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The snow will soon be melting on Canigo, mimosa and almond blossom already splash pale pinks and fluffy yellows as the P-O wakes, stretches, and smiles languidly to greet a new season. Joyeux Printemps!

We live such sunny, lucky lives in this beautiful region. Every season has its charm, with walks, drives, swims and sandcastles, feasts and festivals, lunch on the port, dinner on the terrace, aperos on the patio, friends and family are far away, but always in our hearts - so if you will forgive me for being a little self indulgent, I would like to dedicate this Springtime edition of P-O Life, as it enters its 11th year of production, to my 90 something young-at-heart Dad, Horatio.. Love you Dad. You put me up where I am today.

In this edition, we head over the border as Polly Cannie whisks us up into the Haut Vallespir and into Spain and Linda Razzell takes us on a Dali-less tour of Figueres.

Katja sets the scene for another Pretty Perfect P-O Picnic, Leigh and Merry are our walking guides to the Tour de la Madeloc, Lynn Hall take a leaf out of some remarkable trees, John checks out the airport news... and I dilly dally about as usual, here, there and anywhere!

Don't forget to check out our website at www.anglophone-direct.com and pop into P O Life Facebook group for a chat, or just follow us on our Facebook page.

Most important of all, have a wonderful springtime

Kate & Papa



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Thanks to all who have contributed in any way to putting P-O Life together. You're all stars!

Arles sur Tech:

Cosy Fully renovated, south facing 4 bedroom character house with modern kitchen, terrace, workshop & garage. Close to all amenities.

A must see !

D.P.E. A Ref: 3805 205,000€



CÉRET: Charming 3 bed house, in 875m² of garden, renovated to combine modern conveniences with period charm. Master bedroom with en-suite, summer kitchen cellar, laundry room & garage.

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Arles sur Tech :

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D.P.E. D Ref: 3721 220,000€



CÉRET: Renovated traditional 276m² Catalan « Mas ». Boasts spacious bedrooms, pool, conservatory as well as its own water source and and photovoltaic panels for electricity.

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CÉRET: Close to all amenities this 3 bedroom house with fully fitted kitchen, conservatory, balcony, terrace and 18m² garage is in excellent condition and is an excellent opportunity!

D.P.E. E Ref: 3738 309,000€



Villelongue Dels Monts: Set in a peaceful location, set within 780m² of land, this bright 3 bedroom villa enjoys stunning views. Separate kitchen and a spacious 24m² living area, terrace & a 30m² garage.

D.P.E. E Ref: 3551 244,000€



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All main tourist offices, Perpignan Airport and Palais des Congrès

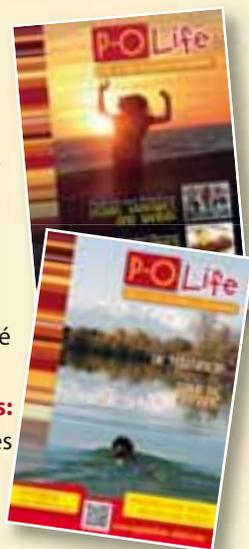
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TOUR DE LA MADELOC

*With Leigh
and Merry Foster*



The clever network of signal towers (tours à signaux) that you see on the high mountaintops around the region date back to the 13th century. They were originally set up by the Rois de Majorque as a defence system to protect the Roussillon from invaders and to enable the passing of information around the region, using fire and smoke signals.

The Tour de la Madeloc dates from circa 1285AD, and was modified by Vauban in the XVIIth century. The views are stunning, overlooking Collioure, Port Vendres and Banyuls, and south to Cap Cerbère and the Spanish border. A steep, linear walk, which takes 1-2 hours each way depending on where you start.

Access:

The start point is reached from the Collioure bypass D914, take exit 14. Follow the track by car up to the Table

d'Orientation (505140E 4706076N – 307m alt.)

Park and enjoy the views from the table and identify places in the distance from the graphic guide. The hills in this area are described as being like a turkey's foot, with high ridges splaying out

from each peak and separated by steep-sided valleys.

Map IGN

1:25000 Banyuls/
Col de Perthus/
Cote Vermeille
(GPS) 2549OT.

The Walk:

Yellow marks throughout.

Walk from here, following the



BON CONSEIL

Si vous avez un chien très poilu, et vous avez des difficultés à savoir de quel côté est la tête, tendez lui un morceau de sucre ... le côté qui mange le sucre, c'est la tête.

(poilu – hairy, tendez lui – offer him)

footpath, and signs to the Tour Madeloc. The path climbs steeply up the hillside (follow the yellow marks) up to the Batterie de Taillefer (493m alt. 505635E 4705381N).

👉 From here there is a rough road where you actually descend a little and can enjoy the views over Collioure and Port-Vendres and the neatly terraced vineyards to the north east.

👉 After about 700 meters the path rises more steeply again and starts to zig-zag across the hillside as you climb towards the tower.

After several zigzags, at the top ridge of the hill, you can see the tower, with its incongruous TV antennae belying its age. The tower is at (506134E 4704248N, 652m alt.)

👉 Once at the tower, you realise that there is actually a road from Port Vendres, and if you want to enjoy the views without spending the time and effort to hike all the way up, you can drive – if you are brave enough to negotiate the narrow tracks and steep drops – almost to the top. Looking down towards Cosprons you can see the Batterie de la Galline (19th century hilltop fortress now renovated and visitable for just 1€) laid out below.

To drive up, take the D914 from Port Vendres to Paulilles, and turn sharp right at the top of the hill leaving town, indicated by a signpost to the Tour de Madeloc. Follow the narrow winding road



for about 5 km to the Col de Mollo and take the left fork up to the Col des Gascons. Park here and follow the paved road (no entry for cars) up to the tower. The walk from here is about 1-1/2 km, still a fairly good climb but with no rocky precipices to scale!

👉 Remember to take lots of water especially in summer. Coming down is easier but take care on the rocky patches. Allow 2½-3 hours for the whole walk. (1 hour from the Col des Gascons) ☀



Parades and Processions

With its strong Catholic history, it is not surprising that many ancient religious parades, ceremonies and traditions have survived over the years.

On Good Friday, the impressive, Procession de la Sanch takes place in Perpignan, long black or red hooded and robed figures marching slowly through the streets to the solemn beat of black veiled tambourines. Some walk bare-foot, others are on their knees.

In 1416, Vincent Ferrier founded the brotherhood of "La Sanch" (the blood) in the church of St Jaques in Perpignan, to assist and accompany the condemned to their execution.

They carry 'misteris', full-size representations of the different scenes of the Passion, and crosses, crucifixes and religious statues weighing up to fifty kilos. Their suffering is not feigned!

The death penalty has long since been abolished, but the Sanch lives on.

Night processions also take place in the evening at Collioure and Arles-sur-Tech.

Whilst Perpignan, Collioure and Arles are parading death, Ille sur Têt celebrates life with Les Reginas - the Resurrection and the beginnings of spring.

At exactly 8 a.m, the 'statue du Ressuscité

(Resurrection) and the 'statue de la Vièrge' (virgin) arrive from opposite ends of the place de la mairie. Upon the shoulders of 'porteurs', they salute each other three times. This is the 'acato'. Believers and non-believers alike find this unique ceremony moving and memorable.

Suddenly, the first 'Régina', (religious music for Easter) blasts out, a 130 strong choir, accompanied by 40 musicians. Follow the procession to the Jardins de la Rodona, where the second Régina is performed.

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Lundi de Pentecôte (Whit Monday) in France

This religious tradition is usually the last of four public holidays in May, a 'movable feast' in the Christian calendar, taking place 50 days after Easter, and celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit amongst Jesus's Apostles. The word 'Pentecôte', originates from 'pentēkostē' meaning 'fiftieth' (day) in Greek.

