



P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales

Walk the region
**THE SPOOKY
DEVILS'S TARN**

Out for the Day
GORGE DE GALAMUS

Festivals and Traditions
**WHAT'S ON AROUND
THE REGION**

Summer **2011**
FREE / GRATUIT N° 32

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Next to the restaurant "Le Clos des Lys"

Bon dia!

Summer's here and it's time to batten down the hatches in the evening against moustiques, moucherons and mouches if you don't want to find live raisins in your muesli in the morning!

And of course, the festival season has arrived; Fete de la musique, Feux de la Saint Jean, Havaneres, Sardanes..... Read all about these festivals, ferias and feasts of dance, fire and music on pages 10 to 15 – any excuse for a bit of a bop!

Evenings are already warm as I write this, and nights are not quite hot and sticky yet but showing their potential for a few sleepless nights to come. Why not head for the hills and cool off by the spooky Devil's Tarn (p6&7) or if you're tired of sand in every orifice, take some time off from the beach and try some of the great sports available in the cooler sweet air around Lake Matemale? (p48&49)

Have a great summer. We do hope the sun smiles on you wherever you are and whatever you do.

Kate & Jane

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Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

organises events, exhibitions, salons, concerts and conferences throughout the year. Check out their website on

www.congres-perpignan.com



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Walktherregion...


with
Mike Rhodes



PIERRES ESCRITES & ETANG DE DIABLE FROM VALLE DE GAUBE.

A wonderful walk for lovers of flowers, animals and wild places, to a hidden valley in search of rock carvings of ancient shepherds and the strange, ink black devils tarn's. This walk starts in the Valle de Gaube, just past the small hamlet of Esposouille, which can be accessed by car from Formiguères in the Capcir. From Esposouille, you can reach a parking place in the Gaube (GPS 31N 421748E 4721004N) by following a track along the valley bottom. For "normal" cars it may be best to park after 2.5k at Les Bosigues but 4x4's can get all the way to the end. The Gaube valley tends to hold a lot of snow each winter so this is a walk that should normally only be done from mid June onwards.

The Walk: From the car park at 1650m, follow the wide track, past the barrier, along the valley bottom, passing the shepherd's hut at Jaca de Llosa. After aprox 40 mins you arrive at a junction. Take LH path which drops down to a bridge to be crossed. The slope beyond climbs steeply for about 400m to a leveling where you can take a breather and gaze at the rocky peaks and ridges of Baxouillard (2546m) and Tribuna (2499m) and the steep pass of Porteille D'Orlu. This is a popular place for wild boar and often the ground is well turned over but the paths are well defined.

 Follow the path diagonally right, across the slope in a westerly direction until the

slope eases again slightly and then in a southerly direction crossing some small streams until you arrive at a small valley coming from your right. (GPS 31N 418698E 4721576N 2100m).



'Le chassé-croisé des juilletistes et des aoûtistes' describes the traffic chaos on the roads of France late July/early August as the whole world and his wife heads off to or home from their hols. A chassé-croisé is actually a dance step where dancers criss cross and change partners. 'Juilletistes' describes holiday makers heading off or home in July and 'aoûtistes' are August travelers.

👉 Do not drop down to the stream but look for a small track going to the right, west. The narrow track is not way-marked but follow it for 600m, always above the stream until you come to a narrow valley through which the stream runs. Follow this valley, at first on the right and then on the left into a larger, clear area. Follow the faint path on the left of the stream and within minutes you will reach a series of large, flat rock boulders. Look closely and you can see names and dates of ancient shepherds carved on many. This makes a great lunch spot, especially if you have children with you as a competition to find the oldest carvings is great fun. Some of the oldest are said to date from the Neolithic period.

👉 Having taken about 2 hours to reach the valley it is quite reasonable, after a nice lunch, to return by the same route but there are several options depending on your fitness. The first is to discover the Etang de Diable, hidden about 400m walk and 100m climb, above and to the west of the carved rocks. There is no one good track to get there but I do recommend having a go as it is eerily spooky.

👉 From the etang it is possible to climb Pic Mortiers 2605m by following vague tracks SW up



a broad crest until a large track goes right onto the ridge at 2510m by a metal carved sign marking the edge of the reserve D'Orlu. From the sign we turn left and follow the ridge to the summit.

👉 From the summit it is possible to return by the same route but it is better to descend the SW ridge and turn L down to a shallow valley before altitude point 2486m. This valley can be descended to the carved rocks or it is possible to continue W to join up with the way marked track at (GPS 31N 418302E 4720537N) taking you NE and back to your start point.

👉 The total walking time for the carved rocks is 4 hours but add an extra hour for the devils tarn and a further 2 hours for Pic Mortiers.

**Mike Rhodes is an International Mountain Leader / Accompanateur de Montagne, lives all year in Les Angles and specialises in guided walks in the high mountains and Snowshoe trips in winter. He can be contacted on +33 (0)4 68 04 37 28
email: mike.rhodes@free.fr web site: www.pyrenean-trails.com**

Did you know...?

Buildings, Monuments, statues and sculptures

Open door to the P-O

On a plateau of the Corbières, near Salses, with panoramic views of sea and lagoon, visible from the A9 motorway and the N9, stands the "Porta dels Països Catalans", or 'Gate of the Catalan Countries', giant arc of four open doors, its uprights symbolising the four bars of the Catalan flag. Created by sculptor Emili Armengol, this gateway to north Catalonia is a symbolic border between Languedoc and Roussillon, a first and last landmark for visitors arriving or departing the Pyrenees-Orientales.

Marca Hispanica pyramid

We've all passed it on the border from Spain in to France and wondered what it was!. Built in 1976 from stones excavated from the building of the motorway, the pyramidal monument overlooking the motorway at the old French/ Spanish border point is a purely decorative sculpture created by Ricardo Bofill, and dedicated to Catalonia. The architect was given the brief

that the mountain had suffered enough when the motorway was built, and he should build something to restore the region's dignity!

FNAC

An eye catching building as you enter Perpignan, the FNAC stands for 'Fédération nationale d'achats des cadres' and is an international chain selling electronic products, books, CDs....



Strictly Catalan

Add an -ada

This Catalan suffix slots on the end of a word in Catalan, to describe a group of things, (eg vacada – a herd of cows). Add an

“-ada” to the end of many food related words and you have a collective festival-style meal, generally based around a single ingredient such as snails, fish, chocolate.... Look out for bullinada, (fish stew) cargolada, (grilled snails) ollada, (a winter stew) escalivada, (grilled veggies) calçotada, (char grilled onions) .

Do you live near a prat?

Well, best not to answer that if you don't want to fall out with the neighbours but you will probably have noticed that there are a lot of Prats around. In fact, Prat is the Catalan word for prairie or meadow. Prats de Mollo, for example, is so called after Mollo, a village over the border in Spain, whose land was where Prats de Mollo is now, hence the prairies of Mollo.

What's in a name?

Bad turns good

Bompas, near Perpignan was built on the site of a river ford, which travellers used to cross to go from Perpignan to Narbonne. Unfortunately, this rather dangerous passing spot was frequented by villains and highwaymen, and therefore named «MAL PAS” (Bad Passage). Later on, with the building of a high bridge guarded by soldiers, it became known as “BONPAS” (Good Passage). The name for the subsequent settlement of Bompas evolved quite naturally from there

La Statue du Petit Tambour

Have you seen the statue of the Little Drummer Boy in Le Boulou? This statue, by sculptor Gérard Vié, represents the first child to die for his motherland on November 1st, 1794, during the battle of Le Boulou (30 April-1 May 1794) a French victory in the eastern Pyrenees against the Spanish.



Don't go to Bages!

