

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales



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& DYNAMITE**

Festivals & Traditions
PANCAKE DAY!

WINTER 2012
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Next to "Le Clos des Lys" restaurant and the car dealerships

Edito...

Joyeux Anniversaire P-O Life!

You're eight years old this year!!

I don't know where the time has gone... but I do know that I owe a massive 'thank you' to thousands of loyal readers, and some great writers and contributors who have supported both the web site, the magazine and its advertisers over the years. Without you we would quite simply not exist.

I would love P-O Life to become a community magazine, written and produced by readers for readers. Would you be interested in joining a small group of intrepid adventurers looking to take P-O Life forward into the unknown? We would love to hear from amateur writers, photographers, designers, IT geeks, anybody with enthusiasm, ideas and suggestions, with a view to getting together some time in 2013 and reaching for the stars - or at least the top of Canigo!

In this edition, Mike Rhodes walks us through the Capcir Valley, John Fairclough brings us up to date with our dwindling flight choices, Simon Newman tells of honkers and bonkers in Canet, Paul Cartmell dines in front of a roaring fire, and Katja Willemsen heads off in search of perfect picnic spots. As for me, well, I skip about here, there and everywhere!

Wishing you a Happy, Healthy and Lucky winter season here in our beautiful region

Fins aviaats

Kate



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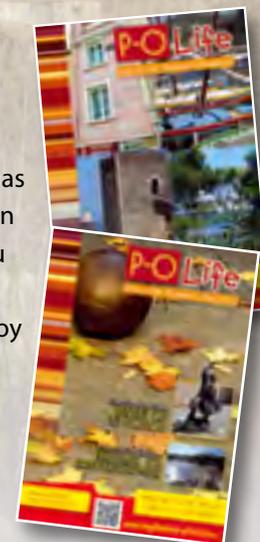
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LE CAPCIR VALLEY LESIETA DE VALLSERRA



with Mike Rhodes

This super 13k walk in the Capcir valley, near Les Angles, is suitable for all the family, and, subject to weather, can be done in summer or winter, on foot or mountain bike.

It will take 3 – hours in summer, but in winter, in good snow conditions this will take several hours longer. Make sure of a good snow cover as some parts do get icy. As a family VTT route it will take 1 ½ - 2 hours and needs only a basic mountain bike.

Getting there : The start point is the popular parking spot at the Club L'Oursan/ Restaurant at Lac de Matemale. (GPS co-ords- 31N426010E 4714058N) at 1540m and the high point 1705m when crossing the Serrat del Frare. To get here, take the N116 from Prades to Mont Louis and then the D118 towards Formiguères. After 15 mins you will see Lac Matemale on your left and at the 2nd Matemale sign, turn left and follow signs to the lake. Map Font Romeu IGN 2249ET covers this area in 1/25000.

The Walk : From the car park, take the path NNE, besides the road, for 500m to the



Fougues VTT hire building where we turn left, and in 100m turn right to join a wider track, the Voie Royale which, in the Middle Ages was the main crossing for the Capcir valley. This track runs straight for 800m until you come to the road. Cross with care.

Continue ahead on the Voie Royale for another 1800m with great views to your right of Le Madres. Turn around and you have equally great views of Cambre D'Axe. The more 'eagle eyed' will have noticed that we are following VTT route number 6, so keep an eye out for the small signs which will take you to the left to cross the main Les

Angles Formiguères road.

Just across the road take a track to the R, which leads to another wide track in 250m. Signs take you straight across and a good track takes you in another 1500m around Formiguères to a campsite. Turn left before the site and climb for 100m to a track alongside a canal. Follow the canal to the right for 800m to a track which climbs gently to the left for another 1500m through the forest. Here we join a wide fire track and signs point to the right to Les Iglesiettes and Lac Balcère.

Take a note of this path junction as we will need to return here later but follow the track for a few hundred meters, across a small bridge and the ruined remains of the Eglise Santa Maria come into view. (See Page 8 - Did you know)

Looking up the valley, the ski slopes of Les Angles are visible and the area around the church is a perfect picnic spot in this sheltered valley.

My route retraces its steps, but it is also possible to return by several different routes including following the signs to Lac Balcère. Our route however returns to the junction taken earlier where an unmarked track veers to the right. Do not take the track directly up the hill but the one contouring gently to the left. This comes out after 1k on another fire track.

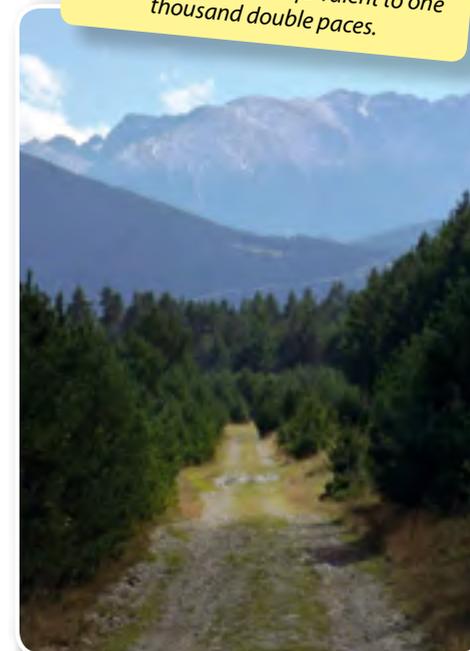
Turn to the left for 100m and follow a vague track to the right, through an electric fence and down 350m to cross another fire road, descending through the trees to the Formiguères road. Cross over and follow paths to the right, marked for Lac de Matemale, a further 2k.

Summer or winter there is a good chance of seeing red deer, marmottes and in the afternoon perhaps sanglier. In winter the snow cover will show the tracks of all of these animals and more. This is my favourite version of the walk but many options are available, so take your map and enjoy a superb day.

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

Isn't it ironic?

Despite its French origins, Britain is the only European country to measure distance in miles instead of kilometres. The word 'mile' actually comes from the French 'mille', (1000), and was based on the Roman mile, equivalent to one thousand double paces.



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Did you know...?

Anything to declare?

Visitors to Paulilles bay, next to the former Nobel dynamite factory, have on occasion been stopped at airport security on their way out of the country, due to the detection of minuscule dynamite particles clinging to their rucksack after a day at the beach!



Let them eat cake!

The tradition of eating a 'Galette des Rois' actually dates back to the 14th century, and was said to "draw the kings" to the Epiphany. These frangipane filled tarts, complete with paper crown and 'fève' or trinket baked inside, can be found in patisseries and supermarkets throughout January, and are usually eaten around the 6th, the twelfth day of Christmas. Not surprisingly, during the French Revolution, the name was replaced with 'Gâteau de l'Égalité' (equality cake), as the word 'king' was none too popular!



Roger de Flor was a Sicilian-born adventurer, mercenary, and Knight Templar, a bit of a villain, and a ladies man, who led a force of 'almogávares' (Spanish mercenaries) known as the Grand Catalan Company. One of the best known medieval works of literature in Catalan, *Tirant lo Blanc*, written by Valencian knight Joanot Martorell is based around de Flor's life. It is believed to have influenced the work of Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, and consequently to have played an important role in the evolution of the novel around Europe.

Lest We Forget

After several years of funding problems, the opening of the Rivesaltes camp memorial museum has now been scheduled for 1st June 2015.

The memorial will be « un musée de la grandeur de l'homme libre, pour un mémorial non de la défaite mais du combat, pour un musée de l'homme digne et debout. » (A museum to show how great is the free man, a memorial of combat, not of defeat, a museum showing man dignified and standing tall)

A plague on you!

The entire population of the former village of Vallsera, (Balcera) near les Angles, was wiped out by the Black Death at the beginning of the XIV century, apart from two sisters, who are believed to have donated all of the land to the commune of Les Angles. Today, all that remains are the ruins of the Eglise Santa Maria



Johnny and the Devil

The twelfth century Puivert, over the border in the Aude, one of the best preserved amongst the Cathar castles, was the location for 1999 film, *The Ninth Gate* starring Johnny Depp. Based on the novel *The Club Dumas* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte, Johnny is a rare book dealer who is drawn into a conspiracy with supernatural overtones. Open to visitors, you can find out more at www.chateau-de-puivert.com



SUNDAY SHOPPING IN SPAIN

Awarded the title of "Ville touristique" in May 2012, shops over the border in Figueres have permission to remain open on Sundays and public holidays, from March 2013. Spurred on by this new initiative and the imminent completion of the TGV Figueres Barcelona line, the mayor of Figueres, Santi Vila, has also announced the arrival of several new businesses attracted by the dynamism of this small, up-and-coming town. Bad news of course for shops and supermarkets here in north Catalonia which remain resolutely closed on Sunday, as shopping in Spain is likely to take away potential business from the Roussillon.

Prepare to be Pampered

Preparatory building work has already started on plans to turn the former military hospital at Amélieles-Bains into a 'centre thermo ludique', spa and leisure centre, at an estimated cost of 9 million euros

The former military hospital in the town centre was built in 1835, for soldiers returning from the war in Algeria, and was BIG, accommodating up to four hundred patients at a time. Whilst all patients were pronounced 'medically equal in the presence of disease and death', there were nevertheless separate, more luxurious treatment areas for officers!

Roofless Witches



The Pyrenees are full of stories and legends, particularly of 'encantades' (enchantresses) and 'bruixes' (witches).

Superstitious Catalans were fearful of 'bruixes', landing on their homes, bringing bad luck. They solved the problem by building "espentes bruixes" (witch frighteners) onto the roof, a piece of forged iron, a jagged tile or a tall stone to prevent the witch from making a comfortable landing. Look around on the rooftops as they can still be seen on the some old buildings, and builders are sometimes asked to build this into the roof to this very day!

Exceedingly good stories

Did you know that Rudyard Kipling wrote a short story during one of his stays in Vernetles-Bains called 'Why does it snow in Vernet ? A legend of St Saturnia! The amusing and light-hearted piece pokes fun at the English habit of talking about the weather. Visit our site www.anglophone-direct.com to read the full story

AIRPORT NEWS

With JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



Over the past few weeks, I've had conversations with a number of readers who have been kind enough to alert me to one or two routes that have survived the seasonal axe. It's true that airlines like Ryanair and Easyjet do tend, during the late summer, to look at their potential bookings for the winter months, and then decide if any route could be run at a profit during that period. This year has been no exception, and there have indeed been some reinstatements, but, sadly they are pretty small in number.

All the routes highlighted in my article in the Autumn edition have, as far as I know, survived, so these are in addition:

CARCASSONNE

Liverpool 2x pw (Ryanair)

BEZIERS

Luton 2x pw (Ryanair)

GIRONA

Luton 3x pw (Ryanair)

BARCELONA

Bristol 7x pw

Newcastle 3x pw

Belfast 3x pw (All EasyJet)

London City 4x pw (BA Cityflyer)

In the autumn report, I did imply that there might be some new flights involving Toulouse, particularly with the ski-ing season in mind. Unfortunately my confidence was misplaced, and the only UK/Ire flights from the airport this winter

will be the existing ones to Heathrow with BA, Bristol and Gatwick with EasyJet, and Dublin with Aer Lingus. The only other possibility from here is to use the regular services of Air France/KLM to either Paris CDG or Amsterdam and connect to the many UK flights from there. But, it has to be said, these are not cheap options!