In 2005, President Chirac, decided to cancel it! After the deaths of an estimated 13,000 elderly people during the heat wave of 2003, the government pinpointed this day to raise funds to support the elderly and disabled. They called it 'Solidarity Day' (Journée de Solidarité), and asked workers to work this day with no pay. But this is France! After several years of demonstrations, with the majority of the French work force resolutely sticking to their guns and remaining at home, Lundi de Pentecôte was reinstated as a public holiday in 2008.

Incidentally, did you know that 'Whit Monday', comes from the white robes worn on Pentecost by those who have been newly baptised?

Bank holidays

- Monday 6th April:** Easter Monday (Lundi de Pâques).
- Friday 1st May :** May Day (La Fête du Travail)
- Friday 8th May:** La Fête de la Victoire 1945 (WW2 Victory Day)
- Monday 25th May:** Whit Monday (Lundi de Pentecôte)

School Holidays

Easter 11-26th April

Other Dates

Mothers Day Sunday, May 24th

Don't forget to turn your clocks forward - Sunday March 29th 2015



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WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

Whilst more than 85% of homes in Britain now have smoke alarms (détecteur or avertisseur de fumée/alarme de fumée/détecteur autonome avertisseur de fumée or DAAF), the trend hasn't quite filtered through to France where it seems that less than 3% of homes have alarms.

At a cost of between €10 and €25, they will be compulsory from March 8, 2015, for all residential property. The owner must ensure the installation of a properly functioning detector. Long-term tenants will be responsible for the upkeep, testing and battery renewal, but this will be the owners' responsibility for short and holiday lets.

Do not be befuddled by those who might try to sell you an all-singing, all-dancing alarm. As long as the device conforms to French norm NF EN 14604, it is legal, and all you need to protect your home.

All houses will need at least one smoke detector fitted. At the time of writing, there has been nothing published to say that more than one is needed or that it must be installed by an electrician.

Insurance companies have been asked to make smoke alarms a condition of their home insurance policies, to put pressure on householders to buy and maintain detectors. Some may even carry out a home visit. Do check with your insurance if this is so for you. You may then need to provide basic information about the smoke alarm to your insurer. Use the text below to communicate that information.

*Je soussigné _____ (your name),
détenteur du contrat n° _____
(contract number) atteste avoir installé
un détecteur de fumée normalisé au
_____ (address) conforme à la norme
NF EN 14604*

Without a smoke alarm, and in case of fire, you could be charged an excess of €5,000 on your insurance.

Whilst insurance companies may check homes, there are no plans for any governmental smoke alarm visits. Do watch out for the latest scam in which crooks are using this new initiative to get into your home.

Anybody other than your insurance phoning for an appointment or coming to your door should be referred toot sweet to the local constabulary!

THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED TO KNOW

Silence is Golden

« Le silence de l'administration vaut accord »

In order to lighten the burden of French admin which has a bit of a reputation for being over the top (polite guffaw from the editor), a new law says that no reply after two months means that the request is granted. There are exceptions - aren't there always? Check them out at www.legifrance.gouv.fr->Principe "silence vaut accord".

Did YOU KNOW?

April Fool à la Française

Of uncertain origins, many believe that the tradition of April Fools' Day was born in the 1500s in France. Until the 16th century, France celebrated New Year according to the Julian calendar, on April 1st. In 1562, Pope Gregory changed the calendar to the one we use today, the Gregorian calendar, and New Year began on January 1st. Those who forgot or continued to celebrate New Year or the 1st April were called Poisson d'Avril - April fish are young and easily caught!. Children, (and certain adults), stick a paper fish on people's backs and run away yelling "Poisson d'Avril".



Did YOU KNOW?



May 1st is the Fête du Muguet & Fête du Travail

As well as offering your loved ones lily-of-the-valley (Muguet) on May 1st, this date is also the Fête du Travail, historically a day of parades, protests and parties for workers to demonstrate or celebrate battles and causes fought and won in years gone by.

In the 19th century, demonstrating workers would wear a red triangle to symbolise 8 hours of work, 8 hours of sleep, and 8 hours of free time, later to be replaced by the lily-of-the-valley.

May 1st officially became a public holiday after the eight-hour working day was introduced in France on April 23, 1919. Known as Labour Day in some parts of the world, it is also a day for protests marches....



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Between Sea and Mountains

by Jane Mann

RL Hughes' carefully crafted verses distill the very essence of the P-O. As he casts his "net of words over the sea", we, who have also fallen under the spell of this corner of France, can delight in the images caught in his net.

In his poems not a word is wasted. In turn, he describes difficulties in mastering the French language, the majesty of Canigou or the "relentless rattle of ill-fitting doors" as the Tramontane blows the clouds from the skies.

His poetry portrays a P-O. full of both beauty and humour. In it, not only is his love of land and seascape apparent but also, in his descriptions of people viewed from his balcony, in his sketches of a lonely woman, a young girl, an aging couple, a gatherer of snails, the individuals spring to life, perfect portraits of unknown but strangely familiar characters.

A former Financial Times journalist, Raymond has spent much of the last twenty years in Port Vendres. His symbol is a hermit crab. He is a private person, protective of his personal space. In the bilingual collection of poems these twenty years have inspired, we are privileged to view our chosen part of France through his eyes, to enjoy the skilled simplicity of his language and to read and recognize the love we share for our life between the sea and the mountains.

On sale (price 10€) at the Maison de la Presse, Quai Pierre Forgas, Port-Vendres or directly from the author (10€ inc. P&P) by contacting him at rl_h@hotmail.com.

bernard-l'ermite éditions



EVENING, AFTER RAIN

*After the rowdiness of rain,
stillness: even the drenched
and darting birds are silent.*

*Out in the bay rocks thrust through
the ripple and sway of the waves
like seals sniffing the evening air.*

*The sea sighs over the shingle;
fingers a beached tree trunk,
bark-stripped and blanched as a bone.*

*Even my neighbours are speaking softly.
The garlicky smell of their supper
drifts up to my balcony.*

Art Revolution in the Roussillon

Jane Mann and Brian Cotton recount tales of artists born in our remote corner of France and intertwine them with stories of visiting painters from Paris who, at the start of the 20th Century, were changing the face of Modern Art. Available in most Maisons de la Presse and from chapitre.com or librarietorcatis.com in French as well as in the original English.

Did you know?

I'm only a poor little sparrow

A recent biography about Edith Piaf, based on personal papers and hundreds of letters sent to a close friend, poet Jacques Bourgeat, paints a different picture to the documented life of the legend.

"Piaf, a French Myth" by Robert Belleret confirms a difficult and troubled life, but claims that she was not born on the streets, nor miraculously cured of childhood blindness, and although she is credited with the writing of many of her own songs, the letters were poorly written, with spelling and grammatical mistakes, making some of the song writing unlikely. Far from the social conscience she was said to possess, and the passing on of fake papers during singing tours to aid escapees, she is actually believed to have regularly performed for Nazi officers,

Belleret explains that the aim was to "feed the myth" of the poor little sparrow.



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We look forward to hearing from you!

Mark Sayers & the bi-lingual Artaxa Perpignan team

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AIRPORT NEWS

With JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



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SPRING 2015

It always seems a bit incongruous writing of summer holiday flights with a cold wind blowing and a log fire crackling around me, but yes, it's that time again when I trawl through the airlines schedules to see what they can offer to the UK and Ireland for PO residents and visitors this summer period. Overall, the slight improvement in the European economic outlook, allied to the very welcome recent drop in fuel prices does seem to have tempted the airlines to dip their toes in the water and try out some new or enhanced services in a number of areas.