Bages, or "Baiae" (meaning water) as it used to be known, was home to fishermen who lived on the edge of the boggy lake. "A Bages, No hi Vagis!" was heard meaning "Don't go to Bages!" The Templier knights decided to dry the lake and the village that grew up there became Bages, and is now definitely worth a visit.

Argelès prickle!

The name Argelès comes from the Latin «argila» meaning clay. Its motto - «qui s'hi acosta, té resposta» means 'he (or she) who rubs himself up against it will get pricked' – a Catalan way of saying "Once you get here, you won't ever want to leave"!!!

Lest we forget

Valmanya

Symbol of Catalan resistance during WW2, the village of Valmanya (Great valley in Latin) on the CD 13 coming from Vinça, was totally destroyed by the Germans in August 1944, in reprisal against resistance fighters operating in the area. Villagers who were unable to flee to the safety of the mountains were machine gunned. From this 'maquis' stronghold, Captain Julien PANCHOT, later to be brutally tortured and killed, led brave resistance fighters who sheltered in the nearby mines of La Pinosa and set up the Sainte Jeanne escape route for refugees. The village was rebuilt but the ruins of the mines remain.

A time for quiet reflexion

If you have a quiet hour or so in your busy summer, why not visit Camp Joffre in Rivesaltes? Under the shadow of a wind-farm, behind an industrial estate, desolate ruined huts and latrines bear witness to man's inhumanity to man.

Camp Joffre opened in 1938 and was soon housing "Undesirables", refugees from the Spanish Civil War, Jews and Gypsies... So handy for the railway. Destination: Auschwitz, via Drancy.

There's not much to see now, but if you close your eyes and listen, you might hear voices on the breeze.

A courageous lady

It is estimated that Elisabeth Eidenbenz, now in her late nineties and living a quiet life near Vienna, saved up to 600 babies by rescuing pregnant women fleeing the Spanish Civil War and horrors of Nazism during WW2.

Today, you can visit the Château d'En Bardou in Elne, where she set up a maternity ward, funded by private Swiss donations. (La Maternité suisse) Restored in 1997, it is a fitting memorial to a courageous lady.



Events festival traditions....

Midsummer Madness -

With thanks to Basil HOWITT

JUNE 23RD

The first midsummer fire on Canigou in modern times was lit on 23 June 1955 by Francois Poujade and fellow USAP rugby fanatics – both to celebrate his birthday and Perpignan's victory over FC Lourdes in the Yves du Manoir Challenge cup. Between 1957 and 1963, a local group of young people devoted to good causes, enlarged the event, extending the midnight fires to 20 further hill tops and watch towers. French Catalonia was truly ablaze!



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Els Focs de la Sant Jean

Essentially the Fires celebrate the ancestral bonds of love and friendship between all Catalans everywhere – and by extension between all human beings.

La Trobada

La Trobada (gathering or reunion) is the meeting of walkers and representatives of villages and towns throughout Catalonia. They make their way along the track known as La Piste du Llech (a five hour walk), on foot, by horse, mountain bike or 4x4s, to Les Cortalets (altitude 2,150 metres), below Canigou, about a week before the solstice bonfire. With them they bring faggots of vine cuttings – symbols, like the fire itself, of “love and peace” to be deposited the following morning round the iron cross at the summit of Canigou.

Communal Feast

Tents pitched, they quickly get down to the serious business of preparing the food.

‘Grillades’ of pork and lamb chops, belly pork slices, sausages and black puddings braised on huge metal trivets over glowing faggot embers. Olladas, huge stews of pork shin, tails, sagi (salted, slightly rancid pork back fat), black puddings, sausages, cabbage, potatoes, leeks,

carrots, celery, dried haricot beans, thyme, bayleaves ... simmered for at least two hours, traditionally in an old fashioned ‘tupi’ or glazed earthenware pot.

El cremat or cinnamon-and-rhum flavoured “burnt” coffee, Xocolotada (or Xicolotada), a posh version of cocoa, which goes well with a sweetened version of fougasse, a flat, sculpted bread handed round on many communal occasions.

Add some guitars and traditional Catalan instruments, and of course, the ‘purro’ - a sort of glass decanter with a long slim spout from which you pour sweet muscat down your throat before passing it on to you neighbour – and you soon have all the makings of a great party in a fabulous location.

The bonfire

The next morning, after much feasting and very little sleep, the hardier participants make the four-hour climb to the top of Canigou, with their bundles of faggots and copious quantities of ribbons and bands in the famed Catalan colours of sang et or, (blood-red and gold.) The faggots, bearing the name of each commune, are piled and tied to form a huge bonfire round the ancient metal cross on the top of the mountain.

A week later, at midnight on 22 June, the fire is lit with a flame permanently kept alive in the Casa Pairal, and on the 23rd, celebrations begin throughout the region



June

FESTIVAL D'HAVANERES

Friday 3rd June.

Join the Catalan Havaneres groups at 21h in the place du Barri in Céret.

Habaneras, named after the capital of Cuba, La Habana (Havana), were originally sea shanties, brought back from Cuba by sailors in the 19th Century, telling of lost loves and exotic places. They were accompanied by guitar and accordion,

spontaneous and mainly to be heard in the bars and taverns.

However, more than just typical drinking songs, they were soon included in "zarzuelas" popular Spanish music theatre of the 19th and 20th century, and even appear in works from great composers such as Bizet and Ravel.

This back slapping music is usually be served up with the traditional accompanying drink, ron cremat, a mixture of rum, sugar, lemon peel and coffee beans, with optional cinnamon stick, served in an earthenware bowl and flambéed to burn off the alcohol.



FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE 21st June

On this, the longest day of the year, amateur and professional musicians perform free concerts in venues throughout France, a celebration of music in all its forms, and open to anyone.

In 1981, Maurice Fleuret, Director of Music and Dance, looked for a way to bring people and their music out on to the streets, and the Fête de la Musique was born. It will be hard to avoid the vibrant sounds of salsa, string and steel bands, rock, rap, hip hop, house and heavy metal pounding out from bars and cafés, streets, squares and courtyards. Carnival atmosphere, food, drink, laughter, and music of all sorts from the good, the bad and the ugly – great fun for all.



OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

Wed 1st-4th

Perpignan Festival Ida y Vuelta ('come and go')

Thurs 2nd - Sun 5th

Vernet-les-Bains

Fete de la Belle Époque

Sat 4th

Around the region

Festival of wine and vine

Thurs 2nd - Sun 5th

Banyuls-sur-Mer

Flamenco festival

Tues 7th

Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

Jazz with Gunhild Carling

Sun 12th

Canet Plage - from 10h

Olive festival and parade of the gégants

Fri 17th - Sun 19th

Collioure

Festival of wine and art

Sat 18th & Sun 19th

Bages

Medieval festival

Fri 24th - Sat 25th

St. Cyprien

Beach rugby festival

Sat 25th

Canet

Free concert. English rock of the 60s

Sat 25th & Sun 26th

Céret

Les Querencias (Flamenco).

Wed 29th

Arles-sur-Tech

Yannick Noah in Concert

July

FÊTE DE LA BASTILLE 14th July

Symbol of the absolute power of the monarchy of Louis XVI, the day of the storming of the Bastille was declared a French national holiday in 1880, a celebration of the birth of the Republic. Fireworks, dancing, and a lot of celebrating mark the event every year throughout France. Check with Tourist Offices for exact dates and details



FESTIVAL DES SARDANES 22nd - 23rd July

Sardane competitions in the Céret arena, with 'colles' (sardane dance troupes) from all over Catalonia, 'strutting their stuff' around the streets of old Céret in between competitions and traditional Catalan summer entertainment in the boulevards. Franco, who considered the Catalan pride a threat to his dictator status, tried to ban the Sardana, as he believed dancers were passing on coded messages with their feet! Whether true or not, today the sardane is danced by Catalan and non Catalan alike, an ideal platform for integration for newcomers who wish to immerse themselves in village life.



OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

Every Friday (& Aug)

Perpignan
Guided Tours in English

Every Tues (& Aug)

Perpignan
Cluedo en famille

Sat 2nd - Sun 3rd

Campo Santo, Perpignan
PSY - Acrobatic dance circus

Wed 6th

Argelès
Fête de la Mer

Sat 9th - Tues 12th

Valmy, Argelès
Les Déferlantes with Joe Cocker, ZZ Top...

Sun 17th

Bolquère Pyrénées 2000
Fête de la Montagne

School holidays for our region

(Zone A)
Summer

2nd July, to
5th September

BANK HOLIDAYS

13th June - Whit Monday (Lundi de Pentecôte).

14th July, Fête nationale, Bastille Day.
(Most shops are closed)

Assomption 15th August



for detailed information visit:-
www.anglophone-direct.com

Events festival traditions....

July/August

LES JEUDIS DE PERPIGNAN

Street theatre,
jugglers, clowns,
acrobats,
flamenco, salsa,
jazz, tango,
reggae, hip-hop,
sardanes, jazz,
blues.....
and late night
shopping!

This is every

Thursday evening in Perpignan, from the 14th July to the 18th August when the town centre literally come alive as local, national and international artistes light up the streets and the 'places' with a sparkling mixture of colour, sound and rhythm.

It's free, and you can either tour around for a total mix of a bit of everything or settle down on a café trottoir and watch whatever comes your way. A Jeroboam of atmosphere!



A LOAD OF BULL?

These yearly bullfighting festivals, with Bull Run through the streets, market, bands,

bodegas, street entertainment and party atmosphere, are big events in the PO, but be warned. They are not for everyone! Avoid the bullrings if you are not into bloody bullfights to the death, and just enjoy the very wild street partying instead

8th - 10th July - **Céret**

9th - 12th August - **Millas**

14th - 18th August - **Collioure**

26th - 27th August - **Port Barcarès**



OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

Thurs 21st-23rd

Elne

Piano Fortissimo concerts

Sat 23rd

Campo Santo, Perpignan

Opera - Carmen

Friday 22nd-23rd

Le Boulou

Music, dancing and bed race through streets

26th and 30th July and 1st and 2nd August

Mosset, near Prades

Opera - Didon au gré des flots

26th July - 13th August

Prades area

Pablo Casals festival

Tues 2nd - Sun 7th

Amélie-les-Bains

International Folk Dance Festival

Fri 5th

Sorède,

Free Flamenco festival (followed by free Blues Festival on Friday 12th)

Sun 7th

Vernet-les-Bains

The Canigou race

Vide Greniers

Visit our site at www.anglophone-direct.com for an up-to-date list of the vide greniers in your area.

August

LA FÊTE DU BABAU - RIVESALTES

10th August
(PRONOUNCED
BA-BA-OH)

Rivesaltes will become a pedestrian-only zone all day long for this fun festival in which the legendary monster, the Babau, reputed to have terrorised Rivesaltes during the middle ages, parades through the streets in search of tasty human flesh, and is finally 'sacrificed' in a dazzling cacophony of noise and fireworks



FÊTE DE LA SOULE - AMÉLIE 20th August

Parades, games, live music, bodegas and a chance to watch the ancient ball game of soule played between local teams at the chateau. The original game was played on a pitch which varied in length from a couple of streets to the distance between two villages. Hundreds of people might join in. The aim was to take the ball the length of the designated pitch to score a goal. It often became quite violent and was in fact banned in the 14th century.

The 'soule' itself was quite heavy, a stuffed pig's bladder or stitched leather skin.

OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

Sun 7th

Collioure

Medieval show at Fort Saint Elme

Sun 7th

Mont Louis

Summer Fair

Mon 15th

National

Assomption. Fireworks, bals, music...

Sat 27th – Sun 28th

Canet village

Medieval festival

Sat 27th

Céret

Tok Trad- Irish and folk music

Sat 27th

Perpignan

First day of Visa photojournalism festival

for detailed information visit:-
www.anglophone-direct.com

Night markets (August only)

These markets usually take place from around 19h – midnight, but can start earlier and finish later

Canet - Every evening (sea front) and every Saturday (port)

Céret - Every Tuesday

Argelès - Every Tuesday and Friday (Port)

Every night - craft (Parking des Platanes)

Prades - Every Friday

Torreilles - Tuesdays and Thursdays (Espace des Capellans)

Le Barcarès - Every evening (craft)

Ste-Marie-La-Mer - Wednesday, Friday and Saturday (sea front)

LAZY LUNCHES AND SUPER SUPPERS IN SPAIN

Restaurant Review

JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



As summer beckons, the longer days tempt PO residents and visitors to nip over the border into Spain. Although the beaches and sea breezes of the Costas are tempting, their attendant crowds and traffic are not everyone's cup of tea, so this year, I've focussed on a few restaurants I've enjoyed, all within 30 mins of the French border, in non-coastal, but nevertheless, pleasant locations

A few minutes right off the fast Figueres to Roses dual carriageway is the small farming village of **Fortia**. A pretty unremarkable place, but home, nonetheless, to two excellent eateries, practically opposite one another on the main road through. The **Reina Sibilla** is the smaller of the two, with a compact atmospheric indoor dining area, or a shady patio. All the food is Catalan inspired. Menu del dia here is around 10€, but there is also a Special menu changing most months, and very good value at 16€, and a large à la carte.

Open every day except Weds . +34 972 534038
www.reinasibil-la.com

Also in **Fortia** is **El Trull**, a much bigger operation altogether, a vast stone barn like building, sympathetically restored. Menus range from 11 to 25€, with a small à la carte selection.

The « all in « deals are remarkable value, including aperitif, 3 courses, wine and coffee for around 15€ . The food is more mainstream Spanish, but the grilled meats are especially good, as is the Paella .

No website, but phone +34 972 534236. Closed on a Monday.

Heading back to the fast road and crossing it (heading North) is the fascinating old town of **Castello d'Empuries**. In the historic centre, just along from the ancient cathedral (which is well worth a visit), and built into the old town walls overlooking the moat, is **Portal de la Gallarda**, atmospheric, with fantastic views over the old town and surrounding countryside. Seemingly more upmarket, with only à la carte offerings, though hardly overly-expensive for such creative cuisine, which draws on modern Catalan influences. Allow



© Aotearoa

35€ each including local wine. Carrer Père Estany 12, +34 972 250152 . Closed on Tuesdays.

Heading back towards France on the main N11 road, just north of Figueres is the village of **Pont de Molins**. About 2km out of the village centre, on the road towards Boadella, can be found **El Moli**, an old watermill as the name implies. Once again, the restaurant is aimed slightly more upmarket, and you'd have to budget about 45€ per head here, as there is no Menu del Dia, but the quality is superb. Much of the salads and vegetables are sourced from their own garden, and this is reflected in a weekly seasonal «specials» addition to the standard menu. Very popular so reservations are strongly recommended; tel +34 972 529271 www.hotelelmoli.es. Closing times are Tues evening and the whole of Weds.

Finally, in the centre of **Pont de Molins** village, is

Amiel & Molins, a fairly new establishment, which is fast gaining a fine reputation amongst locals and visitors alike. A stone building that has been at various times a house, police station, prison and school, is now modernized in a striking style with liberal use of glass, with a choice of dining areas; either the cosy interior or the glazed veranda with spectacular views over the river. A very imaginative Menu is on offer at 18€, and the carte consists of both old favourites with some very cutting edge dishes in addition. The wine list here is especially interesting, and good value. I'd again recommend booking, particularly at weekends. +34 972 529358 www.amielmolins.com. Closed Sun eves and all Mon.