◀ It's a little early to consider the possibilities from Spring 2013. I've spoken to Perpignan Airport, and they were more than a little non-committal about any services from March onwards. FlyBe are listing their weekly Southampton flight on their website, though interestingly, there's no mention of the Birmingham route. And it looks like the Barcelona to Gatwick route will offer rich pickings next year, with both BA and Vueling announcing they are going to join EasyJet in offering flights to the Sussex airport.

As ever, if any of you discover any new flights or omissions, please let us know here at PO Life.

-Two elderly vultures weren't sure they would make the trip south for winter, so they decided to go by airplane.
At check-in, the attendant noticed that they were each carrying a dead raccoon. "Do you wish to check the raccoons through as luggage?" she asked.
"No, thanks," replied the vultures.
"They're carrion."



THE TRABUCAYRES

In 1840, following the death of Ferdinand VII, Don Carlos attempted to establish Salic law in Spain, so he could reign in place of the Regent Marie-Christine. Salic law was a rule of succession practiced in certain royal and noble families of Europe, forbidding females to succeed to titles or offices within the family.

This led to war between supporters of Don Carlos, the 'Carlists' and supporters of the Regent, the 'Christinos'.

The Carlist army terrorized the Vallespir, and from this army, the Trabucayres were born, bandits and highwaymen, named for the 'trabucos' (blunderbusses) with which they were armed. Along with their leader, Jean Simon, nicknamed 'Tocabens' from the catalan 'toca' meaning touch, and 'bens' meaning well (shoot well), they established their headquarters in Las Illas, near Maureillas, for its proximity to the Spanish border and ease of smuggling.

In February 1845, thirteen bandits left Las Illas for Gerona where they attacked the Perpignan to Barcelona coach. Passengers were terrorised and robbed, and three men were taken as hostages. One died on the two day return walk, another was shot when he tried to escape.

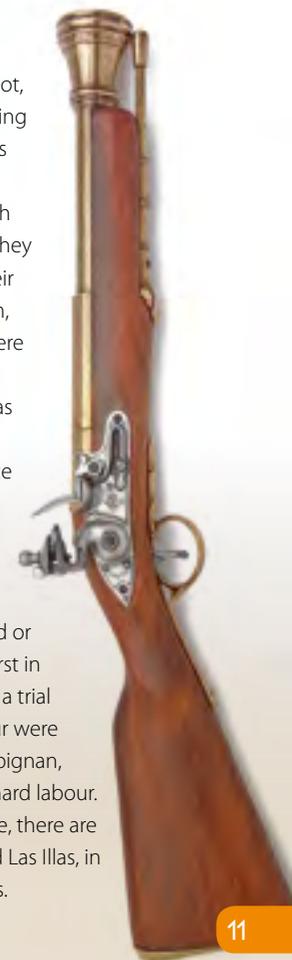
They split up, one group heading for Coustouges, the other, along with the remaining hostage,

took refuge in the 'grotto de Bassagoda' near Las Illas.

From this cave, Jean Massot, 16 years old and the remaining hostage, wrote letters to his mother, asking her to pay 65,000 francs ransom - which she did not have. Realising they would get no money for their hostage, they murdered him, cutting off his ears which were later found in a basket by a young shepherd, and used as evidence.

Hearing of a plan by police and customs officers to capture the bandits, they fled to Mas de l'Aloy in Corsavy, where they were eventually surrounded, killed or captured and imprisoned, first in Ceret, then Perpignan. After a trial which lasted over a year, four were guillotined in Céret and Perpignan, and others condemned to hard labour.

Now hopefully bandit-free, there are some fantastic walks around Las Illas, in the tracks of the Trabucayres.





La vie en rose the pink flamingos of Canet St Nazaire

with Simon Newman

No one knows why flamingos stand on one leg. There are plenty of theories of course, the most common being that it's a heat conservation strategy to counter long periods of standing in cold water. You'd think a more sensible strategy would be just to not stand in cold water. But flamingos are wading birds and wading is what they do when they're not otherwise flying, feeding, fighting or fornicating - their other main preoccupations.

And when they do wade it's mostly to sift through the sand with their especially evolved hooked bills for shrimps, a staple diet that accounts for their distinctive colouring. And on the subject of being in the pink, don't you adore their delightfully lyrical name in French, Les Flamands Roses, tailor made surely for une chanson d'amour by Piaf or Trenet?

Fortunately you don't have to travel to Africa or South America (the most populous continents for flamingos) for they can be seen right here on our doorstep at the St Nazaire étang mid-way between Canet en Roussillon and St Cyprien. There's plenty of other bird-life to be seen there too - herons, grebes,

cormorants, terns and water fowl among many others.

It has to be said that this étang presents, like most wetlands, a pretty stark landscape, though not without its own charm and beauty; serene too, once you get away from the busy road that bisects it from the sea. And when a blue sky and a snow-capped El Canigó provide the backdrop, the picture-perfect scene is complete.

Though undoubtedly graceful and elegant, pink flamingos are renowned as vicious scrappers with a short fuse. All bird species seem to pee them off, but particularly their own kind. Within a colony of flamingos violent and bloody internecine spats can be seen kicking off at alarmingly regular intervals, triggered seemingly by the slightest behavioural-code violation. There's a football terrace analogy there somewhere.

The free car park at the St Nazaire étang gives access to a network of paths to explore this protected wildlife area and there are a dozen or so bird-spotting hides that double as fisherman's huts. And at the right time of the year upwards of three thousand of the ruddy-faced creatures can be

seen busily spending their days wading, fighting, honking and bonking. Flamingos that is, not fishermen. Although.....no.

December to February is the best time for flamingo twitching at St Nazaire. That said, it can't be guaranteed as the étang is fed by both salt and fresh water so the degree of salinity and hence the level of marine life (i.e. flamingo food) varies a great deal depending on rain levels and other environmental factors. As a result it's impossible to know exactly when the birds might be in residence so our advice is to call GOR (Groupe Orthonologique de Roussillon) on 04 68 51 20 01 for a status check if you are planning a visit.

But don't leave it too long, for sadly the flamingo's habitat in the PO is under threat. Climate change is adversely impacting the already fragile eco-balance at St Nazaire and even though much work is being done to protect the flamingo's natural food supply, these spectacular creatures cannot be counted on to grace our shores forever. However experts say that conditions look favourable for the 2012/13 winter months so our advice is to get down there tout de suite for a good old gander. (Ouch, a shameless clunker I know, but so hard to resist.)



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What's on Around the Region

School holidays for our region

Christmas – 22nd December – 7th January
February Half Term – 23rd February to 11th March 2013

February 2nd – Pancake Day

Don't wait for Shrove Tuesday to toss your first pancake of the year. The 'Fête de la Chandeleur' (Candlemas) is also known as the 'jour des crêpes' and dates back to Roman times.

In the days when France lived mainly off the land, it was believed that eating pancakes on this day would ensure a good harvest. Naturally, many proverbs and superstitions surround this day, named after the tradition of carrying candles in procession to the church.

“ **Celui qui la rapporte chez lui allumée. Pour sûr ne mourra pas dans l'année** Light a candle in church, pray for a day 'sans Tramontane', carry it home without the flame going out, and you won't die during the year to come.

Si point ne veut de blé charbonneux Mange des crêpes à la Chandeleur It is essential to eat pancakes on this day if the crop is to be plentiful for the coming year.

Quand il pleut pour la Chandeleur, il pleut pendant quarante jours. Oooops. Check out that weather forecast, we really don't want rain for 40 days

On the other hand
....Soleil de la Chandeleur, annonce hiver et malheur But we don't want sunshine either! ”

Another tradition is to flip a crêpe with the right hand whilst holding a gold coin in the left. Although a little problematic for left-handers, this will ensure prosperity throughout the coming year for the whole family. The gold coin should then be wrapped in the pancake, and put on top of the wardrobe for a year, retrieved and given to the first poor person passing - that is poor in money, not unfortunate to have been handed a year old crêpe!

OUR PICK OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

Thursday 6th December

Vernet-les-Bains ENGLISH CAROLS AND PRAYERS
 04 68 96 24 58

7th – 8th December

AFM Telethon National
 Events take place throughout the region in support of neuromuscular diseases.

Saturday 8th

BRITISH TEA ROOMS Foyer Municipal, Maureillas 2pm-5pm
 Home-made scones, cakes, biscuits, Christmas cakes, mince pies, chutney... ..and a chance to share a cuppa with both French and British cuppa fans.

Saturday 8th

La Casa Musicale, Perpignan SO WHAT JAZZ CLUB.
 Big Band Jazz with lindy hop dancers. FREE
 04 68 62 17 22

Saturday 15th December

Théâtre de L'Etang, Saint Estève CELTIC LEGENDS
 Irish tap dance show with 7 musicians and 18 dancers featuring Irish classic folklores, traditional music and dance, live band... ..a show to get you tapping, stamping, clapping and whooping.
 Tel: 04 68 38 34 95

Sunday 16th December

Riverchurch, Perpignan INTERACTIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING NATIVITY 06.35.92.91.99
www.riverchurch.fr

Rivesaltes and Axat CHOO CHOO...SANTA SPECIAL!
 Train Touristique du Pays Cathares et du Fenouillèdes (TPCF). This Christmas train will travel between Rivesaltes and Axat with non stop entertainment for both young and old. Father Christmas, hot drinks and nibbles, make-up workshop, a present for every child...
 Reservations and check out dates: 04 68 59 99 02 or visit www.tpcf.fr

21st 22nd at 17h

Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Perpignan LE PESSEBRE VIVANT DU ROUSSILLON
 One hundred and fifty singers, dancers, choir members and musicians present this living nativity scene. FREE

Monday 31st December

Collioure - NEW YEAR ON THE BEACH
 On a circus theme. Bodegas, bandas and bopping. Fireworks at midnight in the bay. Book a table on the beach for 5€ (04 68 82 05 66), and bring your own banquet, or dine on oysters, champagne and foie gras bodega-style.

Canet Fireworks at 23h30, hot wine, hot chocolate, and dancing to welcome in the New Year.
Les Angles Torchlit descent of the piste followed by firework display, wine and hot chocolate.

JANUARY

1st January

Argelès FIRST SWIM OF THE YEAR!
 Premier bain de l'année - meet up at 10h30 at the roundabout by the beach - et bonne chance!

Saturday 5th

Perpignan CAVALCADE DES ROIS MAGES
 Procession of the Three Wise Men, a parade on horse and camel back.

Sunday 20th

Argelès village THE ORCHESTRE DE CATALOGNE play music from famous films.

22nd and 23rd

Théâtre de L'Archipel, Perpignan ALICE IN WONDERLAND
 Performed by the brilliant acrobats of the China New National Circus

FEBRUARY

1st and 3rd Feb

Théâtre de l'Archipel, Perpignan PUCCINI'S MADAME BUTTERFLY
 Performed by the Cie Opéra Éclaté
 Info : 04 68 62 62 00

3rd Feb

FETE DE L'OURS
 No P-O winter is complete without a visit to a bear festival, a great day out for all the family, full of colour, heritage and weird traditions!
Arles-sur-Tech - Sunday 3rd
Prats de Mollo - Sunday 24th Feb
St Laurent de Cerdans – 3rd March

23rd/24th February

Parc des Expositions, Perpignan SALON ANIMALIADES
 Puppies, kittens, all shapes, sizes and breeds www.copains-calins.fr

THROUGHOUT THE DEPARTMENT Youpi, it's carnival time!
 February and March see carnival processions all over the P-O – fancy dress, street parades, fireworks, ...