The region's major carrier continues to be Ryanair, but their current policy of focussing on the business passenger does not augur well for a leisure based area such as the PO, with a lot of their local (particularly Girona) routes relocated to Barcelona.

The new owners of **PERPIGNAN** airport have certainly been busy over the winter period, beginning the much needed refurbishment of the ageing terminal facilities, and, interestingly have appeared a good deal more proactive as regards public relations than have previous incumbents.

STANSTED	4x pw	Ryanair
BIRMINGHAM	2x pw	Ryanair
SOUTHAMPTON	1x pw	FlyBe
DUBLIN	4x pw	Aer Lingus

The builders have already been in at **CARCASSONNE** airport, and the finished result is a great improvement on the old somewhat cramped facilities. Schedules are much in line with previous years.

STANSTED	7x pw	
EAST MIDS	3x pw	
GLASGOW INT	2x pw	
LIVERPOOL	2x pw	
CORK	2x pw	
DUBLIN	5x pw	All Ryanair.

Also services from **BEZIERS** seem steady.

LUTON	4x pw	
BRISTOL	3x pw	
EDINBURGH	3x pw	
MANCHESTER	2x pw	All Ryanair

A similar story at **MONTPELLIER**.

LEEDS BRADFORD	2x pw	Ryanair
GATWICK.	14x pw	Easyjet
LUTON..	6x pw	Easyjet

If you can get a lift to Figueres bus station, and don't mind sitting through a few stops, you can actually get a bus directly to Barcelona airport, both terminals. It takes a bit longer, but if you have luggage that you don't want to hump on and off trains, it's much more practical. Find out more at www.sagales.com

A little disappointing to note no new UK/Ire services from one of our major hubs, **TOULOUSE**. Though they tell me there will be several extra flights to London and Cardiff during the Rugby World Cup later in the year.

HEATHROW 21x pw BA
 GATWICK 25x pw Easyjet
 BRISTO 7x pw Easyjet
 MANCHESTER... 4'x pw Jet 2

Ryanair's stormy relationship with the owners of **GIRONA** airport is clearly in one of its cooler phases, with a continuation of the cuts of recent months. Rumours abound of the Irish carrier's plan to pull out of the Costa Brava facility completely, but at least some routes have escaped the axe.

BOURNEMOUTH. 4x pw Ryanair
 BRISTOL 5x pw Ryanair
 LUTON 4x pw Ryanair

STANSTED 5x pw Ryanair
 MANCHESTER 3x pw Ryanair
 2x pw Thomson
 GATWICK. 2x pw Thomson
 BIRMINGHAM. 1x pw Thomson

So, yet again, those who want the best choice of airlines, routes and frequencies will have to look to **BARCELONA**. As already mentioned, Ryanair are seriously beefing up their presence here, and also worthy of mention is the decision by BA's highly rated Spanish low cost arm, Vueling, to greatly expand their operation from here to UK. Fans of Gatwick are again spoilt for choice with no fewer than five airlines providing flights from here to the Sussex airport.

HEATHROW 52x pw BA
 GATWICK. 46x pw BA/Vueling
 42x pw EasyJet
 7x pw Monarch
 7x pw Norwegian



ENJOY Super League in Perpignan

FIXTURES
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MAY
09 MAY - DRAGONS V SAINT-HELENS
23 MAY - DRAGONS V WIGAN

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 3x pw Vueling
 GLAS INTER'L 3x pw Jet2
 GLAS PIK 7x pw Ryanair
 EDINBURGH 5x pw Ryanair
 4x pw Vueling
 DUBLIN 14x pw Ryanair

7x pw Aer Lingus
 CORK 3x pw Aer Lingus

As ever, these schedules were correct at the time of writing (Feb 2015), and relate to frequencies in the high (Jul Aug) season. And, as per normal, if there are any additions or deletions announced in the spring, I'll endeavour to update the list in time for the Summer PO Life, out in June. The usual plea: if anyone discovers any new services, please let us know here at PO Life

Did you know?

Not tonight Josephine

We've all heard of the great love affair between Napoleon and his Josephine, but did you know that their marriage certificate was sold last year at auction for 437,500 euros?

Mr and Mrs Bonaparte were no fools, and the certificate, dated March 8th 1796, states that they will "in no way be responsible for the debts and mortgages of the other" and that there will be "no common property" between them.



Other routes available direct from Perpignan during the summer period.

The Air France subsidiary, HOP! continue to connect Paris Orly 5 times a day, and they hope to be serving Lille once a week in the summer.

The budget airline, VOLOTEA will reintroduce their popular thrice weekly service to Nantes in April.

RYANAIR maintain a year round service several times a week to Charleroi in Southern Belgium

A very small operator, CHALAIR will begin a weekly flight to Ajaccio in Corsica in the summer.



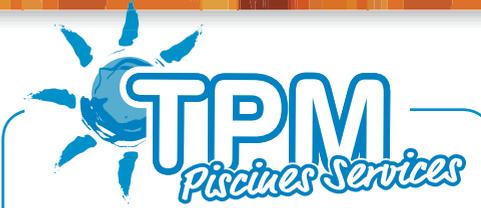
IBERIA will start a twice weekly service to Madrid in April, offering easy connections to their extensive route network to USA, Central and South America and Africa via the Spanish capital. They will also be offering a weekly flight to Ibiza over the summer.

Did YOU KNOW?

Cutting up France to cut down paperwork

The merging of Languedoc-Roussillon with the Midi-Pyrénées has now been voted in, and will take place in 2016. It is looking increasingly likely that we will soon be living in 'Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrenees'.

Hmmmm. A bit of a tongue twister. Languedoc-Roussillon-Midi-Pyrenees-Life? It just doesn't have the same ring!

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**Anne-Marie
PRADES** - Place de Catalogne
04 68 96 38 73

It was my friend and neighbour Evelyne who showed me how to make 'bunyetes'. However, don't test the dough BEFORE cooking like Fleur, Evelyne's daughter. "Ne mange pas la pâte crue" she told me sagely the next morning.

J'ai roté et peté toute la nuit!!"



Life's Too Short To Diet!

CHURROS

Feeling wicked? Why not try your hand at making churros, strips of deep fried pastry sprinkled with sugar.

(It is believed that the churro is named after the shape of the horns of the Churro breed of sheep which is reared in the Spanish grasslands.)

vegetable or Olive Oil

1 cup water

1/2 cup margarine or butter

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

3 eggs

1/4 cup sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

Heat water, margarine and salt in a pan, bring to the boil and remove from heat. Stir in flour until mixture forms a ball. Beat eggs together until smooth and stir into mixture. Heat oil for frying

in a deep-fat fryer or deep pan. Spoon mixture into cake decorators' tube with large star tip and squeeze 4-inch strips of dough into hot oil, or form the dough into long, thin strips and drop them into the oil. Fry until golden and drain on kitchen roll. Combine 1/2 cup sugar and optional cinnamon in a tray and roll the drained churros in the sugar mixture to coat. Voilà! C'est délicieux!

and why not dip it intoEl xocolata

50g of a black chocolate bar

3 teaspoons maïzena (cornflour)

¼ litres milk

Sugar, depending on your preference

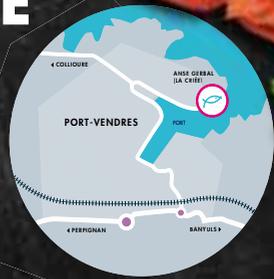
Thin out the maïzena in some milk. In a saucepan, melt the chocolate, which should be cut into small pieces, or grated. Add the milk gradually, followed by the maïzena and the sugar.