As usual, I'd just point out that the Spanish tend to eat a little later than the French. For example, the Amiel & Molins above does not open its doors in the evenings until 20h30, so add at least one hour on to French opening and closing times. **Bon profit!**



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PRICKLY PEAR MARGARITA

'Now when you pick a pawpaw
Or a prickly pear
And you prick a raw paw
Next time beware'
"Have I given you a clue?"

Good ol' Baloo certainly knew what he was talking about when he warned Bagheera about the prickly pear. Abundant here in the P-O, wear gloves or use tongs to pick these cactus fruits and avoid the prickles getting embedded in your hands or you could be picking 'splinters' out for many days! To peel, stick a fork in one end and scrape away prickly skin with a knife, straight into a bin, without touching!

By the time you've gone through all that, you will deserve every last sip of this delicious prickly pear Margarita!

Une petite fille regarde l'album de photos de famille.
« Maman » dit elle « Qui est ce beau brun musclé et mince en maillot de bain à côté de toi à la plage?
C'est ton papa
Alors, qui est le gros chauve qui vit à la maison?
(chauve - bald)

- 3 prickly-pear fruit peeled
- 2 cups tequila
- 1/2 cup freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1/2 cup orange-flavour liqueur
- 1/2 cup crushed ice

Place prickly pears in a container, pour over tequila, and leave in fridge at least 24 hours. Pour into blender and puree. Strain to extract seeds but keep pulp.

Blend puree well with lime juice, liqueur and ice. Add some honey if not sweet enough. Serve immediately



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COASTAL DRIVES PART 1

Beginning with the Côte Rocheuse at Cerbère on the Spanish border and ending on the Côte Sablonneuse just before Leucate in the Aude, the coastline of the Pyrénées Orientales varies from rugged rocky coves to long lazy sandy beaches, offering all manner of opportunities for sea sports and seaside related relaxations. In this summer edition we will take a few days out along the Sandy Coast, beginning in Argelès sur Mer...

First of the sandy coast towns, Argelès town itself is slightly inland with a charming centre, a XVI century church and a market on Fridays. Argelès sur Mer is a lively seaside town whose beautiful long and sandy beach is backed by a promenade with well kept gardens and villas. Loads of boutiques, fast food restaurants, bars and a sparkling night scene ensure that it is popular with holiday makers of all ages, particularly the young.

Hard to imagine how it must have been in 1939 at the time of the Retirada when thousands of

Spanish refugees fled Franco's Spain and camped in freezing conditions on the sands. Small wonder they were so swift to volunteer to serve in the French army in the autumn of that unfortunate year.

Argelès Port, built in the late 70s and early 80s is now an established yachting and pleasure boat port with all the amenities a yachtsman could require.

Between Port Argelès and the Cote Vermeille is Le Racou. At the beginning of the XX century

the Lydia



Canet Lagoon





just a collection of fishermen's huts and the odd beach hut built on the sand, it has grown into a much sought after seaside village. The old huts change hands seldom and, when they do, it is for large amounts of euros. It is the last stretch of sand before the rocky coast begins, the sea gets deep quickly, the swimming is easy and the whole place has a 50's California feel about it. You half expect to see Ava Gardner washed up on the shore.

Between St Cyprien and Argelès is Aqualand, an extremely popular watery play-park and there are also numerous riding ranches, an adventure park, canyoning and karting in the area.

Also between the two towns, at the mouth of the river Tech, is a large nature reserve called Mas Larrieu. Sand dunes, reeds and rushes are home

to many birds and insects. Various gulls, herons and bee-eaters abound, it is very beautiful and a discovery footpath with informative notices leads to a picnic place. Guided visits are arranged by the tourist office from April to September.

However you should be aware that it is an area much favoured by the gay community so the wild life can sometimes take a surprisingly human form.

St Cyprien has miles of golden sands, a port so full of yachts the masts almost obscure the palm trees, golf, restaurants, bars, casino, discothèque, quayside fishing boats, sporting opportunities galore, an old village centre with excellent art galleries and a botanical garden. "Le Jardin des Plantes des Capellans" next to the sports complex on Rue Verdi has palms and a bambouserie, and



Canet



St Cyprien

Out for the day...

Le Racou



Canet



a collection of over four hundred roses as well as many local Mediterranean plants through which white peacocks strut.

It is to the Grand Stade des Capellans that the whole family can go for a whole summer of sporting and less-sporting-more-artistic entertainment. There are seventeen out door tennis courts, and a further four indoors. There is squash, swimming, body building, a fitness gym, a sauna, a spa, massage. You can join for an hour, a day, a week, a year... and you can leave your children or grandchildren in their capable hands and have some grown up time to yourselves!

There is a market on Fridays on the port and Thursdays in the village.

Canet Lagoon, with beautiful, calm waters,

Canigou, magnificent in the background and, in the foreground, carefully preserved fishermen's reed huts, separates Canet from St Cyprien. Bird-watching and windsurfing opportunities abound as well as walking and cycling through the surrounding nature reserve.

Canet's long and gloriously sandy beach is backed by numerous cafes, bars, restaurants and towering blocks of predominantly holiday apartments. The yachting harbour and an interesting aquarium are at the opposite end of the beach from the lagoon. North of the town, in the attractive old village is the ruined Chateau Vicomtal dating from the XI century. Between the mouth of the river Têt at Canet and the mouth of the river Agly at Toreilles the land is flat, often

Leucate





sandy and reed covered. Lots of horses and riding establishments line the road, lots of fields of vegetables as well.

Toreilles has a charming old centre with twisting lanes and attractive stone houses. Its beach is long and sandy and, unlike Canet, there are no tall apartment blocks. In summer it is a popular buckets and spades family beach with a few handy cafés and shops.

Take a long, long walk to the mouth of the Agly where the river water meets the waves of the sea, a paradise for birds and fishermen and a beautiful walk in any season.

Between Port Barcares and Port Leucate, beached on the sands is the Lydia, a 1930 ferry that, after years of service on the high seas, has come to

rest and been transformed into a casino, restaurant and nightclub. Given that, in Catalan, Le Barcares means “a dry spot to which boats can be dragged”, it seems a very suitable resting place.

The lagoon of Leucate straddles both the Aude and the Pyrenees Orientales, eels and oysters are farmed in its waters and flamingos can often be seen. Definitely the place to go for oyster lovers. Here they are available for buying or tasting, fresh, delicious and not expensive. Where the lagoon drains into the sea, well signposted off the D627 is the Centre Conchylicole. The oysters are raised in the lagoon and brought to the huts that line the channel to be packed and sold. Tanks bubble with water full of oysters, small tables are crowded with people enjoying them while sipping white wine.

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Out for the day...

on the Trail of the Laughing Elephant. Part 2

IN SEARCH OF BARDOU CHATEAUX.

Remember the spring edition's article of the vast industrial fortune the Bardou Job brothers made from ready cut scraps of paper?

Jean Bardou and his son Joseph invented ready to roll cigarette papers in neat little packets and, so great was their success, that, on the death of Jean Bardou, Pierre, the younger son, built the "Hotel de l'Industrie du Papier à Cigarette" in Rue St Saveur, a combined house and factory.

He took as his logo the initials of his father, between which he imposed the lozenge shaped symbol of Perpignan. Immediately read as JOB, he incorporated the logo into his family name that became forever Bardou-Job. When Pierre's three children grew up and married, he commissioned the fashionable Danish Architect, Viggo Dorph-Petersen, to design three chateaux, one for each of them.