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El Caganer

Bare bottomed bounder

The traditional Christmas nativity scene or 'pessebre', is still very much alive and kicking in Catalonia... but what every Catalan child is really looking for is that bare bottomed bounder, the 'caganer'.

A popular and much loved Catalan Christmas figure, this small statue, originally of a pooping peasant wearing traditional floppy red Catalan cap (barretina), crouches with trousers half down, in a 'toilet' position, making his small contribution to the land.

Often hidden behind a tree, or round the back of the stable, the fun is to find the cheeky chappie, symbol of prosperity, health and happiness for the coming year.

Originally men only, one early caganer scene showed the wife waiting at her husband's side to wipe his bottom. Today, liberated women are represented by 'caganeras' and are crafted to wipe their own bottoms!!

Affectionate Irreverence

Other figures were also added over time to the peasant... washerwomen, shepherds, fishermen... Today, modern caganers may represent almost anybody.

William, Kate, and Michael Jackson squat next to the Pope. Elvis, Ronaldo, Tiger Woods and the Queen crouch nearby. Contraversial? Maybe. Disrespectful? Not at all. Marc Alos Pla for the company www.caganer.com who craft these unusual and novelty caganers by hand, explains,



"They are by no means intended to mock the personalities but rather to pay tribute to them"

The family run business in Girona create these bare bottomed personalities with affectionate irreverence, re-thought each year to represent well known personalities and current affairs.

We all do it!

The exact origin of the Caganer has been lost over the years but the tradition is known to have existed since the 17th century. When Barcelona Council cut the caganer from the public nativity scene in the early 2000s, public outcry and media support quickly had the bare derrière reinstated, proof of its timeless popularity.

Some say that this uninhibited little figure is 'fertilizing' the land to ensure a rich and successful harvest, others that he represents equality, in that we are all equal when it comes to biological functions. All agree that he or she symbolises good luck for the coming year.

If you're looking for an unusual Christmas or Easter present, visit www.caganer.com and order from a variety of celebrity caganers.

Find out more about Catalan Christmas traditions (el pessebre, caga tio) on our website at www.anglophone-direct.com



Auberge Can Joan ST JEAN D'ALBÈRE

**Restaurant
Review**
with
Paul Cartmell



I first spotted 'Auberge Can Joan' on a wonderful sun drenched walk last Easter from the hamlet of Saint Jean d'Albère. Unfortunately it was closed.

Following a number of recommendations that the Auberge was well worth a visit, we drove back there in late autumn, along tiny, winding forest roads, with magnificent twisted cork oaks. This time there was no pre-lunch walk and the day was cool and overcast. We approached the large, ancient building commanding magnificent views towards Spain, and walked through an unassuming door leading to a lovely, rustic, vaulted room with fabulous echoes, where we were given a welcome as warm as the huge fire roaring in the hearth.

The most important things to bring with you to the Auberge are a hearty appetite, plenty of time and a nominated driver. And if you have plans for eating in the evening, cancel them. Oh and the

next day too!

Almost immediately, aperitifs were served; dangerously by the bottle..... pastis, Grenache and Muscat with a generous 'plat de crudités'. We were presented with three choices for a main course, that day duck, wild boar, or veal. No large and complicated menus to navigate, decisions were made and we all went for the wild boar casserole.

Aperos finished, a large platter of charcuterie arrived, pâtés maison, roasted peppers and other vegetables, anchovies, eggs mimosa, and salad accompanied by ordinary but pleasant red, white and rose wines. The platter would make a meal by itself and was thoroughly delicious.

After a welcome pause (I did say allow plenty of time), a huge pot of wild boar and mushroom casserole arrived, accompanied by a steaming dish of dauphinoise potatoes. Hearty and very tasty, we really enjoyed both dishes but reluctantly could not finish all. Time for another pause (though the wine was still flowing), and we were then offered a plate of lamb cutlets! Now, we were beginning to flounder, belts loosened and top buttons unfastened, and regretting not taking that pre-lunch hike. We reluctantly passed on the lamb, though I've no doubt it would have been delicious, if the wild boar was anything to go by.

Following the hearty main course, the lightness of the crisp green leaf salad, with cheese selection was almost refreshing and wonderfully simple. And the wine.... well it just kept flowing.

I don't know about you, but lovely long, relaxing

lunches are a rare pleasure, especially with a roaring fire and in a room full of character. Three hours into lunch feeling languid and replete, the dessert arrived. Familiar local favourites made up the choices and we all enjoyed a magnificently rich chocolate tort, complete with dessert wines.

Coffee and digestifs completed a memorable lunch and feeling rather full, we took a very small meander around the delightful hamlet of Saint Jean d'Albère, which in no way compensated for the calorie intake.

We had chosen the set menu for 27 euros and it was incredible value, including five courses, wine, aperitifs, digestifs and coffee. The food itself is not pretentious; it is fresh, hearty, home cooked, well prepared and simply delicious. The portions are almost too generous but there is a smaller set menu or a la carte options

Since this gastronomic adventure, I have been back to the Auberge for a lighter, summer lunch on the terrace and it yet again lived up to expectations. The service was charming, welcoming and friendly, the staff are extremely helpful (also English speaking) and the ambiance has the feeling of a much loved old farmhouse.

I'll be going back there again but next time, the pre-lunch walk is compulsory!

Can Joan

St Jean d'Albère
Tel: 04 68 83 60 92

To get there....

Take the RN9 direction Le Perthus, turn left onto the D71 at the Douane building just before Le Perthus, direction St Jean d'Albère and keep on going until you see Can Joan on your right telephone to check opening hours. Open New Year's Eve.



to see more resto
reviews visit
www.anglophone-direct.com

DANS UN RESTAURANT :

"Monsieur, pourquoi bougez-vous tout le temps votre pied sous la table?"

"C'est pour empêcher les loups de s'approcher de moi!"

"Mais il n'y a pas de loups ici!"

"Vous voyez, ça marche"

(loup - wolf ça marche - it works)



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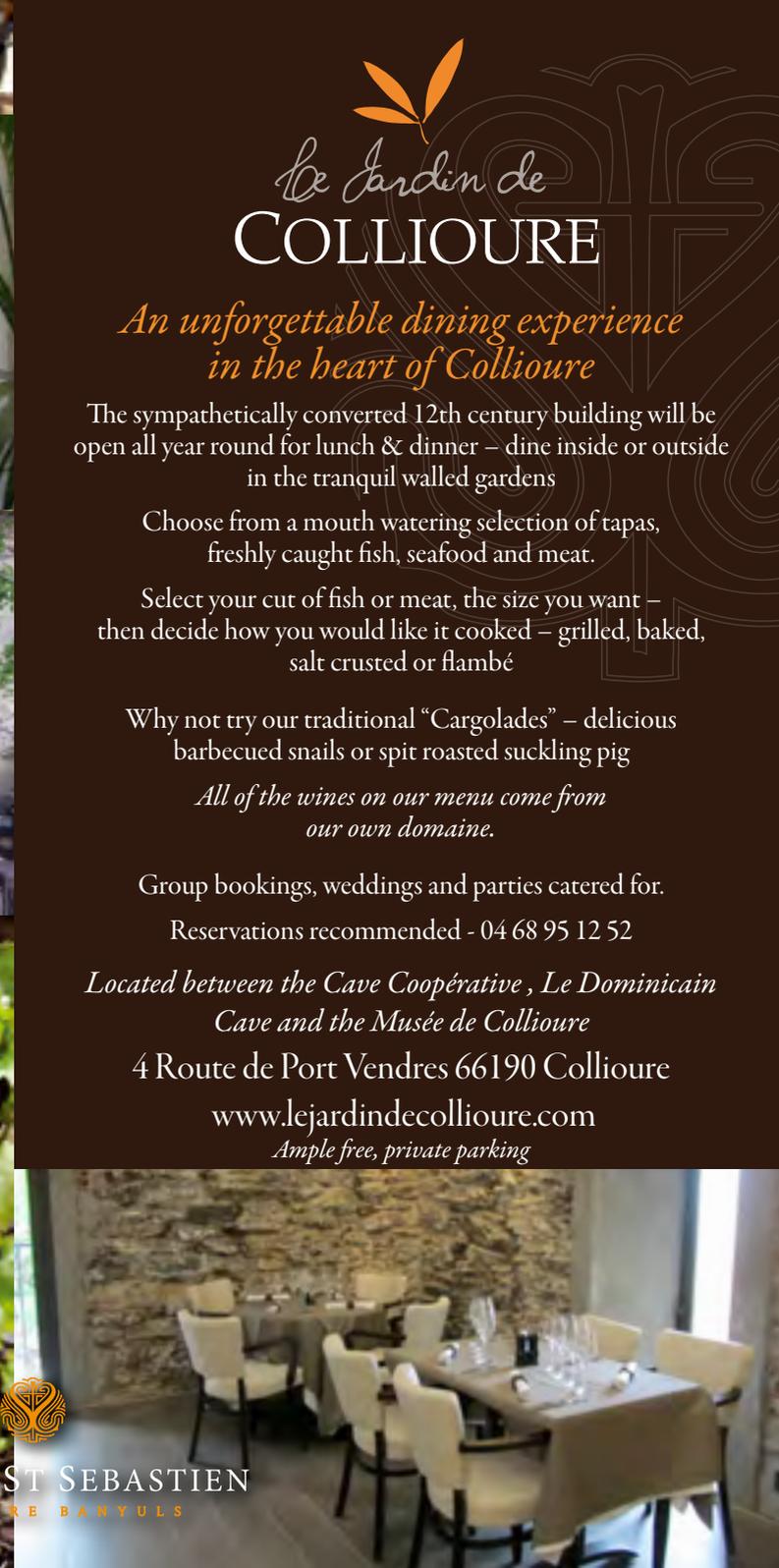
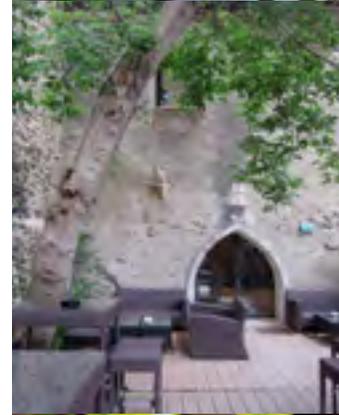
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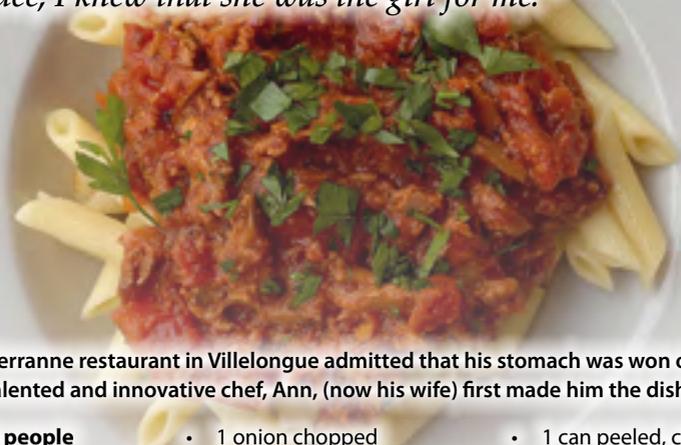


DOMAINE ST SEBASTIEN
COLLIOURE BANYULS

THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART...