Cook over a low heat while stirring constantly until the mixture thickens.



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Les Poissonneries
de la Côte Catalane

Anse Gerbal - La Criée, 66660 Port-Vendres

And don't forget the traditional Easter Bunyetes

Bunyetes are flat, fried 'pancakes' which swell in oil, become crisp, and are served dusted with granulated sugar, much like beignets or doughnuts. They are traditionally made and eaten at Easter all over Catalonia

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 teaspoons instant dry yeast
- 4 Tablespoons butter, melted and cooled
- 4 eggs
- A few drops orange flower water
- 1 Tablespoon lemon zest, finely grated
- 1 lb plain flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 litre of vegetable oil
- Fine white sugar

Mix the yeast with the cooled butter to dissolve it. Beat the eggs well with the orange flower water. Combine the two mixtures, adding the flour to make a ball. Place the dough on a floured surface, and knead well until it is very smooth and elastic. Place in a buttered bowl, cover with cling film, and allow to rise until double, about 2 hours. Divide the dough into golf ball-size pieces. Leave, covered with a towel, for 10 minutes. Roll out each piece of dough with a rolling pin, making the disc as thin as possible, even transparent in some places.

Heat the oil to boiling in a deep fryer and drop the discs into the hot oil, being careful not to get burned by the splashes. When one side is golden brown and crisp, turn and cook other side until golden. They cook very quickly – be careful not to burn them! Remove to absorbent paper, sprinkle liberally with sugar immediately. *Bon appétit!*



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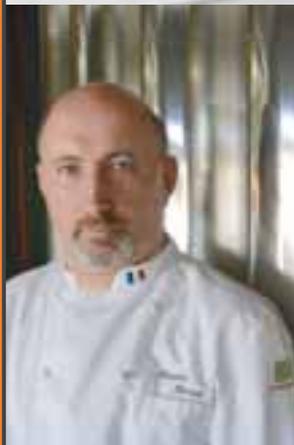

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Restaurant Reviews

with Kate and Mates

A Winter Selection...

The following reviews are not adverts, they are just restaurants that I have enjoyed, or that friends have recommended. They are based on that person's opinion, on that day, usually taking into account the whole package. You might not always necessarily agree! 😊

Bon appétit.

LA TABLE DE VALMY, Argelès.....with Allan

This is a stylish restaurant with a lovely terrace that has spectacular views over the vines and the sea.

The service was excellent and the place had a real buzz about it. Chateau Valmy is clearly using the restaurant as a showcase for their wines and they offer a 4 course menu with a different wine served with each course at €45 or without wine at €35 - in both cases coffee and water are included.

They have a children's menu at €15 which is not published.

The wine list obviously features their wines but they are reasonably priced and if you buy a case of 6 to take away, you get a free bottle to drink while you are there.

The food was very good, though not spectacular, but the place should be taken as a complete package, the location, the view, the wine, the food and the general ambiance - overall we thought it was terrific.

Like many restaurants these days they don't offer much choice on the menu. This is particularly frustrating as we really enjoyed this restaurant and will certainly go back - but the limited choice means we will probably end up eating the same as we did this time.

Open from late March onwards.

Chemin de Valmy Argelès sur Mer

04 68 95 95 25 contact@chateau-valmy.com



1

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ARBEQUINA, Thuir.... with Kate

Young chef Guillaume has trained with some of the top Perpignan chefs – and it shows. Named after a small aromatic olive, dishes are predominantly Mediterranean, fresh, light and sunny, plenty of colourful vegetables, without being over complicated.

The lunchtime menu, very reasonably priced at 15 euros for 3 courses, or 12 euros for 2 courses was tasty and beautifully presented, but there was no choice. The à la carte however, offered some unusual and exciting dishes with great presentation and flavours. Tempting titles such as 'Gambas rouges, guacamole et sésame noir' for starters (my choice and delicious) or 'Pavé de lieu jaune rôti, coques et salsa verde' did not



disappoint and were as tasty as they sounded. A small but busy restaurant, with a pleasant atmosphere, attentive service, clean loos.... Will certainly go back there again.

21 Rue de la République, Thuir, 04 68 34 46 64

LE RELAIS D'OULRICH, Céret/St Jean.....

with Danièle

This restaurant is very busy at lunchtime – if you arrive after 12.30 you may not get in – it is popular with local working people and the retired. It is not a chic place for a long lingering lunch, but for traditional French home-cooked food it would be hard to find better. It is airy and modern, with a separate bar area and a terrace for summertime. It is excellent value, and the waitresses helpful and cheerful.

The menu changes daily, but to start with there is always the tempting large cold buffet, or usually a homemade tart /quiche (last visit it was courgette, chicken and mushroom) with a little salad. For the main course it was hard to choose between chicken with cèpes, duck and smoked sausage cooked with lentils, a duo of tuna and smoked fish on a bed of creamy leeks, or brandade (of salt cod) – all delicious. Steak and chips is normally available as well, just ask. Amongst several home-made puds were two tarts – banana, chocolate and coconut, or pineapple (the Chef's pastry is excellent).

The 3 course menu including wine is 14€50, or if you are not so hungry, for 11€ you can have the buffet with a pud, or a main course and pud. A 3 course children's menu is available for 8€.

I find it great for lunch any time I can find a

good excuse to eat out (sadly it is not open in the evenings), but especially after my supermarket shop! – very handy! Try it for yourself.

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AU DIAMANT NOIR, Montferrer.....with Rhona

Au Diamant Noir was named after the much sought after black truffle, known in this area as the black diamond.

Chef Serge and wife Micheline are your hosts. Their hospitality and attention to detail shines through every dish, traditional home made French cuisine, well cooked from fresh local produce, created for all seasons.

The menu is €21 for three courses and €25 for four. Bookings are by reservation only, both lunchtimes and evenings. The menu is not extensive, but there is a choice between meat and fish.

On my last visit, I started with mille feuilles d'endives followed by perfectly cooked cod in an American sauce served with potato and turnip purées and finished with superb crepes with caramelised pears. Delicious. Other dishes available were red mullet with scallops as a starter, veal with



potatoes and vegetables, creme catalane and a selection of local cheeses.

This restaurant may be a diamond but it is not the only gem in lovely Montferrer. The Cafe Communal/ Bistro De Pays, run by the delightful Gisou, is perfect for your apero, before popping across the road for lunch or dinner at the Diamant Noir. ..Some great walks round here too, to help you work up an appetite.

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**MOANA NUI,
Thuir.....short
and sweet with
Keith and Sheila**



Very much worth a review, this restaurant presents a menu from a different country around the world, changing on a weekly basis. Fabien is the excellent chef with his wife Patricia. The 3 course evening menu including a glass of wine and coffee at 19.50 euros is very good value.

Moana Nui 24 Rue du Souvenir, Thuir
04 68 64 19 72

Please bear in mind that reviews are based on the subjective opinion of the reviewer. Times, dates and prices are correct at the time of writing but you are advised to ring ahead and check Bon appétit



Did YOU KNOW?

All for one...

Rumour has it that the famous d'Artagnan was amongst the King's musketeers protecting Louis XIII in 1642 when he lay siege to Collioure and the Château Royal, and occupied the hills overlooking the town.

It seems the dashing hero was also a bit of a wine connoisseur as, in 'The Three Musketeers', Alexandre Dumas tells how the musketeers « were engaged in enjoying an enormous demi-john of Collioure wine »



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L'abus d'alcool est dangereux pour la santé, à consommer avec modération

Did you know?

