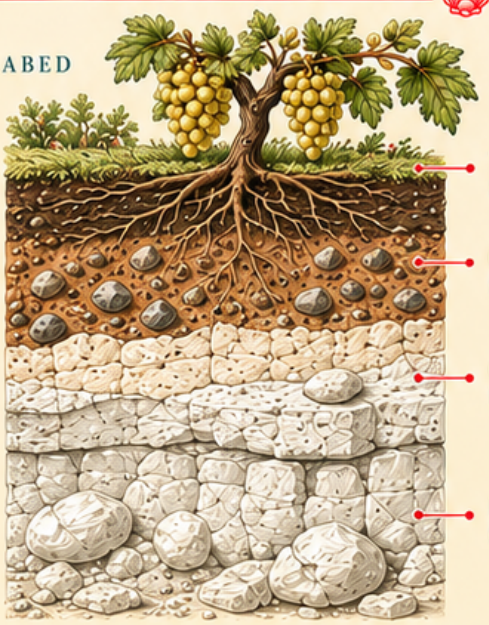
THE TERROIR OF CHAMPAGNE

GEOLOGY, SOILS, LANDSCAPE, CLIMATE AND THE VINES

1. GEOLOGY

AN ANCIENT SEABED

Champagne's foundations were laid 70–100 million years ago, when this area was a warm, shallow sea. Marine life accumulated as layers of chalk, forming a deep bed of porous limestone (chalk) that defines the region today.



2. SOILS

A MOSAIC OF TERROIRS

Champagne's soils are varied, but chalk is the dominant feature. Other soils – marls, limestone, sand and clay – add diversity, influencing water retention, vine vigour and the character of the wines.



CHALK
Porous, drains well, retains moisture deeper down.



MARLS
Mix of clay and limestone. Adds richness and depth.



LIMESTONE
Harder rock, often with flint. Warmer, earlier ripening.



SAND
Drains quickly, Warms easily, encourages finesse.



CLAY
Retains water. Warmer and richer wines, adds body and structure.

3. LANDSCAPE

SLOPES, ASPECT, ELEVATION AND RIVERS

Vineyards are mostly on gentle to moderate slopes, ideally facing east, south or southeast. Elevation and river valleys influence temperature, drainage and frost risk, creating a wide range of microclimates across the region.



4. CLIMATE

A NORTHERN BALANCE

Champagne has a cool, continental climate with oceanic influence. It is one of the northernmost wine regions in the world, with long, cool growing seasons, regular rainfall and a risk of spring frost. These conditions help preserve acidity and produce wines of freshness and finesse.



5. VINEYARD PRACTICES

GENERATIONS OF GROWERS

Champagne's vineyards are shaped by generations of growers, with strict regulations to protect quality. The historic village classification system (échelle des crus) reflects long-term experience of each site's potential.



6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

WHAT MAKES Cchampagne UNIQUE



CHALK
Deep chalk stores water and moderates vine stress.



COOL CLIMATE
Preserves acidity and aromatic finesse.



DIVERSE SITES
A mosaic of soils, slopes and exposures.



THREE GRAPE VARIETIES
Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, each expressing terroir in different ways.



PEOPLE AND PLACE
Generations of growers and houses interpret the land in their own style.

7. CHAMPAGNE AT A GLANCE

A UNIQUE PLACE

Champagne is located in northeastern France, about 150 km (93 miles) east of Paris. Its vineyards sit at a relatively high latitude, with moderate elevation, gentle slopes and limited sunshine compared to many other wine regions. These conditions produce wines of remarkable freshness, balance and finesse.



49° N
LATITUDE
One of the northernmost wine regions in the world.



150 – 200 m
AVERAGE ALTITUDE
Vineyards sit at moderate elevations across the region.



12%
AVERAGE SLOPE
Mostly gentle to moderate slopes.



~1,900
HOURS OF SUNSHINE PER YEAR
Less sunshine than many other wine regions.