Pasta with spicy tuna tomato sauce

"Ann seduced me with this recipe. Once I tasted her spicy tuna in tomato sauce, I knew that she was the girl for me!"



Peter of the Pierranne restaurant in Villelongue admitted that his stomach was won over before his heart, when talented and innovative chef, Ann, (now his wife) first made him the dish below.

Ingredients 4 people

- 350 gr spaghetti or penne cooked "al dente"
- 3 cans of tuna 'naturel' well drained
- 1 onion chopped
- 5 salted anchovies
- 2 little hot peppers crushed
- 2 tbspoons oregano
- 2 garlic cloves chopped or crushed
- 1 little can of tomato paste
- 1 can peeled, chopped tomatoes
- 1 glass of dry white wine and 1 cup of chicken stock
- handful of chopped parsley
- pepper and salt (extra oregano if wanted)

Sauce :

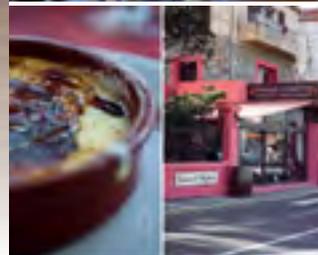
- 5/6 tbl spoons of olive oil (be generous!)

Preparation

-  Heat oil in deep frying pan or wok. Add onions, hot peppers, anchovies, oregano and, last, the garlic. (don't burn it!) Turn down heat and simmer so aromas can integrate.
-  Now you can add a glass of white wine and/or a cup of chicken broth.
-  Add the chunks of tuna to the sauce (spoon in and don't stir too much to keep whole chunks).
-  Add tomato paste and cook for a minute. Add chopped tomatoes and simmer.
-  Heat the pasta, add extra olive oil and top it with the sauce and chopped parsley.

Many more delicious dishes will seduce you at the Pierranne restaurant
Opening times: lunch and dinner, Tues to Fri, plus Sat dinner and Sun lunch. Closed all day Mon.

21 Carrer de la Marinada
Villelongue dels Monts
Tel 04 68 56 83 01 .
www.lapierranne.com



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www.domaine-st-sebastien.com



ROSE HIP SYRUP

Looking for a winter tonic? Cindy Guilbert recommends this easy and delicious recipe for rosehip syrup, which contains 20 times more vitamin C than oranges.



-  Wash about a kilo of berries and break off the stalks.
 -  Chop in food processor until mashed up
 -  Place into 1.75 litres of boiling water (as quickly as possible - vitamin C begins to break down as soon as they are damaged)
 -  Once boiling, turn off and allow to stand for 15 minutes.
 -  Pour the mixture through a jelly bag or muslin and allow the juice to drip through.
- Put the rose hips back in the pan, add another litre of water and repeat the straining process. You could probably do this three times and still get goodness out of the rose hips.

-  Add about 750g of sugar for each litre of syrup, and bring to the boil again. No need to boil away for hours. Once the syrup is boiling, you can start bottling it.
-  Bottle in sterilised bottles. Best to use small ones as the syrup will go off if the bottle is open for too long. Store in a cool, dark place and refrigerate after opening. It is a delicious drink either hot or cold – dilute to taste. You can also use it as a sweetener on your muesli or in savoury dishes or desserts.

For delightful and original hand made gifts, cards and jewellery, contact Cindy on 04 68 88 02 77



Food, Glorious Food

'Les anglais vivent pour manger et les anglais mangent pour vivre'

Before the French revolution in 1789, around 80% of the French population lived off the land, on a diet based around bread and cereals. After the revolution, a new ruling class of bourgeoisie ironically recreated the luxurious cuisine of the very 'aristos' they had beheaded, and food became a symbol of social status. Parisians were still starving on the streets and the reputed 'haute cuisine' for which France has long been known, was still only within the reach of the wealthy.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, more

diverse foods became available to the working classes. Improved transport links helped. France became fashionable for wealthy tourists from around the world, so chefs created dishes to appeal to a wider audience, and the country gained the reputation of the world capital of haute cuisine.

Long dinners prepared lovingly and consumed leisurely over several hours of wine and chat are still very much the French way of life.

Of course, we know that dinner out is not always perfect, so here is some useful vocabulary to help you to explain politely when a 'plat' is not quite 'comme il faut'.

vocab.

C'est (trop).... - It's (too)...

- ...fade - bland/tasteless
- ...sucré - sweet
- ...salé - salty
- ...poivré -peppery
- ...epicé/piquant - spicy (hot)
- ...acide/aigre - sour
- ...amer - bitter
- ...dur - tough
- ...cuit - overdone
- ...cru - raw
- ...tiède - luke warm

C'est.... - It's...

- ...mangeable/immangeable - edible/inedible
- ...dégoûtant - disgusting
- ...infect - awful
- Ce n'est pas...**
- ... assez cuit - It is underdone.
- Il manque de....**
- sel - salt
- poivre - pepper
- gout - taste
- Il y a une mouche dans ma soupe!

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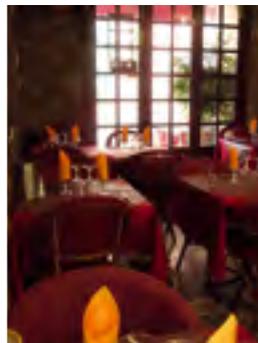
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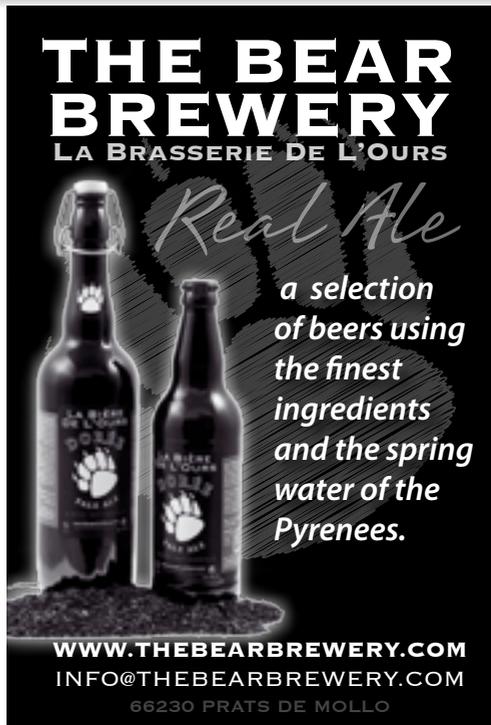
The Beer Necessities

You might have heard about bears and bear festivals in Prats-de-Mollo, but have you heard about beers and beer festivals?

Spurred on by thirsty locals and their desire to enjoy "Real" British Ale, Cathy & Kevin Grainger have boldly embarked upon the exciting project of setting up a traditional brewery specialising in fine quality, traditional beers in the pretty mountain village of Prats de Mollo.

After a sneaky tasting, (in the name of research bien sûr), we have a feeling that Prats will soon be experiencing a sharp increase in popularity! The brewery will be opening soon for tastings and sales – keep an eye on our website at www.anglophone-direct.com for opening date and stockist details.

For the full story of bears, beers and barley don't miss the Spring edition of PO Life – available from 1st March.



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Col l'Ouillat, Pic Neoulous A WINTER DRIVE AND WALK

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This delightful drive twists and turns ever upwards through ancient, gnarled cork oaks, chestnuts, and beech till you arrive at the top of the world - or so it seems.

Take the RN9, le Boulou - Le Perthus road, and just before entering Le Perthus, look out for the filter lane on the left, the D71 towards St Jean d'Albère.

The narrow but spectacular tree lined route, criss-crossed by well trodden footpaths formed over the years by escapees, smugglers, refugees, and shepherds, will tempt you back another time, for another visit. For now, continue past the hamlet of St Jean d'Albere (see restaurant review p16), and a left hand turn will soon put you on the approach to your destination, the Col l'Ouillat. Listen out for

the bells - you will very likely need to slow down or stop for the pretty, unhurried cows that graze free along the road side, or their stubborn donkey friend, who will let you pass only when HE is ready. All part of the charm of the drive.

Suddenly the tree lined road opens up to wide and spectacular views. Keep climbing and you will arrive at a perfect picnic and BBQ area. Park up, grab some of that winter sun, light up a fire for your steaks, unpack your sandwiches and wine, sit on the terrace of the on-site 'Chalet de L'Albère', where there are loos for the disabled, with a warm drink or a cold beer. or continue straight on until disabled signs welcome you to a small parking area. The newly created path on your left has been specially adapted and equipped for the disabled,



prams, wheelchairs, or those just wanting a short, easy trot in idyllic surroundings. A flat, ten minute woodland stroll past tables and benches, sparkling waterfalls, tree identification signs, brings you out at a stunning viewpoint with orientation panel. The whole of the P-O and beyond lies at your feet, edged by miles of sparkling blue Mediterranean. On any day, it is spectacular. On a clear day, it will take your breath away.



How do you persuade a bear to eat cheese?
"Cam-em-bert"!



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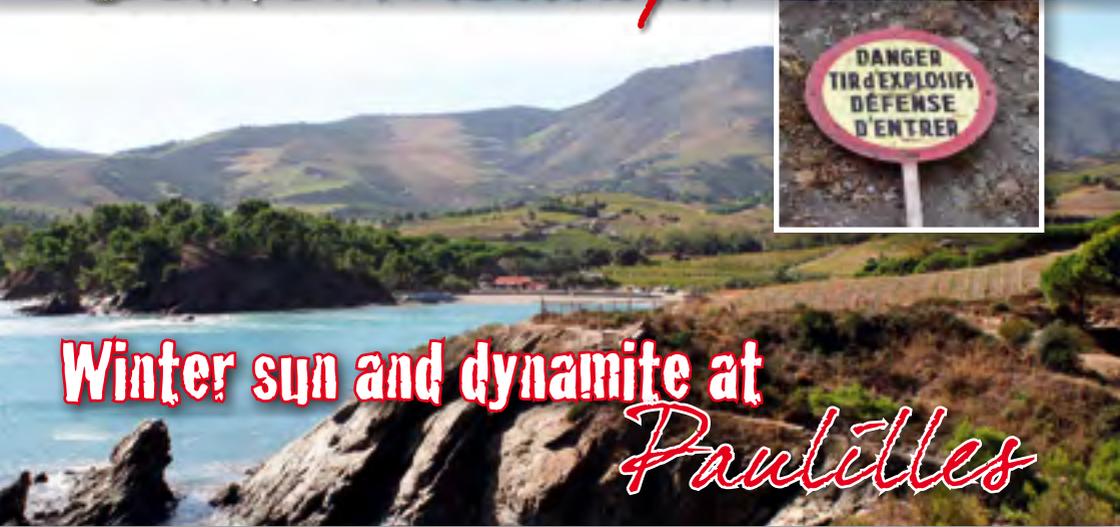
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Winter sun and dynamite at Paulilles

Tucked away off the coast road, half way between Port Vendres and Banyuls-sur-Mer, lies the bay of Paulilles, three beaches (Bernardi, del Mitg and Fourat) separated by rocky headlands, surrounded by steep and endless vineyards, and rugged mountains.