National Cheese Day : Friday 27th March is National Cheese Day as Artisan cheese makers fight back against 'plastic' cheeses flooding in from foreign markets. Consumption of the ever-so-French famous stinky cheeses is up against growing competition from fetas and mozzarellas as fast food pizza and panini threaten the leisurely lunches of yesteryear, but did you know that Santa Lucia and Salakis, two of the best-known brands of Italian mozzarella and Greek feta are actually owned by French company Lactalis!



Good Egg

An egg a day keeps the doctor away? The giving and receiving of Easter eggs first began in France during the 4th Century A.D, when a law was passed forbidding the eating of meat or eggs during Lent. Bien sûr, the hens continued to lay, and the uneaten eggs led to a surplus after the 40 day fast. So they used them to make omelettes. Many believed that if they ate an egg for breakfast that had been laid on Good Friday, they would remain fit and healthy until the following Easter.



*Deux tomates traversent la rue.
L'une des deux se fait écraser.
L'autre tomate dit: «Vite, Ketchup!»*

Casament treblant

This old Catalan carnival custom which takes place in March, parodies and ridicules marriage via the mock marriage of two men, usually particularly hairy and macho. The 'ceremony' is presided over by a mock mayor, 'witnesses' and 'family' who accompany the 'wedding procession' through the streets. Some say that it was started years ago to 'point a finger' at certain couples in the village, whilst others say that it is simply based on an original and amusing alternative to a stag night! All in good fun and not to be taken too seriously!

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DOING IT YOURSELF!



The arrival of spring is a great motivation to get out the paint brush or saw....and get DIY-ing, but do you know what to ask for when you realise at the last minute that you are missing that 'absolutely-can't-finish-the-job-without' screw, nail or spanner?

The tools.....les outils

- burin (m) - chisel
- clé (f).... spanner
- ... à cliquer - ratchet (douilles - sockets)
- ...plate - open-end spanner
- ...à molette – adjustable spanner
- cutter (f) - Stanley knife
- lime (f) - file
- marteau (m) – hammer
- massette (f) - lump hammer
- niveau à bulle (m) - spirit level
- perceuse/ visseuse (f) – drill/screwgun
- pince (f) - pliers
- pinceau (m) – brush
- pistolet à colle – glue gun
- rabot (m) - plane
- rouleau (m) – roller
- serre joint (m) - clamp
- scie.... (f) - saw
- ...égoïne – handsaw
- ... à métaux - hacksaw
- ...sauteuse - jigsaw



- tournevis (m)... - screwdriver
- ...plat - flat screwdriver
- ...cruiforme - 'phillips' screwdriver
- tronçonneuse (f) - chain saw
- truelle (f) - trowel

Things that drop through the cracks....

- boulon (m) – bolt
- clou (m) – nail
- cheville - plug
- écrou (m) – nut
- vis (m) - screw





General

- béton – concrete
- carrelage – floor tiles
- charpente – roof timbers
- crépi – rendering
- crochet - hook
- douille – electrical socket
- échafaudage – scaffolding
- faïence – wall tiling
- aggloméré – chipboard
- prise femelle - socket
- prise male - plug
- placoplâtre – plasterboard
- peinture - paint
- établi (m) - workbench /the carpenter's bench
- boîte à outils (f) – tool box
- la maçonnerie - masonry
- la menuiserie - woodwork
- la peinture - paintwork, painting
- la plomberie - plumbing
- la tapisserie - upholstery



- raboter - to plane
- raccorder - to join
- réparer - to repair
- restaurer - to restore
- rénover - to renovate
- scier - to saw
- sceller - to seal
- serrer - to tighten
- tapisser - to wallpaper
- visser - to screw



Did YOU KNOW?

Proud to be French

We all know a chauvinist pig or two don't we ladies – a gentleman who has a 'prejudiced belief in the superiority of his own gender'? However, did you know that the word 'chauvin' (which gave English the word chauvinist) actually means patriotic in French and has nothing to do with dislike of the fairer sex.

In fact, the word was coined after Nicolas Chauvin, soldier in Napoleon's army, who was fanatically loyal to his emperor.



Getting on with it...

- boulonner - to bolt
- clouer - to nail
- dévisser - to unscrew
- démontér - to dismantle
- frotter - to scrub
- limer - to file
- peindre - to paint
- percer - to drill





Alan Daruois



Veronica Wardell



Steve Buuphrey



Sue Holmes

photos say it all!



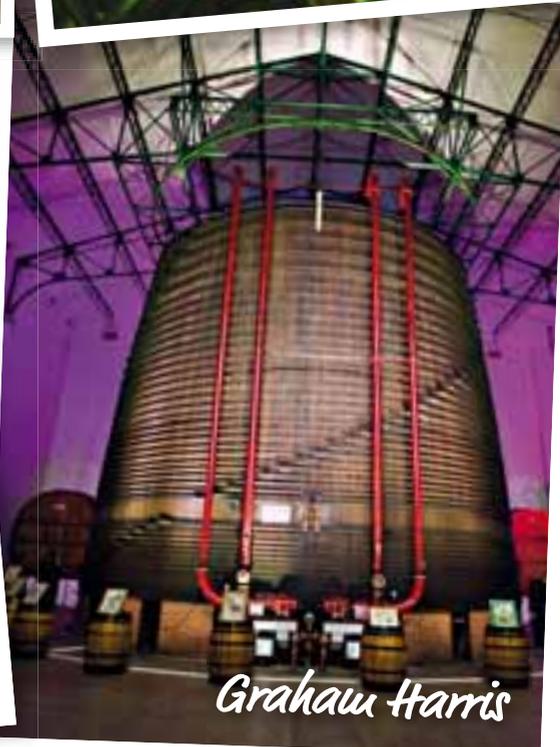
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Out for the day...

Pretty Perfect
P=O Picnics

With Katja Willemsen

ERMITAGE DE DOMANOVA

The immensely likeable monk at the Ermitage de Domanova, Frère Gérard, welcomes visitors with open arms. Within minutes of biting into our baguette, he not only ambled over to say hello, but joined us for a glass of vin doux. Noisette, his guard-cat (see inset), meowed a greeting from his perch on the first floor window sill.

Once the fortified residence and chapel of a wealthy noble family, "doma nova" means "new house", but despite this upbeat name, its story is as anguished as many historical buildings in our region: abandon, war, revolution, looting, murder and inevitable decay.

When Frère Gérard arrived nine years ago, the hermitage was in ruins. Vipers and scorpions had annexed the

ground floor, and falcons occupied the attic. By trade, a builder and carpenter, and by passion, a man of the cloth and sculptor, this gentle monk breathed life back into the building. The chapel's interior and fine sculptures were restored with the help of experts funded by the village of Rodès and the state, but Frère Gérard did most of the structural repairs with his own hands - one stone, one beam, one picnic spot at a time.

For a hermit who welcomes the world into his domain, it's symbolic that one of his first projects

was to replace the original door that termites and time had ruined. He sourced oak that was over three centuries old then built the new 250 kg door himself, à l'ancienne, the old-fashioned way. He sawed the wood by hand then assembled the



Out for the day...

parts via slots and grooves and traditional pegs. It's no surprise that this magnificent door is rarely closed.

From the moment you turn-off the N116, hand-painted signs and simple crosses show you where to go. (See inset for detailed directions.) One of the signs even tells you exactly how long it will take: 7 minutes by car, 17 by donkey, and just 27 on foot. The road rises gently, past a tall shrine to Saint Mary, and ends on the monk's doorstep, so leave your car at the bottom and walk the way of the pilgrims.