For his son Justin, Chateau d'Aubiry rose out of the vineyards outside Ceret. Rich in Belle Époque embellishments, with three huge glasshouses in the grounds, it still dominates the landscape. The glasshouses have fallen into disrepair but the

fairytale aspect remains. Look out for it on your right as you drive the D115 towards Ceret. You may already know l'Andreu, the hunting lodge near Corsavy further up the valley, once used by the Justin Bardou family... It is now a guest house of some distinction.

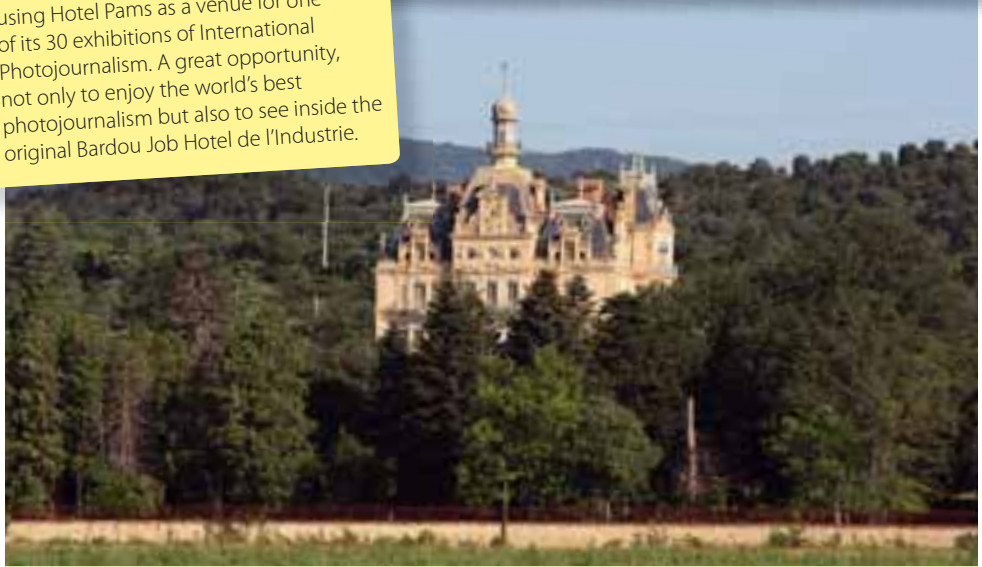
For his daughter Camille, married to Charles Ducup de St Paul, he ordered the Chateau Ducup St Paul. Upon her death it was bought by the Catholic church. A reminder of a more gracious age, it is now almost swallowed up in the semi industrial sprawl that encircles Perpignan.

His daughter Jeanne

married Jules Pams, a lawyer, councillor and later, Minister of Agriculture and of the Interior. For them he had Chateau de Valmy built on the heights of Argeles. Impossible to miss its



From 27 Aug-11 Sept, VISA will be using Hotel Pams as a venue for one of its 30 exhibitions of International Photojournalism. A great opportunity, not only to enjoy the world's best photojournalism but also to see inside the original Bardou Job Hotel de l'Industrie.



Disneysque turrets and towers catching the sun as you drive the D 914 towards Collioure. Call in for a tasting of excellent wine or to visit the Park Valmy where concerts are often held.

The Hotel de l'Industrie became known as Hotel Pams when Jeanne and Jules Pams moved into Rue St Sauveur (now Rue Zola). The factory had long outgrown the house and moved elsewhere. Pierre, the father, lived with them until he died in 1892. Jules Pams immediately grasped the opportunity to transform the interior décor. He commissioned his friend the architect and interior designer Leopold Carlier to give it the exotic treatment we can see today. The artist Paul Gervais's Venusian, nubile, near-naked nymphs disport themselves in legendary landscapes, the

patio is adorned with romantic statues. Now owned by the City of Perpignan, it is open on the Journées de Patrimoine and is the headquarters of the VISA exhibition each September. For lovers of the excesses of Belle Epoque kitsch it is well worth visiting.

Republic Technologies bought to rights to the trade name in

2005 ensuring the continued manufacture of JOB cigarette papers. The initials J.O.B crop up on buildings around Perpignan and as far away as Toulouse. The heritage bestowed on the Pyrenees Orientales by a baker, his sons and the fortune they made out of scraps of paper designed to go up in smoke, is considerable.



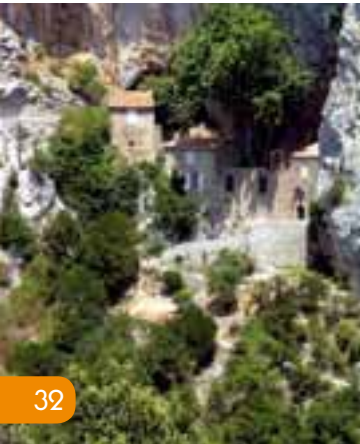


IN THE GORGE OF GALAMUS.

After the impressive Chateaux of Queribus and Peyrepeteuse and before the equally impressive Château of Puilaurens, the Gorge of Galamus winds its way through an awesomely narrow cleft in the Corbières.

Leave your car in the large parking and take the footpath to the Hermitage of St Antoine. It clings to the side of the gorge above the turbulent waters of the Agly river hurtling between the tall grey cliffs far below. The first written records date

from the XV century, and continue till the last hermit/priest, Père Marie, died of hunger and cold in 1870. A legend from further back in time tells of two troubadours, Gadamus and Giles, who, in 1090, were making their way from castle to castle. Stopping at Puilaurens, Gadamus fell in love with the beautiful Sylvaine. Unfortunately, as they left, they were accosted by a band of brigands in the Forest of Fanges and Giles was killed before Gadamus could frighten them off. As he died





IN THE HEART OF CATHAR COUNTRY,
AT ST PAUL DE FENOUILLET, THE RIVER
AGLY TAKES A SHARP RIGHT AND HEADS
FOR THE GORGE OF GALAMUS.



he made Gadamus promise to carry his soul to Jerusalem. This Gadamus did. He sojourned awhile in the Egyptian desert monastery of Saint Antoine and, a year later returned to Puilaurens only to find that Sylvaine had died of the plague. Heartbroken, he spent the rest of his days in the cliff caves named after the Egyptian hermit Saint. Now you may visit the Hermitage with its Cave Chapel and, in the shady courtyard, buy drinks, biscuits and postcards.

Nearby a steep and dangerous path descends to the river and rock pools, or you can walk up to the road for easier access further on.

Pot holing and canyoning are popular, the scenery is spectacular and the road hacked out of the towering 500 m cliff face in the 1880s is dramatic. Swimming in, or picnicking by the rock pools is a joy. Tourist Information [0468490757](tel:0468490757)



Out for the day...

PRADES, THE CONFLENT VILLAGES

and Pablo Casals

Summer is a wonderful time to visit Prades. The town is lively and it is the moment to profit from the festival season.

Prades is clustered round the large church of St Pierre. Inside, the altar piece claiming to be the largest baroque altar in France, features trumpeting angels, cherubs and gleaming gold leaf glinting on the tortured and twisted pillars surrounding a large statue of St Peter. On Tuesday mornings one of the busiest weekly markets in the P O fills the squares and wraps itself round the church.

Prades is rich in cultural events, the most important of which is the Pablo Casals Festival, when every summer the Conflent comes alive with the Sound of Music.