Walk there along the coastal path from Port Vendres, drive, cycle, or take the 1€ bus Perpignan Cerdère route. A large, free car park off the roundabout is well signed.

The sand and pebble beaches are perfect for grabbing some winter sunshine, sheltered as they are by historic anti tank walls built by the Germans in 1943 to limit the possibility of an allied landing.

For those who wish to do more than while away a lazy hour on the beach, the site of the former

Nobel dynamite factory beckons.

Sheltered by both the Béar and Ullestrell headlands, and protected by Port Vendres fort, the site was chosen for its unpopulated position, which would not endanger lives in case of explosion. Equally important was its facility for building solid jetties for safe sea transport, and the fact that it was 'as far away as possible from German borders' where the Franco-Prussian War raged.

Today, the dilapidated buildings and grounds of the 80-acre site have been renovated, and a free industrial heritage museum explains the fascinating history of the site, set within landscaped gardens. Picnic spots provide vast views over Med and mountain and large sepia murals on several of the restored

buildings are a fitting memorial to the explosion victims and dynamite makers of Paulilles. A restoration workshop for traditional wooden 'barques catalanes' can also be found on site.

Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite and other deadly materials, was actually a pacifist at heart. He believed that his inventions would end all war through their deterrent effect.

Shocked at being described by a newspaper as a 'merchant of death', this paradox of a man, manufacturer of explosives, staunch supporter of the struggle for peace and disarmament, remade his will. He left much of his wealth to the establishment of the Nobel Prize for achievements in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature..... and peace. He made no provision, however, for maths. Rumour had it that his mistress of the moment had an affair with a renowned mathematician. Nobel withheld the prize for maths for fear that his rival might win it!

In partnership with Paul Barbe, entrepreneur and politician, Nobel began to produce nitroglycerine in the 1870s. The factory was one of the first of its kind to employ women in non-clerical positions, as well as large numbers of foreign workers. Spanish refugees of the Retirada, and Vietnamese after France's withdrawal from Indochina found a job and a home at Paulilles. A self-sufficient community with its own church and school, employees described the site as 'le Pérou' (El Dorado), and 'un petit coin de rêve'. Factory directors planted gardens with local and exotic flowers and shrubs

and the site became an attractive and pleasant place to live.

Workers were well paid and well looked after. And so they should have been. The 'dynamiterie', called 'La Montagne' by superstitious workers who preferred not to say the real name out loud, was responsible for at least 30 explosions, leaving more than 50 dead over a century of production. Many others were victims of anti-freeze agent, glycol, cheap substitute for glycerine, and found many years later to dilate arteries and damage the heart.

With a strong trade union, strikes were inevitable. One strike started as a result of workers being suspended for playing rugby with several sticks of dynamite tied together!

When the factory closed down in 1984, it remained derelict for some time. Developers and entrepreneurs eyed it greedily for its prime position, dreaming dreams of luxury hotel complexes and marinas. In 1998 however, the conservationists won the day and it was bought by the Conservatoire du littoral (Coastal Conservation), and restored over several years.

Open every day apart from 1st November, 25th December and 1st January.
Winter 9h – 17h
Summer 9h – 21h.
An on site café is open from May to October.



Out for the day...



Pretty Perfect P-O Picnics

With Katja Willemsen

Idyllic picnic spots are often those discovered by accident. Somewhere off the beaten track, perhaps hidden behind bramble and tumbledown mas, or next to a small stream in a forest of gnarled cork oaks. Here are three scenic picnic spots near the tiny hamlet of Evol, perfect to throw down a rug and open a bottle of wine.

The sun was low in a wintry blue sky when we set off through the Têt valley to explore Olette. Disappointment at this sad patchwork of crumbling crépis switched to delight when we spotted a green and red sign for “Les Plus Beaux Villages de France”. A quick change of plan and we were heading up a spaghetti strand road leading into the cleaved ravine of the Evol River. (See box inset for exact directions!)

This authentic little gem of a village, which takes the river’s name, clutches onto the northern flank of Mont Coronat. Time has stopped in Evol. The mottled schist houses with their slate roofs and smoking chimneys are a rugged reminder of the fierce winters that have battered the hamlet for centuries on end. Pregnant bulges of bread ovens can still be seen on some of the external walls.

It’s easy to picture donkeys hauling carts of schist from the nearby quarry and Catalan men, cheeks ruddy from

the cold, cleaving each tile with pride whilst their black-clad women dry figs and bake bread. The church of Saint André dominates the hamlet and its cemetery is well worth a look for its ornate collection of iron crosses, many still adorned with the heart-shaped porcelain grave markers so popular in the early 20th century.

Once you’ve walked the cobbled streets, drive through Evol, following the signs to Les Etangs/ Col de Portus. (The road is a bumpy mixture of dirt and old tar.) The first picnic spot is at the humble chapel of Saint Etienne. If you see a weather beaten

wooden sign for Capella Sant Esteba X111, you’ve gone too far!

Jostle down the untarred slipway on the left and park next to the chapel. Unfortunately, like so many churches these days, the door is locked but the slate roof is at a perfect pitch for close-up inspection of the handmade tiles. Head down the side of the chapel to the wooden bench for picnicking in



comfort, or a little further to the grassland under the trees if you packed a blanket. Both options have spectacular views over Evol and down the valley to the Spanish border.

If you’re up for a ten-minute easy climb, or it’s a windy day, walk across the road and up to the ruins of the 13th century castle to picnic spot number 2. Inside, you’ll be protected by walls that have fought off onslaughts far greater than even the Tramontane!

For the really adventurous and those with 4x4’s, keep driving deeper into the ravine. Normal cars do venture on this dirt track but only do so if you have nerves of steel and good insurance. The scenery is breathtaking with jagged mountain spikes ahead and dense forest on either side.

Follow signs to “Les Etangs”. After about half an hour, paradise and picnic spot number 3 await at the Refuge de la Mouline. Wooden tables are scattered in between the trees, some shaded, some in the sun, and further along from the refuge, there are plenty of flat rocks on which to balance a glass of wine. Bon appétit!

About Evol

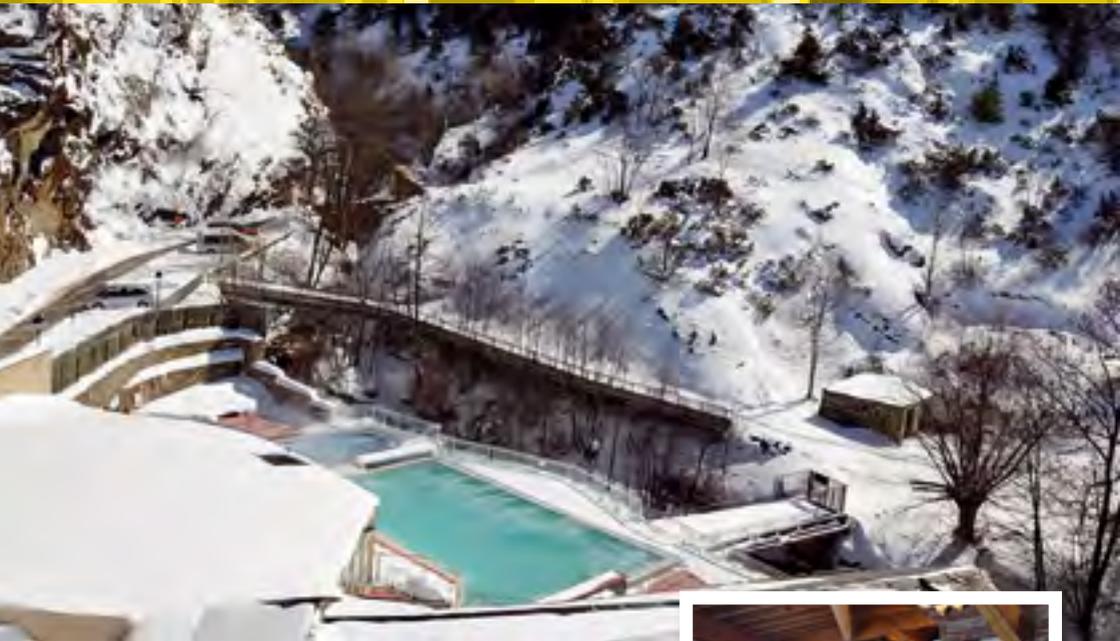
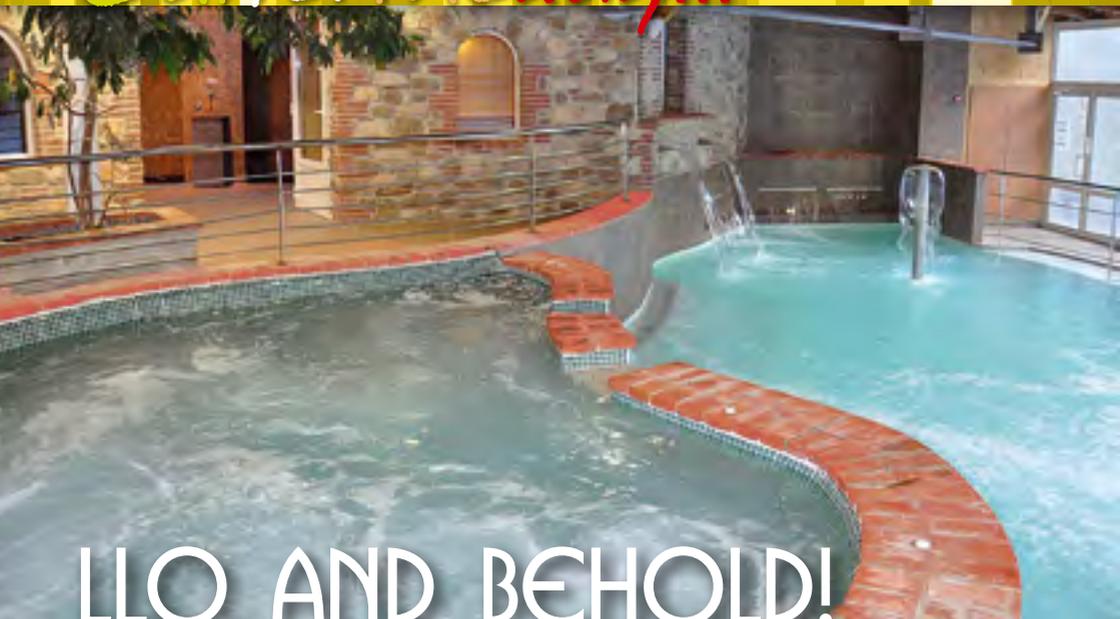
- A particularly authentic Pyrenean hamlet with houses of schist and roofs of slate.
- 9th century Roman church of St André
- Chapel of Saint Etienne
- Remains of 13th century castle of Vicomtes de So
- Work place of Ludovic Massé, Evol’s maverick writer-poet.

How To Get There

- Take the N116 to Prades.
- Allow about 35 minutes from Prades to Evol.
- Stay on N116 and follow signs to La Rocade.
- At Villefranche-de-Conflent, take first exit, passing the fortified village on your right.
- Continue along this winding continuation of the N116 until you reach Olette.
- Watch out for the “Plus Beaux Villages de France” sign on your right, and take this little road (D4) for about 5 minutes to Evol.



Out for the day...



LLO AND BEHOLD! ABSOLUTELY WORTH THE DRIVE.