The Ermitage de Domanova isn't an austere edifice to God, it is Frère Gérard's home, and he loves visitors. Testament to this welcome are the many picnic spots at which to enjoy the tranquillity of his garden and the splendid views.

There's even an inside picnic area if rain or the Tramontane catch hikers off-guard. Snakes and creepy-crawlies were evicted from the old animal quarters, with Noisette's help of course, and a cosy room with farm-style tables and benches was created. There's even a kettle, cups, coffee and tea. And guess who made the stain glass window himself?

If you're lucky, Frère Gérard will invite you up to the wooden galley overlooking the altar, and

play Byzantine chanting for you. The haunting music in the small chapel with its glittering baroque altarpiece reaches deep into the soul.

Be sure to see the ex-voto collection of naïve paintings on wood, some date back to 1693.

Have fun choosing where to picnic, and don't forget to take an extra glass for Frère Gérard! ☀





Noisette, the guard-cat

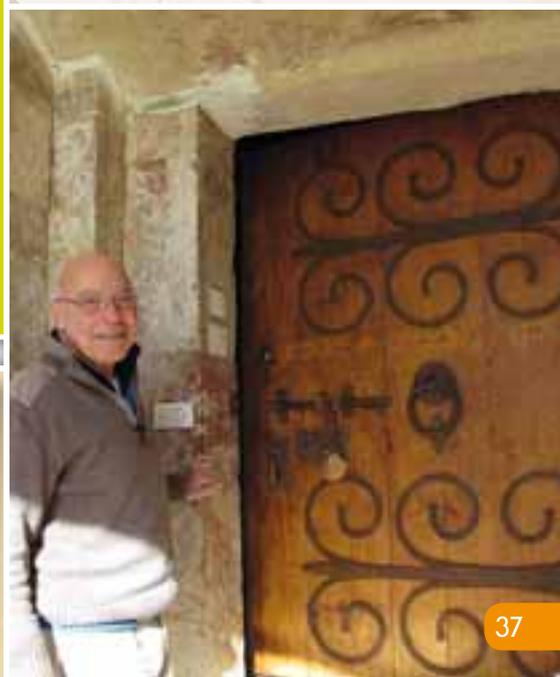
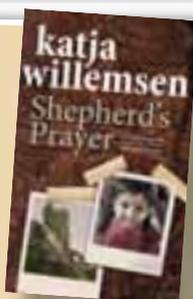
Noisette watches over the hermitage and raises the alarm the minute he spots trouble. Frère Gérard tells the story of how Noisette head-butted him out of his meditation and led him to a deep hole into which five wild boar piglets had fallen. Frère Gérard braved a very agitated Mama Boar, lowered himself into the hole and hauled her little ones out one by one. The minute he lifted out the last one, Mama Boar trotted off with her brood. Moral(s) of the story, according to Frère Gérard? Boars can count to five, and Noisette is a godly cat.

How To Get There

- From Perpignan, take the N116 towards the mountains.
- About 5 kms after Ile-sur-Têt, turn left at the sign "Ermitage de Domanova" - opposite the turn-off to Rodès.
- Follow Frère Gérard's signs to the hermitage. It'll take 7 minutes by car, 17 minutes by donkey, and 27 minutes on foot!
- Open every day, except Thursdays, from 9h30 to 18h30

A wolf cult, kidnapped child, and the Tour de Massane create high tension in Shepherd's Prayer, a fast-paced thriller set in Collioure.

Available on Amazon



Out for the day...

*Remarkable Trees,
in lovely places*
With Lynn Hall

Let's Tork Cork

Whilst cork oaks (chênes lieges) are plentiful in this southern part of France, few reach such a majestic size as this magnificent tree in the grounds of Mas Santol, Reynès, believed to be the largest in the P.O. The owners, M. & Mme Arnaudières, are so proud of their fine tree that visitors are welcome to come and admire. There are a number of cork oaks in the same glade, but this splendid specimen has a girth of 5.10 metres and an approximate height of 20 metres. Unlike many in southern France, it is sufficiently sheltered from strong winds for the canopy to have also achieved an impressive spread.

The estimated age of the tree is between 250 and 300 years. This is generally viewed as the maximum age for a cork oak.

Mas Santol directions: from Céret either take the scenic route via Col de Bousells heading

towards Reynès village on the D15 or from Céret's Pont du Diable take the D115 direction Amélie, through La Cabanasse and turn left on the D15 towards Reynès village, then take a left fork at the sign for Col de Bousells and continue until you see a sign for Mas Santol on the left. Map: Carte de Randonnées No. 10 Canigou. The Mas is well signposted and is included in a circular walk of 13 km included in the free guide 'le Petit Guide Rando', available in Céret and le Boulou tourist offices.

For another favourite, visit the small village of Taillet, perched on the edge of the Vallespir, to admire the views, visit the church of St Valentin, and if on a Sunday, (or by rendezvous, tel. Tel. 06 85 42 24 26.) check out the charming boutique of 'artisane globe troteuse' Pétrouchka.

Whilst there, walk down the slope past the Mairie and, ahead of you, see another giant among cork oaks. This has a girth of 3.80 metres, a height of

approximately 16- 18 metres and a similar spread to the canopy. Local opinion puts the age at least 200 years.

Taillet directions:

from Thuir/Fourques follow the D615, turn left at the Col de Llauro (D13), drive on through Oms and turn left onto the D63 at the sign for Taillet. (Approximately 20 minutes from Col de Llauro).

Or, from Céret (about 25 minutes) take the D115 direction Amélie, cross the Tech at Pont de Reynès, head towards le Vila and take the right hand fork onto the D63, sign-posted Taillet.



Turn this into a scenic afternoon circuit by returning via the village of Oms.

As seen after the extensive forest fire just across the border in 2012, cork oaks have an amazing ability to regenerate after appearing to be completely destroyed. Trees with carbonised bark are now displaying plenty of leaves, whilst nearby pines and many

deciduous oaks are completely dead.

The bark of the cork oak has benefitted humankind since Roman times or earlier. Cork can provide insulation material, fishing floats, insoles →

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Out for the day...

for shoes, fishing rod grips, notice boards, flooring, gaskets and washers – and, of course, stoppers for wine and champagne bottles. The latter still an important industry in the Vallespir. Cork production has declined over recent decades, but increasing interest in renewable sources promises a renewed vitality for this ancient trade.

The orange trunks of recently harvested cork oaks have a beauty all of their own. The bark can be removed every 10 to 14 years. The actual interval depends on local conditions. Portugal and Spain are responsible for over half of all cork production. Portugal's advantage over France is that of higher rainfall in the prime growing regions.

To learn more about these beautiful and useful trees visit the Musée du Liège in Maureillas [04.68.83.15.41](tel:0468831541) ☀



Cork Manufacturing in Céret

Cork production has been an important industry in the Vallespir since the 1930's, but started to decline when many wine makers began using plastic corks. After much research, Céret-based company DIAM has manufactured a new style of cork closure which eliminates the two greatest problems of cork - the musty-smelling taint caused by a substance called trichloroanisole (TCA); and variations in porosity to air, which can affect the oxidation of wine as it ages in the bottle.



Diam has an impressive new plant in Zone Tech Oulrich - great news for Céret – and wine lovers everywhere. www.diam-closures.com



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Out for the day...

Over the Border

...from St Laurent de Cerdans

With Polly Cannie

It's going to be a feast for the eyes and palate today (with a bit of culture and possibly retail therapy thrown in), so set off after breakfast, choose a clear, sunny day and make sure you've got a good appetite for a late lunch.