The first Chamber Music Festival was held in 1950 in Prades. The world famous cellist and conductor Pablo Casals had fled there during the Spanish Civil War, and, every summer, an inspiring series of concerts is played by some of the world's greatest musicians. Pablo Casals himself participated up to

the age of 90. In 1976, at the suggestion of the violinist, Fred Mucciolini, an Academy of Music was set up to welcome young musicians and give master classes in instruments of Chamber Music. The Student Concerts are held in the surrounding Conflent villages where the small churches are packed full of gems of Baroque Art and proud parents. The villages are, of course, well worth visiting in their own right. So many different ones, each surrounded by different countryside and offering different charms. .

St Michel de Cuxa's beautiful and peaceful Abbey is the main venue. Discretely dressed in soft summer





clothes, local music lovers mingle with music lovers from all over the world in the graceful cloisters. (You may notice half the cloisters are missing: they are to be found in the Cloisters Museum in New York.) As the cool abbey church fills, small bats can be seen flitting about in the high vaulted ceiling. But, once the musicians start playing, the bats are forgotten and the music commands undivided attention.



Some concerts are held in St Pierre in Prades, others in outlying villages. 04 68 96 33 07 for reservations and enquiries. The 32 concerts run from July 5 – August 13, the Student Concerts will be held in the last week.

Mosset is home to the Mosset Opera. This year they present their own particular version of the Baroque Opera of Henry Purcell from the 26th – 30th July and 1st – 2nd August. [04 68 05 50 83](tel:0468055083)



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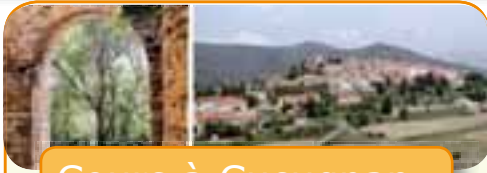


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Absolutely Almost All you need to know about the Pyrénées Orientales

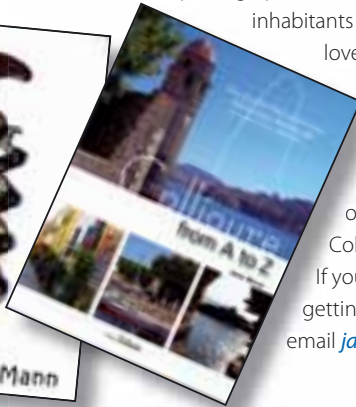
Absolutely Almost All you need to know

about the Pyrénées Orientales- Jane and Kate's guidebook, lavishly illustrated with its lively blend of information and essential facts is a must have for visitors and residents alike. If you have not already got your copy you can find it in most Maisons de la Presse, at Cooper's Epicerie, Argeles sur Mer, at the Aéroport de Rivesaltes or on the internet from www.fnac.com.

Careless Love - The perfect beach novel. A tale of sex, love, commitment, fidelity and family played out against a backdrop of windswept Cornish beaches, deepest Gloucestershire countryside and the Mediterranean sunshine of the French Pyrenees.

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Collioure from A to Z - Overflowing with an eclectic mixture of information, anecdotes, history, photographs and stories of Collioure, its inhabitants and visitors; all told with a love and knowledge that has grown since Jane Mann first set foot there some twenty years ago. www.amazon.fr "Livres en anglais" or the Maison de la Presse Colioure, or Perpignan Airport. If you have any problems getting hold of these books email jane.mann@wanadoo.fr



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Test your French

1 - L POUR LETTRE

Match up these words, all beginning with L, with their definitions.
(Why not try to work them out first without looking at the answers?)

personne sans courage	1	a	larme
désagréable à regarder	2	b	lent
salade verte	3	c	lecteur
goutte de liquide salé	4	d	laid
bassin fixé au mur	5	e	lessive
personne (ou chose) qui lit	6	f	libellule
ne pèse pas beaucoup	7	g	lâche
pas rapide	8	h	léger
produit pour laver le linge	9	I	lavabo
insecte à 4 longues ailles transparentes	10	J	laitue

LANGUAGE TIP

In the last edition we looked at the difference between **un peu** (a little) and **peu** (few, not many). Here are a few more expressions with **peu**

- à peu près - approx, more or less
- avant peu - before long
- pour peu de temps - for a short while
- peu avant - shortly before
- peu après - shortly afterwards
- sous peu - shortly
- depuis peu - a short while since
- de peu - only just

RÉFLEXIONS

Si Superman est si malin, pourquoi est-ce qu'il porte son slip par-dessus son pantalon?

(malin - clever, slip - underpants
par-dessus - over)



Useful expression

Quand on parle du loup...

Talk of the devil



2 - MATCH UP THE USEFUL BEACH VOCAB!

jellyfish	1	a	un seau et une pelle
bucket and spade	2	b	une vague
shellfish	3	c	un coup de soleil
wave (sea)	4	d	une méduse
pebble	5	e	un caillou
sunburn	6	f	les coquillages

3 - MATCH UP THE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION

Ah, la vache!	1	a	I've a frog in my throat
J'ai le cafard	2	b	he's grumpy
Il a le démon de midi	3	c	What's your problem?
Les carottes sont cuites	4	d	I'm exhausted
J'ai un chat dans la gorge	5	e	Flipping heck
Elle a une araignée au plafond	6	f	It's titchy
Quelle mouche t'a piqué?	7	g	It's all over
J'ai un coup de barre	8	h	I'm fed up
Il est mal luné	9	i	She's crazy
C'est riquiqui	10	j	he's having a mid life crisis

Blague bête

Quel est le fruit préféré de Beethoven?

POMME POMME POMME POMME !

Tongue twister (Virelangue)

(Répétez trois fois)

**Fruits frais, fruits frits,
fruits cuits, fruits crus**

(fresh fruit, fried fruit, cooked fruits, raw fruits)

4 TROUVEZ LA COULEUR QUI MANQUE

(FIND THE MISSING COLOUR)

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 examen..... | mock exam |
| 2.....de travail | overalls |
| 3 travail au..... | working illegally |
| 4.....à lèvres | lipstick |
| 5 un..... | a bruise |



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Test your French

5 - PARTS OF A WHOLE!

Here are the parts – find the whole Eg le toit, les fenêtres, les portes, les murs

Answer : une maison.

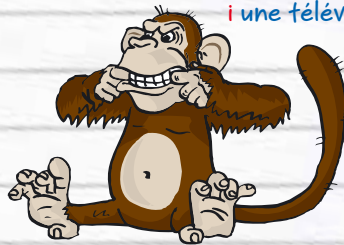
1. Un écran, une carte SIM, une batterie
2. Une selle, des repose-pieds, un top case
3. Les ongles, les doigts, la pousse
4. Une souris, un écran, un clavier
5. Un écran, une télécommande, une antenne.
6. Le guidon, les pédales, une selle
7. Les plumes, le bec, les ailes
8. Un matelas, un sommier, un oreiller
9. Le nez, la bouche, les yeux
10. La carrosserie, les pneus, le pare-brise

a le visage b un vélo c une main
d un ordinateur e un lit f un oiseau
g une voiture h un portable
i une télévision - j une moto

Useful expression

On n'apprend pas à un vieux singe à faire des grimaces

You can't teach an old dog new tricks!