In the Cerdagne and Capcir, when the winter snows cover the land, it's natural that thoughts turn to snow sports, but have you thought of combining a day in the mountains with the delights of the natural, hot thermal springs at Llo?

Originally named Parrochia Allone, shortened to Hello, then Llo, this pretty mountain village is dominated by the ruined monastery of Sant Felieu and La tour del Vacaro, tower of an ancient and equally ruined chateau fort, once home to 19th century 'witch' Jean Govern, known for his skill with herbs.

Recently taken over and renovated by English speaking Yves and Isabelle Jail, a visit to Les Bains de Llo is a luxurious treat within everyone's pocket.

Three outdoor pools, heated to between 34° and 36°, and a large indoor pool, have a range of hydro jets positioned to massage your neck and back, legs, feet... There is something surreal about floating in a warm pool surrounded by cold snow - an indisputable 'wow' factor, made even better

by the knowledge that the sulphurous waters are known to detoxify, maintain soft, smooth skin, ease rheumatism, shoulder, neck and wrist...

An entertaining touch is the 'Aqua musique' - lie on a watery bed of bubbles, head supported on a specially designed ledge, ears submerged, and gentle music soothes the soul... lift your ears out of the water and the music is gone! How do they do that?

For a break between the hard slog of moving from pool to Jacuzzi to sauna to steam, a 'relaxation room' is equipped with a large screen showing stunning photos of the region. On Saturday mornings, join in the aqua aerobics class free of charge.

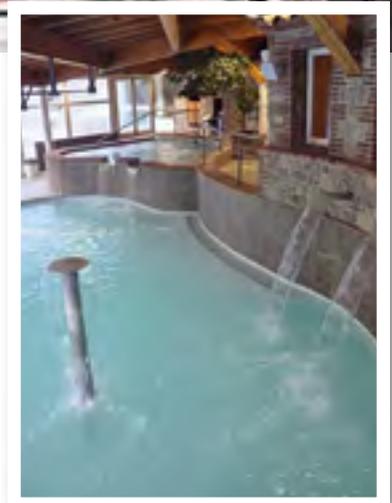
A range of health and beauty treatments and massages are also available to soothe those aching joints, or iron out the creases of a hard day's skiing, climbing or walking nearby.

Lunch or snack in the cafe/restaurant, take a picnic if you want to soak up some of that winter sun, or make a weekend of it and book into one

of the large, modern, newly renovated and fully equipped apartments available on site. Great weekend rates include spa treatments, massage, facials and unlimited entry to the baths.

For walking and climbing enthusiasts, the nearby Gorges du Sègre boasts the first 'via ferrata' of the Pyrenees. Hire harness and helmet, click onto the route of hand and foot holds, and boldly venture across rope bridge and precipice to the Chapel of St Felieu. For the less adventurous, a footpath through the gorge to the refuge of Culasse at 1800 metres will keep your feet firmly on the ground.

Between skiing, walking, climbing and total wind-down, your weekend can be as energetic or as relaxing as you wish.



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When skiing doesn't quite do it for you.

We can get a little obsessive about skiing can't we? In fact, it's easy to forget that winter in the Pyrenees offers a gondola full of exciting alternatives for those times when the ski lifts are closed, that frozen shoulder is giving you grief, Grandpa's recent hip replacement isn't quite ready for the pistes, or you're just too tired to tumble.

So why not head for Lake Matemale and a dog sleigh ride through the frozen forest, followed by lunch in Les Angles



old village at Restaurant Le Ramballade. Grab a window seat and enjoy breathtaking views over the frozen lake.

Or how about a bit of sledging on the lower slopes, then back to 'Le Mixx' Tapas Bar in Les Angles for an early apero and nibbles — funky modern bar with heated terrace and free wifi?

A guided snow shoe walk is a superb way to explore the winter mountain wonderland and learn about the local wildlife - more leisurely than skiing, but good

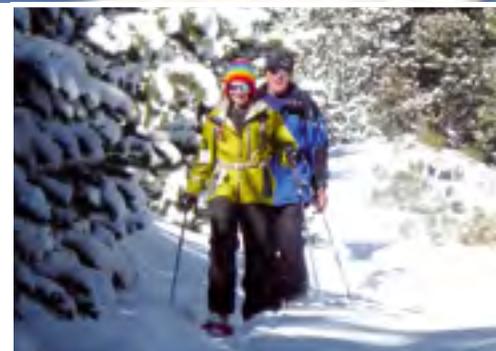
cardio and calorie burning workout, followed by a barbecue and a bevvvy in the snow. Nice.

So what else? Well, not much really, only.....

....thermal baths, helicopter rides, ski kiting, tandem parapenting, night time dining at Le Chalet restaurant at the top of the Les Angles with arrival by gondola and return by skidoo, snake gliss, free floodlit sledging on the nursery slopes in Les Angles, animal park (boar, wolf, bison, bear, reindeer, marmotte and izards), igloo building courses, hot water canyoning, ski air bag, snowboarding park.....*phew*, that should do for now. And of course fantastic skiing for all abilities...

Pop into the tourist office at Les Angles and find out more.

(For excellent year round accommodation rates contact Pyrenean Trails for self catering and B&B in beautifully converted barns, Mouli Del Rui for B&B (evening meals also available) and Les Bains Llo for self catering apartments).



Pyrenean Trails

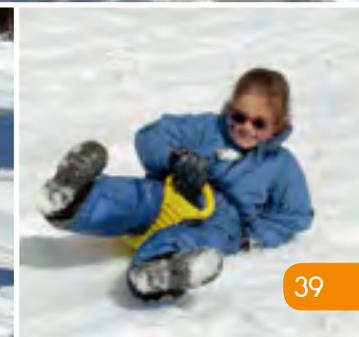
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Les Angles

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PILATES: SLOW TRACK BACK TO FITNESS



Inspirez/expirez - breathe in/breathe out
étirer/contracter - stretch/tense
échauffement - warm up
dos rond/plat - round/flat back
à plat ventre/couché sur le dos - lying on your tummy/back
debout/assis/à genoux - standing/sitting/kneeling
cuisses - thighs
abdos - stomach
fessiers - bottom
buste - chest
tapis - mat
altères - weights

If you would like to try a Pilates discovery fortnight with Helena, ring **04.68.87.38.34**

Soooooo... it's nearly Christmas. It's not worth starting a new diet and exercise routine YET because you can't POSSIBLY be expected to fast over the festive season... but NO MATTER WHAT, you are DEFINITELY going to start running, jumping, skipping...in 2013. PROBABLY DEFINITELY. Just not quite yet.

The thing is, let's face it, we are simply not all marathon runners, joggers or body building belles and beaux, and some of us need to take it a little more slowly. Pilates is an exercise discipline which

improves mental and physical well-being, increases flexibility, and strengthens muscles through controlled movements. Great for those aching backs and round tummies that have started doing their own thing, it is not fast and furious, it will not make you breathless, and is a really good 'back to fitness' option.

Buy a book or a DVD or join a weekly class here in the P-O. Helena, English speaking yoga pilates instructor in Le Boulou area, gives you some useful French vocabulary to get you going!



Total Peace of Mind

Don't wait until the last minute to think about renovations, repairs, and maintenance (sand changes etc) on your swimming pool. Organise it over the winter/spring and be ready to dive straight into the summer season.

- ▶ **Annual or seasonal maintenance contracts**
- ▶ **Green pool treatment**
- ▶ **Pool opening and closing**
- ▶ **System upgrade**

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Test your French

1 - RE POUR REPAS!

Match up the words, all beginning with RE, with their definitions.
(Why not try to work them out first just from the definitions?)

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|---|------------------------------------|
| rein | 1 | a | dire merci |
| rééducation | 2 | b | diminuer |
| remercier | 3 | c | remettre droit |
| reculer | 4 | d | un côté d'une feuille de papier |
| redresser | 5 | e | partie d'une chanson qui se répète |
| reduire | 6 | f | aller en arrière |
| refrain | 7 | g | organe qui nettoie le sang |
| recto | 8 | h | animal rusé qui mange des poules |
| redoutable | 9 | i | traiter un convalescent |
| renard | 10 | j | qui est à craindre. |

Qui suis-je?

Je suis dans l'étang et au fond du jardin.
Je commence la nuit et finis le matin.
J'apparaît deux fois dans l'année.

Qui suis-je?

La letter N

Tongue twister (Virelangue) (Répétez trois fois)

Fais sécher ces six chaussures
sales sous sa cheminée.

2 - PARTS OF A WHOLE!

Here are the parts - find the whole
(possibilities at end of exercise)

Eg le toit, les fenêtres, les portes, les murs

Answer: une maison.

- L'orteil, le talon, la plante
- La selle, des cale-pieds, un top case
- L'écran, la télécommande, l'antenne.
- Le repertoire, les apps, la carte SIM
- La vitrine, la caisse, le rayon
- L'embrayage, le frein, le volant

a un portable b une voiture c un pied
d une télévision e une moto f un magasin

Christmas & New Year
greetings for your good
wishes and cards

 Bonnes et Heureuses Fêtes!

 Je te (vous) souhaite un
Joyeux Noël et une Bonne
Année!

 Bonne Année et Bonne Santé

 Joyeuses Fêtes et Bonne
Année

 Paix, joie et amitié

 Bonheur, santé et prospérité

Useful phrase

Mieux vaut tard que jamais
(better late than never)

3 - Read the amusing piece of advice below and fill in the blanks!

Une super 1 _____ d'améliorer votre français, c'est de prendre rendez-vous 2 _____ un psychologue.

Bonne 3 _____ de communication orale, payée par votre assurance santé! Vous apprendrez 4 _____ vous présenter de manière 5 _____ approfondie, dire du mal de vos 6 _____ et votre famille et, 7 _____ sur le gâteau, vous aurez l'occasion de parler 8 _____ de vous même et de vous plaindre sur votre 9 _____ et ses problèmes insignifiants.
Une 10 _____ affaire!

a séance b cerise c véritable d longuement e façon f vie g très h chez i amis j à

Êtes-vous prêt à devenir le prochain millionnaire



Here's some useful vocab to help you. (and don't forget P-O Life if you win!)

- Cochez (la case) tick (the box)...
- Chaque/prochain tirage - each/next draw
- Jour/résultats de tirage - draw results/day
- Gagnant - winner
- Bulletin - playslip
- Grille Classique - classic game
- Système Flash - lucky dip
- Les gains - winnings
- Jouer en ligne - play on line
- Jeux de grattage - scratch cards
- Mise - stake

Language tip

Il y a + **time phrase** = ago
Je suis arrivé en France il y a 3 jours

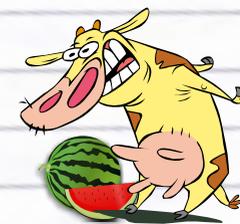
Useful expression Ah bon

Really? Is that so? I see

Blague nulle

Quel fruit obtient-on en tirant
sur la queue d'une vache?
Un meuhh-long (melon!!!!)

(en tirant - by pulling la queue - tail
meuh - moo)



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Test your French

4. Find the English for these common French expressions

Que je sache	1	a	What's up with you?
Tant mieux	2	b	Keep to the right
Tenez votre droite	3	c	Look on the bright side
Il tient à son père	4	d	So to speak
Pour ainsi dire	5	e	Stop thief!
Bon débarras	6	f	As far as I know
Prends-ça du bon côté	7	g	Good riddance
A bout de souffle	8	h	Breathless
Quelle mouche t'a piqué?	9	i	All the better
Au voleur!	10	j	He takes after his father



Une blague bête

Dans un restaurant...