We're driving along the D115 through Ceret (No stopping there today but don't forget the fabulous [Cherry Festival on Saturday 30th - Sunday 31st May](#)) Amélie and Arles-sur-Tech right up into the Haut Vallespir and over into Spain. You'll already be catching glimpses of the stunning scenery as you do this, taking a left turn onto the D3 towards St Laurent and Coustouges, and winding slowly upwards. There are occasional pulling over points for photo opportunities but none better than when you

arrive at the main car park in the village centre of St Laurent. In fact, we're stopping here to walk the short distance to the Toiles du Soleil fabric and accessories shop, home of the brightly coloured Catalan stripey fabric produced on ancient industrial revolution machines in the Dickensian factory behind the shop. Have your credit cards ready for gorgeous goodies - at a price! (Check opening times on www.toiles-du-soleil.com)

A short walk down the hill brings you to the little cinema and Retirada museum - not as harrowing as the main museum in La Jonquera, but

informative and well presented. You can also find information here on walking the Cami de Retirada, the route many escapees took over this part of the Pyrenees.



Heading out of the village towards Coustouges. Just as you leave St Laurent take the turning to the right signposted Domaine de Falgos (www.falgos.com) and after around 5kms of winding road it opens out into the wonderful golf resort and spa where you can enjoy a drink and nibbles in comfortable surroundings with stunning views in all directions. With heated indoor pool, steam, sauna, jacuzzi and outdoor sun terrace, golfers and non golfers alike may wish to bookmark this for a longer visit another day, because we're off again back to the main road and a right turn towards Coustouges, a very pretty hilltop village, worth stopping in the car park on the right and wandering through past the church and into a little lane with truly magnificent views into Spain.

Residents will tell you this is the southernmost village in France but it's beaten by a short head by Lamanère, truly the end of the road, which is beyond Serralongue.

Almost time for lunch, driving downhill and out of France and into Spain, and oh! the views!! Fifteen minutes later will find you in Tapis and there on the left is Can Mach, a traditional Catalan restaurant, with rooms and a well-stocked shop for all your must-have local fare (www.canmach.com). It's very popular, very lively, and the food is delicious, filling and extremely reasonably priced - see the menu on their website to whet your appetite, maybe best to book - and lunch can go on and on and on; we usually roll out about four o'clock!

Various options for you now - carrying on downhill to explore the pretty village of Macenet with its 12th century, Romanesque church, or go a little further on to Darnius where you take a right turn to the lake at Boadella for a lovely stroll to work off that lunch. From Darnius you're almost back at the main N11 and other choices - turn right for an evening in Figueres or Roses or turn left towards La Jonquera where you'll find the new Gran Jonquera shopping outlet on the right for some retail therapy, food or clothing - although the latter isn't always as cheap as you'd hoped - open until 9 pm.

From here it's back to the border at Le Boulou either on the N11 or switching to the A9 motorway perhaps if your destination is more towards Perpignan. I hope this has been an enjoyable mix of activities and that you'll join me again for some more travels through the southernmost valley in France. ☀

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Out for the day...

Over the Border



Forget Dali for today...

...*Figueres*

With Linda Razzell

Get out your walking boots and prepare to discover the hidden delights of Figueres. Come on a market day (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) and bring a stout basket. Forget Dali for today, but plan to come again midweek in midwinter and spend a day taking in all five museums.

Arrive from France by the N11/AP7 and turn right into Avinguda Vilallonga. Cross the railway tracks, turn left, and leave the car in the (old) station car park: pick up a street map from the tourist office in the station and you're off. From here it is a five minute stroll to the old market in the Plaça del Gra, where it is hard to resist the appeal

of fresh, vibrant, local produce. Great quality, low prices. Just up the road in the Plaça Catalunya is the new market with its huge solar roof; you can find honey, olives, bacalao, goat cheese, sausage, and traditional utensils. If you get carried away, you can always nip back to the car to stow your purchases.

Time for a break? Nico's, in the Plaça Catalunya, has the best churros and hot chocolate in town. If coffee is your poison, go one block farther and walk through König's restaurant to its terrace, where you can sit and watch the parakeets noisily staking their claims in the palm trees. Go past the play area and you will find yourself in the Plaça



Josep Pla in front of the Teatre Municipal El Jardí, a playful, Dali-inspired building, complete with decorative eggs. It has a lively programme of drama and music all year round, some of it outside in the summer.

Turn right to walk through the leafy Rambla, (currently disrupted by works repairing the collapse where the underground river burst out in November), noting the Museum de L'Emporda, dedicated to local history, and the Toy Museum for future reference. Carry on up through the Old Town, passing the town hall, cathedral and the Teatre Museu Dali, and cross the main road to the Parc Bosc, where you can play on the adult exercise apparatus if you feel like it.

From the top of the park it is a short but steep climb up through the pines to the fort of San Ferran.

It takes about forty minutes to walk the narrow rocky path circling the perimeter wall or you can take the tour inside. The last battle of the Civil War was fought here – and lost. Then it was used as a prison for Republicans. An impressive aqueduct, which fed the moat, leads across the motorway before disappearing into the hillside. The looming bulk of San Ferran is a trifle menacing but the views of the Bay of Roses and the snow-capped Pyrénées are worth the climb. You can see the shape of Figueres from here, its two stations, and its eclectic mix of buildings.

Walk back down the wooded slope to your left, and cross the main road. Turn into the first small →



Out for the day...



a bargain at eleven euros for three courses, including wine, and always comes with little 'extras'. The atmosphere is friendly, and you can be sure of a warm reception from the proprietors.

On the way back to the car park, look through the streets on your left to catch a glimpse of the bullring, a magnificent old structure awaiting a new purpose.

It is worth a slight detour to get a closer

street you come to and you will find an unexpected open space ahead, with seats, wooden paths, and metal structures. Parc de les Aigües is a memorial to the day when Franco, aided by Mussolini, bombed Figueres in broad daylight, destroying a large part of the town and killing many. 'Silensis' was an exhibition staged last year in the Museum de L'Emporda, a moving photographic, oral and written record by people who witnessed it.

From here, walk back round the circumference of the town until you find yourself passing the indoor market (excellent fish), and the small but fascinating Museu de la Tecnica, then head back towards the centre. Turn left down Vilallonga by the Asil, which looks more like a boutique hotel than an old people's home, and carry on down, crossing the tracks. Lunchtime doesn't get going until 13.30 or later, and opposite LIDL you will find Transit, looking like a fast food joint – but the only fast thing here is the service. The food is reliably good and lunch

look, and that will take you to the final point of interest, the cemetery. Worth coming back in Autumn as the day to visit here is November 1, when everyone else does! It's a large and respectful party; the town band plays soulful music under the trees while families get together to picnic and renew the flowers. The dead are housed in large, glass-walled mausoleums, and in metre square, six-high, apartment block-style nichos around the walls.

Before you leave, there is a beautiful example of nineteenth century architecture on the corner by the railway tracks, ruinous now and for sale: take a look at a similar, renovated building opposite to get an idea of how elegant this street once was. By the way, the penny-farthing on the wall opposite is not merely an artwork, but once indicated a bicycle shop.

I hope you have enjoyed this fascinating glimpse into a dynamic little town. ☀



Jailhouse Rocks



The 'Castell de Sant Ferran', built in Figueres, in the mid 18th century, is the largest castle in Europe. The walk around the perimeter of the castle is a flat 3km with superb views over the Empordà Plane out to the sea.