Bon conseil

Ne remettez pas à demain ce que vous pouvez éviter complètement (remettez à demain - postpone until tomorrow éviter - avoid)

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6

TEST YOUR FRENCH AND YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE REGION

Choose the correct Answer

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Le 'cargolada' est un repas basé sur les
a escargots
b pâtes
c poissons | 3 les Trabucaires étaient.....
a des gendarmes
b des vilains
c des douaniers | 5 Le 'Maitre de Cabestany' était..
a un maçon
b un sculpteur
c un cuisinier |
| 2. Le drapeau Catalan est composé de.....
a jaune et noir
b rouge et jaune
c rouge et noir | 4 Les 'castellers'
construisent...
a des tours humains
b des châteaux d'eaux
c des grands immeubles | 6. L'âne est l'emblème
a) de l'Espagne
b) des Pyrénées-Orientales
c) de la Catalogne |

7 - MATCH UP THE USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----|---|--------------------------------|
| Ca passe ou ça casse! | 1 | a | Something's not right |
| Mon oeil! | 2 | b | It's make or break time |
| Tu m'étonnes! | 3 | c | It's worth it |
| Ca vaut la peine! | 4 | d | Don't mention it |
| Et patati et patata | 5 | e | And so on... |
| Pas de quoi | 6 | f | Yeah, right! |
| C'est n'importe quoi | 7 | g | It's rubbish |
| A vos souhaits! | 8 | h | No way! |
| C'est pas vrai! | 9 | i | Tell me something I don't know |
| Il y a quelque chose qui cloche | 10 | j | Bless you! |

Question intéressante

How do French snakes ask the time?

'Quelle heure reptile?'

RÉFLEXIONS

Pourquoi les Kamikazes portaient-ils un casque?

(casque - helmet)



Test your french - answers

- 1 1g2d 3j 4a 5i 6c 7h 8b 9e 10f
 2 1d 2a 3f 4b 5e 6c
 3 1e 2h 3j 4g 5a 6i 7c 8d 9b 10f
 4 1 blanc 2 bleu 3 noir 4 rouge 5 bleu
 5 1h 2j 3c 4d 5i 6b 7f 8e 9a 10g
 6 1a 2b 3b 4a 5b 6c
 7 1b 2f 3i 4c 5e 6d 7g 8j 9h 10a

Améliorez votre Anglais

1 - TROUVEZ LE FRANCAIS POUR CES PHRASES UTILES

Heads or tails?	1	a	Je donne ma parole
It's on the tip of my tongue	2	b	Il y a quelque chose qui cloche
What's up doc?	3	c	J'ai les boules
I've got butterflies	4	d	C'était le coup de foudre
I have a hangover	5	e	A tes souhaits!
It was love at first sight	6	f	Quoi de neuf docteur?
She has passed out	7	g	Je l'ai sur le bout de la langue
Bless you!	8	h	Pile ou face?
I give my word	9	i	Elle est tombée dans les pommes
Something's up	10	j	J'ai la gueule de bois

Cheesy* pick up lines in English

(Attention! Si vous prenez une baffe, je n'accepte aucune responsabilité)

Your lips look so lonely.... Would they like to meet mine?
Tes lèvres semblent si solitaires.... Voudraient-elles rencontrer les miennes?

If I could rearrange the alphabet, I would put U and I together.
Si je pouvais changer l'alphabet, je mettrais U (you) et I (moi) ensemble

Do you have a map? I keep on getting lost in your eyes
Avez vous une carte? Je n'arrête pas de me perdre dans tes yeux

I didn't know that angels could fly so low!
Je ne savais pas que les anges volaient si bas

Is there an airport nearby or is that just my heart taking off?
Y a-t-il un aéroport dans le coin ou est ce mon cœur que décolle?

*cheesy - cucul la praline

Expression utile

Give him an inch and he'll take a mile
Tu lui donnes la main et il prend le bras

...and another one
Hold your horses!
Attendez!

2

- Les 'Cockneys' (Londoniens habitant l'est de Londres) parlent un argot qui s'appelle 'Cockney rhyming slang' ou ils remplacent un mot par une paire de mots qui riment. Trouvez la bonne définition

Exemple: apples and pears = stairs (escaliers)

plates of meat	1	a	believe
trouble and strife	2	b	face
Adam and Eve	3	c	telephone
boat race	4	d	feet
dog and bone	5	e	wife

3 - LOOK, SEE OR WATCH?

1 Did you ___ USAP yesterday?

- a. look
- b. see
- c. see or watch

2 ___ into my eyes" said the hypnotist.

- a. look
- b. see
- c. watch

3 Can cats ___ in the dark?

- a. look
- b. see
- c. watch

4 I have to go. ___ you later!

- a. look
- b. see
- c. watch

5 Oy! What are you ___ at?

- a. looking
- b. seeing
- c. watching

6 The police are ___ the suspect.

- a. looking
- b. seeing
- c. watching

7 Be quiet and ___ the show

- a. look
- b. see
- c. watch



Daft Joke..

What's the difference between a mosquito and a fly?
A mosquito can fly, but a fly can't mosquito.

4 - Pouvez vous trouver le français pour ces abréviations utilisées dans les textos anglais? (A ne pas utiliser à l'école, les enfants !)

a txt msg	1	a	Comment vas-tu?
C U L8ter	2	b	très amusant
How R U?	3	c	avant
B4	4	d	un texto
LOL	5	e	à plus tard

Virelangue

Répétez trois fois

The dog's jaw drooped

5 - L - is for Love

Trouvez les définitions de ces mots suivants, qui commencent tous avec L

ladybird	1	a	rules made by government
lane	2	b	on your own
laptop	3	c	measurement from end to end
laugh	4	d	sweet on a stick
laws	5	e	small round insect with spots
least	6	f	smallest amount
length	7	g	happy sound
lonely	8	h	small computer
lightening	9	i	narrow road
lollipop	10	j	flash of light in sky



ARGELES UNDERWATER!

By Ellen Turner Hall



© Photos Laurent Ballesta - Andromède Environnement

“Planète Mers”, this year’s photographic exhibition on the grand promenade at Argeles Plage, plunges us underwater from 2 April to 25 September. The message is: how we treat 75% of the earth’s surface determines the future of 25% on which we live.

Fact check as you make your way around the exhibition:

1. What marine animal construction is visible from outer space?
2. What is the fastest predator in the world? Hint: NOT the cheetah!
3. Which mollusc produces active molecules against viruses, bacteria and cancer cells?

Inspired by the book “Planète Mers” by

Laurent Ballesta, the images on display help us discover the incredible variety of submarine life. Ballesta, marine biologist and underwater photographer, offers a fish’s eye view of what lies below the surface. Holder of the world record for deep-dives, Ballesta illustrates the biodiversity of the seas’ deeper and lesser known regions all over the world.

Close to home, in the nature reserve off Banyuls-sur-Mer, in 1997 Laurent Ballesta was the first person to photograph the 3-centimetre Andromeda goby. From the discovery of this tiny fish grew Ballesta’s lifelong passion for the creatures of the seas. About one fifth of the exhibition is devoted to local species(



enfants de la mer

Ensemble, pour une autre Terre

velvet swimming corals, yellow tube sponge, anemone shrimp, grey trigger fish, leopard-spotted goby and the familiar salema fish, with its silver body and yellow stripes) found in our own Golfe du Lion.

Information panels include captions in French and English, often with evocative titles. "Don't Walk on the Grass" shows the Jordanian reef stone fish completely covered by seaweed which grows on its rough skin, creating the perfect camouflage. "Red Gold in the Mediterranean" refers to the branching red skeletons of coral near Cerbère. "Outer Space Adventure" describes the comb jellies of the Canadian Arctic which resemble LED-lit comets beneath the ice. We wonder at the

strangeness of plant-like animals (the tentacled Mediterranean gorgon's head), animals which seem to have roots (the quill-like orange sea pen) or animals with leafy growths (the implausible Australian weedy sea dragon).

Today this enchanted world of fabulous creatures is in peril, threatened by climate change, pollution and over-fishing. "Planète Mers" hopes that this insight into the beauty and variety of marine life will inspire you to join efforts to protect the seas. In the end, saving our seas means saving ourselves. A variety of "green" activities for you and your family is proposed by Les Natureles. Take the plunge!