Bonjour monsieur, servez-vous des nouilles?

Bien sûr, nous servons tout le monde

(nouille - noodle or nitwit!)

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Hold it! Tenir (je tiens, nous tenons) translates mainly as 'to hold' or 'to keep' but takes on different meanings depending on usage. Here are a few.

tenir..... une classe - to control a class (eg of kids)

...un magasin - to run a shop

...à quelqu'un - to be fond of s.o/s.thing

...de quelqu'un - to take after someone

5 CAN YOU FIND THE ENGLISH FOR THESE FRENCH EXPRESSIONS WITH TENIR?

Il tient le coup	1	a	Keep out of reach
Il se tient à peine debout	2	b	Behave yourself
Tiens-toi droit	3	c	Sit/stand up straight
Tiens-moi ça	4	d	He's hanging in there
Tenir hors de portée	5	e	They keep out of the way.
Ils se tiennent à l'écart	6	f	I think he's fond of me
Je pense qu'il tient à moi	7	g	Hold this for me
Elle tient à son argent	8	h	I insist
J'y tiens	9	i	She is close to her money
Tiens-toi bien!	10	j	He can hardly stand up

Language Tip

Je veux que tu/vous + subjunctive..... - I want you to....

If you have never heard of the subjunctive, don't panic!

Here are a few common ones to learn by heart.

Je veux que tu....

...fasses (do)

...saches (know)

...prennes (take)

...sois (be)

...aies (have)

...ailles (go)

Eg

Je veux que tu sois à l'heure

I want you to be on time.

Je veux que tu fasses la vaisselle

I want you to do the washing up



Et encore...

Deux pianos se croisent :

Ça va, toi ?

Bof, j'ai mal au do

(se croiser - pass each other)

Speech Fillers

Every language needs conversation fillers - non-sensical little words to plug a gap during an awkward silence, or when you can't find the right word. Here are a few with some very rough

English equivalents.

alors... - so, then...

bon - ok, right.

mais bon... - anyway

bon ben - right, well.

eh bien - well...

enfin... - well...

c'est-à-dire... - what I mean is...

eh... - er...

à la limite - I suppose, I mean

donc - soooo

hein? - eh?

Test your french - answers

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

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

1 - Trouvez l'équivalent en Français pour ces expressions idiomatiques

It's up to you	1	a	Je vais très bien
Make yourself at home	2	b	Parlons affaires
You must be kidding	3	c	Ce n'est pas mon truc
It's the story of my life!	4	d	Fais comme chez toi
I'd like to be a fly on the wall	5	e	Coûte que coûte
Let's talk shop	6	f	Comme tu veux
I'm as right as rain	7	g	Il est à poil
By hook or by crook	8	h	J'aimerais bien être une petite souris
He's wearing his birthday suit	9	i	Ca m'arrive tout le temps!
It's not my cup of tea	10	j	Tu plaisantes!



Good advice

Never test the depth of the water with both feet

Have you ever noticed.....

..... that people who tell you to calm down are usually the ones who got you mad in the first place?

(notice - remarquer the ones - celles qui.. mad - en colère in the first place - en premier lieu)



2 - Encore des faux amis en anglais qui ressemblent à des mots français, mais ont un sens totalement différent. Les connaissez-vous?

ENGLISH	FRENCH
Assistance	1 a pièce de monnaie
Rude	2 b danger
Sensible	3 c finalement
Actually	4 d secours
Coin	5 e grossier
Tape	6 f détaillé
Pain	7 g ruban, bande (magnétique)
Eventually	8 h sensé
Comprehensive	9 i douleur
Hazard	10 j en fait

Fun word
I am flabbergasted
Je suis époustouffé

Useful expression
Shelf life - durée de conservation d'un produit.

Something fishy's going on
Ca me paraît louche tout ça



Language tip

'...ish' - à peu près

Rajoutez '...ish' pour donner une indication vague de l'heure, l'age etc

I arrive home at six-ish, depending on traffic.

Je rentre à la maison vers six heures

She is smallish - Elle est assez petite

He looks thirty-ish - Il fait dans ses trente ans

LETTER TO SANTA

Dear Santa,

My wish for 2013 is for a fat bank account and a thin body.

Please don't mix these up again, like you did last year!

Love Kate

a silly joke...

How does a snowman travel?
On his icicle.

a sillier joke...

What do you call a penguin in the Sahara desert?
Lost!

the silliest joke...

What do you get if you cross a Scottish legend and a bad egg?
The Loch Ness Pongster!
(pong - sentir mauvais - arghhhh)

3 - S - is for Soup

Trouvez les définitions des mots suivants, qui commencent tous avec la lettre S

sack	1	a	thin
smell	2	b	become smaller
sow	3	c	green leaved vegetable
skinny	4	d	take somebody's job away
spinach	5	e	small, noisy bird
steeple	6	f	discover through the nose
starling	7	g	church tower
safe	8	h	adult female pig
slug	9	i	snail without shell
shrink	10	j	out of danger

Ooops

In P-O Life 37 we gave you the hiccoughs in the plural. Naughty. In French it is always singular even though you probably have many more than one. 'J'ai le hoquet. **Sorrrrrrry.**

Virelangue

(Répétez trois fois)

Grow glowing green grapes!

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(Don't) kiss me Kate ... when to say 'adieu' to the French kiss

It's second nature for the French to greet and take leave of family, friends, colleagues and even complete strangers with cheek-y kisses. They grow up with it. It's as natural as breathing... or as waving a hand from a respectable distance and saying 'hi' in the UK.

We've given you a vague set of 'kissing rules' in the past but here they are again

- Women kiss women (only ones they already have a friendly relationship with of course. Don't go kissing the lady on reception at the opticians)
- Men kiss women but shake hands with men (unless they are family or very close friends in which case men kiss men)
- Children kiss everybody, including complete strangers.
- The number of kisses varies from region to region, town to town, and even person to person, so don't worry, take your lead from the 'kissee'.
- Most people kiss from right to left (ie your right cheek to their right cheek)
- Some people just touch cheek to cheek and 'air kiss', others will kiss properly on the cheek.
- If the 'kissee' is rather cute, make up your own rules!

Of course, unless you're looking for a few days off school or work and want to catch something infectious, there are also quite a few reasons NOT to kiss hello or goodbye

- **They're sweaty**
- **You're sweaty**
- **They smell**
- **You smell**
- **They have dog breath**
- **You have dog breath**
- **They are covered in cream or something unidentifiable or put-offish**
- **They look ill**
- **They are snuffly or snotty**
- **You hardly know them**
- **The room is quite full and if you kiss one, you will probably have to kiss them all.**
- **You don't actually like them**

So if you just shake hands when you should have kissed, will that seem standoffish, over formal, down right unfriendly? Will you cause offense if you DON'T pucker up?

Here's what the French have to say....

Conseils pour éviter la grippe

Les règles d'hygiène. (Hygiene recommendations)

Se laver régulièrement les mains (au savon et/ou se les désinfecter avec une solution hydro-alcoolique) Wash your hands regularly (with soap and/or antibacterial solution)
Se couvrir la bouche et le nez quand on tousse ou éternue. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze

Éviter les contacts (bises, poignée de main...) et éviter tout contact avec une personne malade. Avoid contact (kissing, handshake...) and avoid all contact with those who have contracted the virus.

Olivier, Maureillas

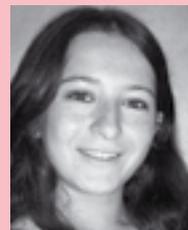
Ne pas faire la bise? Un Français ne ferait pas ça, ou rarement. En général, la plupart des gens qui sont malades diraient "Je ne fais pas la bise



parce que..." Par contre, un anglais qui fait la bise, c'est maladroit, tu le reconnais tout de suite, étant donné que ce n'est pas un geste naturel chez les anglais, donc je ne serais pas insulté. Chez un français que je connais, je trouverais ça bizarre.

Camille, Rennes

Les français font la bise pour dire bonjour, au revoir, merci, enchanté... C'est une habitude,



question d'éducation. En revanche se vexer si quelqu'un ne fait pas la bise est peut-être un peu exagéré car dans certains cas, comme par exemple arriver dans un lieu rempli de personnes, le temps de dire bonjour il est l'heure de dire au revoir!



Useful vocabulary

faire la bise – to kiss hello/goodbye
la plupart – most
diraient – would say
Par contre – On the other hand
maladroit – awkward
étant donné – given that..
enchanté... – pleased to meet you
en revanche – On the other hand
se vexer – to get cross
un lieu – a place
rempli – full
le temps – the time (it takes)
il est l'heure – it's time



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Write up your Rue!

It's not only artists who find their inspiration in Catalonia. Here are three talented English-speaking writers scattered around the Pyrénées-Orientales, who are well worth a place on your 2013 reading list. All available from Amazon and Amazon Kindle

Shepherd's Prayer

by Katja Willemsen www.katjawillemsen.com

Katja Willemsen was born in Holland, grew up in South Africa, and now lives in a tiny village in the Vallespir. She describes herself as 'looking Dutch, feeling South African, and having sturdy tap roots in our little French hamlet.'

Shepherd's Prayer is set in the scenic hills behind Collioure and anyone who has visited the area, and enjoys its brooding history, will love this book, which twists and turns like the mountain paths of the story.

Katja's goal is to create page-turners that can be enjoyed as a light read, but with thought-provoking psychological depth behind. Themes involve family secrets, psychological shadows, and the supernatural, wrapped around loaded topics - betrayal, schizophrenia...

From the very first sentence the story has heat and tension. Raisin Radcliffe and her brother stumble on a labyrinth of caves underneath an ancient dolmen near the Massane Tower



above Collioure. Then a village boy is kidnapped and a violent cult demands closure of the Grotte des Loups, Collioure's famous prehistoric cave, or the child will die. In helping rescue him, Raisin and Geoffrey confront the trauma of their own youth.

Left luggage in Barcelona

by Simon Newman

Simon Newman lives in Maureillas, on the Spanish border, with his language-teacher wife Pauline. A talented writer with a wicked sense of humour, his novel Left luggage in Barcelona tells of burned-out media hotshot Joe Palmer who goes to the Catalan capital in search of well, a total life makeover!

While in Barcelona Joe decides to search for his long-lost biological father, aka Domingo the Waiter, who did a runner shortly after a less-than-immaculate conception on an Estartit beach in the Sixties. Fortunately help is at hand in the form of the fragrant and flamboyant Quentin La Bouche, a larger than life Queen of the Costas who's had more than a little experience at finding waiters himself.

But Joe's path takes a different turn when a man claiming to be Antoni Gaudi, the enigmatic architect of the Sagrada Familia, comes back from the grave, and Joe is confronted by The Gaudi Enigmas, seven mystical poems written each day of the week before the architect died. What do they mean and does anyone but Joe care?

Ultimately Joe's search for just about everything leads to self-redemption of a kind but not without discovering an eternal truth. "Just as you think you've got life sorted it turns round and bites you on the bum."



Between Two Worlds

by Mairi Crow www.mairicraw.com

It is now several years since Scottish author Mairi Crow moved from rural Dorset to the village of Taurinya in the foothills of Le Canigou. Here, she embarked on her debut novel, 'Beyond the Hedge', the first in a fantasy trilogy inspired by her childhood in a small Scottish port, the tale of Sandy Henderson and the enchanted world of Sylvania which lies beyond a huge hedge at the bottom her overgrown garden.

Warm and bubbly with an infectious laugh and a bucketful of tales to tell, it is easy to understand how Mairi enraptured and captured the hearts and imaginations of both children and adults with the first part of the trilogy.

Now, the eagerly awaited second part, 'Between Two Worlds', brings back the Tartan Fairy Folk and their beloved monarch, Queen Celestina, who once more find themselves plunged into chaos and despair as the dark shadows of evil threaten their carefree, happy land.



When Pongo, the ebulliently cheeky fairy dog, arrives unannounced in Scotland, Sandy embarks on a series of outrageous shenanigans which bring the magic and enchantments of Sylvania into her home as well as her school, an ancient Victorian mansion with secrets of its own.

Will Queen Celestina and her subjects survive the ultimate onslaught on all they love and cherish? And will Sandy be able to make the huge sacrifices demanded of her for the greater good of those she loves?



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Things you might need to know...

JUST A LITTLE PRICK.... and you can be protected against the most common strains of flu this winter.

Buy your own vaccine at the chemist for around 7 euros (note that the usual percentage is still reimbursed by the state), and make an appointment with a local doctor, nurse or vet (joking) to administer it. Anybody can do this.

The jab is particularly recommended for over-65s and for those with health problems which could make them more vulnerable to the bug.

If you are amongst the above, you will probably receive a letter recommending the vaccination, along with a 'prise en charge' voucher for free vaccination.

If this is the first time you receive the voucher, you will need to see your doctor beforehand, so that he or she can be sure that the vaccine is suitable for you.



Emergency number for the deaf or hard of hearing – 114

This free 24/7 number is available by fax or text message. The line is manned by a specially trained team, who will assess the emergency and contact the service required, police, fire brigade,...

Check out www.solidarite.gouv.fr for more details.



One big European melting pot?

Studies are being made into the possibility of a single EU-wide passport for the future. EU members would have equal rights to vote and pay their taxes in their country of residence, whilst retaining their right to their original nationality

Meanwhile, surveys show that 65% of the French wish to leave the EU and the Euro, and return to the Franc.



Announced nearly two years ago, the new food court at Auchan, to be constructed on the former site of Leroy Merlin, is still awaiting the green light from Perpignan planning office for the addition of a food hall and extended shopping gallery, expected to house at least 15 more retail outlets.

0892 0820 £€\$ When your number's up

Don't forget, if you want to ring a premium number 0892, 0820 etc (often info lines, bank, insurance company...) there will always be a 'normal' much cheaper equivalent. Simply go to the site www.nonsurtaxe.com, put in the premium number and up will pop the cheaper version! Simples (click click), and it means that if you want to make a complaint, you can give them a good old ear bashing without worrying that it is costing you a fortune!!



Volunteers needed...

Les Restos du Coeur provides food packages and free meals to the poor and homeless, organised and served up by volunteers around France. Volunteers are always needed, particularly if you have a skill such as IT, painting, help with form filling, or just to help out the centres. If you can help, contact...

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Saint André->Marie Thérèse Imbard 06 82 49 65 14

Céret ->Anne Merlin 06 12 29 71 00

Amélie-les-Bains-> Borges Alban 06 68 55 30 77

Winter Fuel payment

A new European ruling on the winter fuel payment for UK pensioners abroad means that many more ex pats will now be eligible for winter fuel payment.

In order to claim, you only need to have been born before July 5, 1951.

Payments begin at £200 per household and rise to £300 where the person is over 80. Find out more at www.gov.uk
->Benefits->Heating and housing benefits



Useful websites....

<https://e-justice.europa.eu>

Visit this 'e-justice' site, available in 22 languages, for quick answers when you're faced with the trials and tribulations of life (divorce, litigation, relocation, death), find a lawyer in another country, ask about avoiding costly legal proceedings.....

www.administration24h24.gouv.fr

French admin on line, notify the authorities of a change of address, request copies of government forms and certificates, check out your benefit entitlement, points on your driving licence...

<http://donnons.org>

Created to allow items that we no longer use to be re-used, recycled, donated, this give-away and find site is also a chance to help a student just moving into digs, a person in need or an artist or DIY enthusiast who might be able to repair, restore, renovate....

Breathing space for breathalyser

The shortage of breathalyzer kits throughout France continues to make a mockery of the new law stating that drivers in France (cars, motor bikes over 50cc, vans...) must carry a breathalyser kit (éthylotest or alcootest) in their car, or face an on-the-spot fine of 11 euros. The government has now extended the legal date to March 1st 2013. Fines will therefore not be enforced before that date.

These 'use and discard' kits are relatively cheap (1 - 2 euros) and should be available in chemists, supermarkets, on-line, at ferry and tunnel terminals etc, but do remember that if you do decide to check your alcohol level before returning home from an evening out, you will need another breath test kit to produce for the gendarmes if you are stopped!



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A Matter of Life and Death

I felt uncomfortable researching and writing this article. I am unprepared. I don't want to think about it... but it's the one absolute in life. We're all going to die... and the practicalities fall to loved ones, at a difficult, and unhappy time, often made worse by language barrier and lack of information.

We can't make the hurt go away, but we can give you some basic, useful, information to help you to be better prepared for death in France.

The following information assumes that the death is not unnatural or suspicious.

Death at home

- Contact the doctor who will issue a 'Certificat Medical de Décès' (death certificate)
- Call a funeral home (pompes funèbres) who will arrange for the deceased to be removed to the funeral home mortuary.

Death in hospital

- The attending doctor will issue the death certificate and the 'on duty' funeral home will remove the deceased, unless relatives specify a funeral home.
- A death must be reported (déclaration de décès) to the local mairie WITHIN 24 HOURS.

Paperwork required for funeral home & death declaration.

- Identity of the person declaring the death
- Passport or carte de séjour, marriage (if applicable) or birth certificate of the deceased

- Death certificate issued by doctor.
- You will also need to know the address, next of kin, and maiden name if applicable.

If all details are available, a death certificate (**acte de décès**) is usually issued immediately, stating where and when death took place. There is no charge. Ask for several copies to make it easier to cope with paper work to follow.

Once the death is registered, a 'permis d'inhumér' (burial permit) or a 'certificat d'incinération' (Cremation certificate) is issued. If the deceased followed a particular religion, their local religious organisation can be contacted for guidance.

If the deceased has not joined the 'opt out' register (**Registre National des Refus**) for organ donation, it will be presumed that they have consented to organ donation, although family can still object.

A good funeral home can take care of all paperwork, and arrangements, but remember this is a business. Don't be afraid to ask for one or several quotes (**un devis obsèques**)

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- Burial - enterrement
- Coffin - cercueil
- Mourning - le deuil
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Le vrai tombeau des morts c'est le cœur des vivants.

Jean Cocteau

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How do we support?

Our trained members are available for you to talk by telephone, our bilingual members offer language support. We can help you find the right information and can visit you at home or in hospital. We have Drop In groups, a book exchange, events to raise funds and events to enjoy ourselves. See what we are doing by checking the CSF website, the CSF Forum or look on the P-O Life website.

For more details or to find out how you could help Cancer Support France - Sud de France or how we can support you and those close to you contact:

Penny on 04 68 38 81 28

OR

Maggie on 04 68 96 55 46

pennycsf66@gmail.com

maggielongworth@losmasos.com

www.cancersupportfrance.org | www.csf-forum.org

CSF - Sud de France (11,09,66) Association no. W 112000594

DROP IN to our informal groups at Céret and Prades

Céret: Pablo's Bar, Place Picasso - first and third Wednesday 10am to 12 noon

Prades: Café Alchimie, Rue Hospice - first and third Thursday 3pm to 5pm

Coffee and a warm welcome awaits you

Eliane Morley explains the best way to legally pay for casual labour

The CESU (Chèque emploi service universel)

The CESU is a way of declaring and paying for casual labour such as;

- House and garden maintenance (cleaning, ironing...)
- DIY
- Baby-sitting
- Administrative and computing help
- Personal assistance: cooking, driving, walking
- Pet sitting

When you employ somebody at home, regularly or occasionally, the employment declaration can be made easily and quickly on the internet (www.cesu.urssaf.fr) or with Urssaf.

Payment is made via a 'chequebook' provided by CNCESU (National Centre of Cheque Emploi Service Universel) or Urssaf.

ADVANTAGES

- Both employer and employee are legally declared
- The employer benefits from a 50% tax reduction and is insured in case of damage caused by the employee.

The employee is covered in case of accident or injury, and has a status within the French social security system for pension, unemployment, training.....

- Calculations and direct debit of taxes are organised directly by CNCESU
- CNCESU prints and sends the payslip directly to the employee.

Find out more at www.cesu.urssaf.fr

Eliane can also provide the following services :

French lessons and help with admin, personal assistance: cooking, driving, walking, cleaning, ironing etc...

Contact her on 06 08 01 80 15



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SAMU (medical emergency)	15
Police emergency	17
Fire service emergency	18
European emergency line	112
SOS Doctor 24/24	08 20 20 41 42
Emergency vet	04 68 55 55 83
Anti-poison centre	04 91 75 25 25
Perpignan hospital	04 68 61 66 33
CPAM (English spk serv)	0811 36 36 46
Cancer support France	04 68 69 01 37
Directory enquiries	118 008
International directory enquiries	118 700
International Mastercard	08 00 90 13 87
Local weather forecast	08 36 68 02 66
GDF (gas problems)	08 10 43 30 66
EDF (electricity problems)	05 56 17 40 70

You can use the European emergency number 112 in any EU country from any telephone. You do not need a card or money to ring this number from a pay phone. 112 may also be used from a mobile to connect you with all emergency services.



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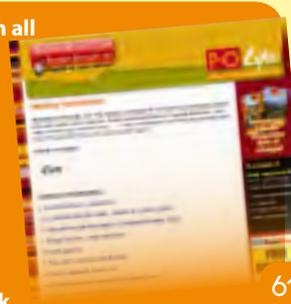
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While market conditions remain difficult, Real Estates bucked the trend with a robust upturn in sales throughout 2012. However, in order to meet the varying demands of our buyers we are constantly looking to increase our property portfolio – ensuring that we have quite simply the very best selection in the region. Synonymous with exceeding expectations, we'll ensure you receive exceptional service throughout the process of selling your property; we will work hard to sell your home for the best possible price, in the shortest possible time. To sell your property call today.



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Bien que les conditions du marché restent difficiles, Real Estates a résisté avec une forte reprise des ventes au cours de l'année 2012. Toutefois, afin de répondre aux besoins variés de nos acquéreurs nous cherchons constamment à agrandir notre portfolio de propriétés – nous veillons à ce que nous avons tout simplement la meilleure sélection dans la région. En dépassant les attentes de nos clients, nous vous proposons un service exceptionnel tout au long du processus de la vente de votre propriété ; nous faisons notre maximum pour vendre votre maison au meilleur prix possible, dans les plus brefs délais. Pour vendre votre propriété appelez-nous dès aujourd'hui.



If you are looking to buy or sell a property contact:



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