To see the full programme go to:
www.enfants-de-la-mer.fr.

Letsgetphysical...



HERE THERE BE DRAGONS

Catalan Country has long been home to passionate supporters of Rugby, though Rugby à quinze (Union) has had a larger following than Rugby à treize (League). In recent years "treizistes" have made great strides in the Pyrénées-Orientales and in 2006 the Perpignan-based Dragons Catalans became the only non-UK side to play in the British Super League. With a season running from February to early October, summer is very much rugby season here in the P-O.

Dragons Catalans

To Brits of "a certain age" the voice of Eddie Waring will always be associated with weekend television coverage of Rugby League. His Yorkshire vowels were a perfect accompaniment to this mainly North of England game, far removed from the more gentlemanly Rugby Union of Bill McLaren.

The two codes split at the end of the 19th century, over different attitudes to payment of players. Rugby League, played with 13 men,

developed mainly as a working class sport, while Union, with 15 players, maintained its amateur ethos and was considered a "toff's" game. Rugby League has long suffered from a dour, gritty image, exemplified by the 1960's film "This Sporting Life".

But now a splash of Mediterranean colour has been added to the game, and a thousand or more British fans travel regularly to see the Dragons Catalans of Perpignan play Leeds, Hull, Warrington or Wigan in the highly competitive Super League.

Rugby not your thing?

Grab a kite and a picnic and head for La Franqui beach at Leucate to watch the kite and buggy surfers. Absolutely the best beach for collecting huge, perfectly formed unusual shells

The “Dracs” stadium, Gilbert Brutus, is currently being modernised and extended, with new offices, changing rooms, etc, and, more importantly, new stands to cater for up to 14,000 spectators.

All away games are in Great Britain, a gruelling travel schedule, but with one happy result – so much time spent travelling together has created an exceptional team spirit within the 32 man squad,

achieving one of the main goals of the new trainer, Australian Trent Robinson.

The current squad has just 8 foreigners, with nearly half of the French players being Catalan.

After only 5 years playing in the Super League, the Dragons Catalans are looking forward to adding French flair into the toughest Rugby League competition in the Northern Hemisphere.



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Letsgetphysical...

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Trent Robinson



Australian coach Trent Robinson played in the world's most competitive competition, the Australian National Rugby League, before being tempted to France where he spent three years playing for Toulouse Olympique in the European second division competition. As Toulouse had an Australian coach, training was done in English, followed by translation into French, even though the majority of players were French!

In his fourth year at Toulouse, with no previous coaching experience, he switched from player to head coach!

A four-year spell in Australia followed, as assistant coach with one of Australia's top clubs, the Sydney Roosters.

After helping to take the Roosters to the runners-up spot in the Australian 2010 Grand Final, he returned to France to become coach to the Dragons Catalans. Together with his French partner Sandra and son Noah, he has settled in Baho, a short drive from the stadium. He and Sandra converse in French, but to ensure Noah

becomes completely bilingual, he speaks to his son in English.

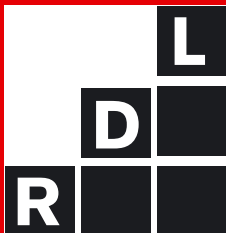
Trent is keen to "make a difference" to the game of Rugby League in France, which, although popular, is not as important as in Great Britain or Australia. In particular he wants to inspire youngsters, and as part of this aspiration, next season should see the beginnings of a Dragons Catalans Under-20 squad in the Super League.

With his obvious drive and love of the game, this young Francophile Ozzie seems sure to lead the Dracs confidently forward and bring some Mediterranean warmth into the Super League!

Rugby not your thing?

Not everyone is a water baby. Why not try the increasingly difficult runs high up in the trees at Marquixanes, just off the N116 between Ille sur Têt and Prades where a series of nets, ropes, zip wires and other obstacles will challenge your skill and courage?

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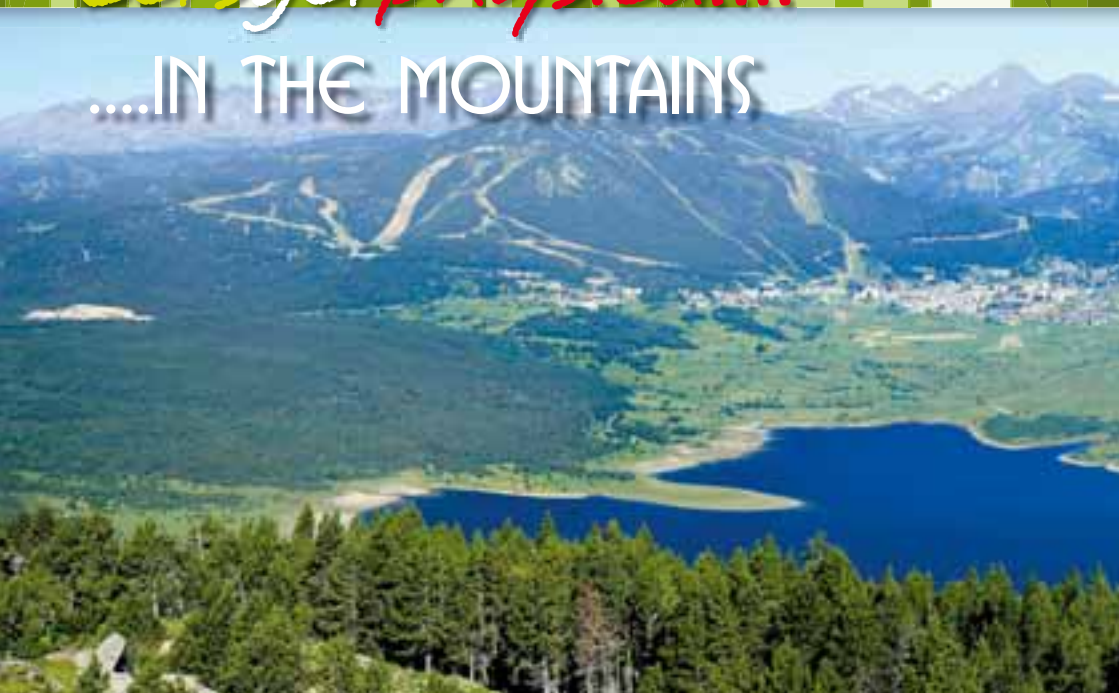
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Letsgetphysical...

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There are many designated areas with benches, tables and barbecue grills, all you need to do is bring your meat... Or maybe you could catch a tasty trout ... Fishing permits can be obtained from

the Chalet du Ski or at Sport 2000 in Les Angles and there are fishing reserves by the barrage or on the tributaries of the Aude.

On the lake itself, from the Club Nautique de l'Ourson, it is possible to sail, windsurf, swim in the lake or pool, canoe, kayak, pedalo, mountainboard or play in the inflatable "Planet'air".

On July 19 – 24 a Parapente (paragliding) competition will have everyone's eyes pointing skywards. Vol'aime: [04 68 30 10 10](tel:0468301010) or Retana: [06 70 04 77 53](tel:0670047753) are the people to get in touch





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Rock climbing is another popular activity, ask Ian to point you in the direction of the best rocks to climb.

The telecabine runs in July and August from the centre of Les Angles, ideal for the bike parks of La Molina or Les Angles and a good start for walking and rambling.



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(Registre National des Refus) for organ donation, if you do not wish your organs to be used for transplant. Anyone not on the register will be presumed to have consented to organ donation, although as stated above, the family will still be able to object and have the final word.

Britain has one of the highest family refusal rates in the EU, with 42 per cent of relatives blocking organ removal, compared with 17 per cent in Spain, 29 per cent in Italy and 30 per cent in France.

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Regine Estebe Rigall

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