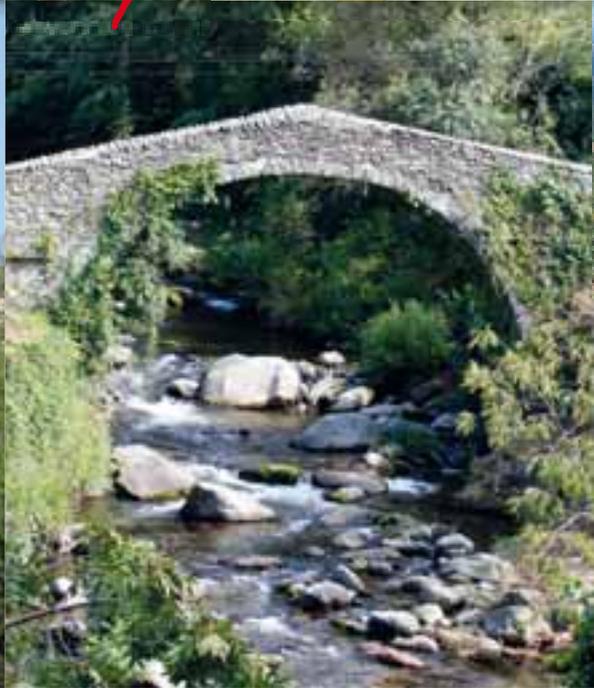
Look across from the castle to the pink, orange and yellow building on the other side of the motorway to Càrcel Puig de les Basses prison. This stripey building, clearly visible from the motorway that is on the way to Girona, was completed in 2011 but left empty due to high building and running costs. Finally opened to inmates last year,

it has been built to conform to the high standards required by the modern criminal of today. A pleasing visual interior, sports facilities, soccer field, pool, and tree lined walkway along independent units with showers, (known as cells in days gone by) with lounge and patio, hairdresser, shop and cafe, library..... The philosophy in this prison is to rehabilitate prisoners according to personalised programmes and facilitate and assist their reintegration into society. On the negative side, prisoners are not allowed to use the pool unless a life guard is present.

DID YOU KNOW?

Catch me if you can : This 2002 film, inspired by the true life story of Frank Abagnale, forger and impostor of the 1960s, was partly set (though not filmed) at Perpignan prison, where Abagnale was imprisoned in 1969 for a particularly miserable and degrading six months of his life. In the film, Abagnale was played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks was his FBI pursuer. This grim stone building surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers cannot fail to capture your attention on the road out of Perpignan towards Toulouges.





SALAMANDERS IN BAILLESTAVY

Take a dramatic drive from Vinca (on the N116 between Ille sur Tet and Prades) along the winding D13, towards Baillestavy.

This lovely village has an ancient ruined church, originally built on old industrial iron workings in the IX century, and abandoned when a church was constructed in 1665 in the 'new' village high on the hill - a steep climb but worth it for the view.

Enjoy a spring time picnic by the Lentilla river as it tumbles over rounded rocks, and bright dragonflies dart over the surface. Signs identify trees, and flowery meadows afford easy access to the river.

But wait. Did you notice the brightly coloured sign at the entrance to the village asking you to watch out for salamanders? In fact, Baillestavy is more than just a pretty, peaceful, pleasant village, it is also the salamander capital of the P-O.

The Pyrenean Brook Salamander can only be

found in the Pyrenees of Andorra, France, and Spain, and Baillestavy has become well known for the prehistoric looking creatures. Squarish head, warty skin in shades of olive, grey, charcoal, or muddy brown with an intermittent yellowish stripe down the spine, the Pyrenean Brook Salamander is alive, well and thriving in Baillestavy.



Coasting

The 'Côte Rocheuse' (Rocky Coast) stretches from Collioure to Cerbère, via Port-Vendres, Paulilles and Banyuls-sur-Mer, and is also known as the 'Côte Vermeille' (Vermillion coast), named for the reddish glow of the land under a certain light.

It was so named in 1912, to keep up with other

parts of the French and Spanish coast already becoming known to travellers by their romantic names; the Côte d'Azur named in 1887, the Côte d'Émeraude in 1894, the Côte d'Argent in 1905 and the Costa Brava in 1908.

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As the success of La Gaiete du Feu has grown over the past 20 years, so has their showroom, with the recent addition of a brand new 200m² 'salon' just 2 doors up from their old showroom on Avenue Julien Panchot. Now the biggest fireplace showroom in the P-O, it has nevertheless retained the warmth and service of a family run business. Pop in for advice on the best form of heating for your home - log fire, pellet burner, wood burning

stove, bio-ethanol - and enjoy a fresh coffee and a browse through the latest P-O Life at the same time!

Did you know that most renovation and building works, and materials for renovation are subject to VAT (TVA) at only 10% as opposed to 20% on all other building work? This also applies to having a fire installed professionally as long as your house is more than 2 years old.



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Test your French

1 - V POUR VASE!

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

vacarme	1	a	grand oiseau de proie
veau	2	b	maladie contagieuse
veille	3	c	jour avant
virgule	4	d	personne âgée
volaille	5	e	pour bien fermer la porte
vœu	6	f	signe de ponctuation
vieillard	7	g	bruit très fort
vautour	8	h	petit de la vache
verrou	9	i	ensemble des oiseaux
varicelle	10	j	souhait

Tongue twister (Virelangue)

(Répétez trois fois)

Bonnet blanc, blanc bonnet

(The same difference)

Useful expression

Quand on parle

du loup...

Talk of the devil!

Another useful expression

Lapsus - Freudian slip



2

Find the English for the idiomatic expressions below

Manquer le coche	1	a	to have a lot of work on
Motus et bouche cousue	2	b	to take offense
Faire la tête	3	c	to be late
Mettre son nez partout	4	d	to be nosy
Rester bouche bée	5	e	to butt in
Couper la poire en deux	6	f	to miss out on something
Arriver à la bourre	7	g	to be speechless
Mettre son grain de sel	8	h	to meet someone halfway
Prendre la mouche	9	i	to keep a secret
Avoir du pain sur la planche	10	j	to sulk

Call me naughty if you wish, but I think everyone should know a little bit of modern French 'argot' (slang), even if it's sometimes a bit cheeky.

Match up these slang words and phrases with their English meanings

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|---|---------------------|
| Arrête de flipper | 1 | a | He's very drunk |
| C'est un bouffon | 2 | b | He's a real bast**d |
| Ca ne pisse pas loin | 3 | c | It's no big deal. |
| Il raconte des bobards | 4 | d | It stinks! |
| Il capte rien | 5 | e | I'm off! |
| Il est complètement bourré | 6 | f | Stop freaking out |
| C'est un beau salaud | 7 | g | She's well padded. |
| Ca schlingue | 8 | h | He's an oaf |
| Elle est bien en chair | 9 | i | He's a fibber |
| Je me casse | 10 | j | He doesn't get it! |

Think about this one...

Si une frite n'a pas de Mayo, elle me peut pas aller à la piscine



J'ai mal

Patient: Docteur, j'ai un problème

"Quand j'appuie là",
(il appuie sur son bras) "j'ai mal"

"Quand j'appuie là",
(il appuie sur son nez) "j'ai mal"

"Quand j'appuie là",
(il appuie sur sa jambe) "j'ai mal"

Docteur: "Je crois Monsieur que vous avez le doigt cassé!!"

(j'appuie - I press)



Although in adult language learning, it's quite important not to get TOO hung up over genders (masculine and feminine), there are a few words whose meaning changes completely depending upon whether you use the correct one.

Here are just a few....

le moule – mould, baking tin

la moule – mussel

le mi-temps – (work) part-time

la mi-temps – (sports) half-time

le livre – book

la livre – pound (currency & weight)

le manche – handle

la manche – sleeve/ English Channel

le poêle – stove

la poêle – frying pan

le poste – job, tv/radio set

la poste – post office

le radio – radio operator

la radio – radio, X ray

le somme – snooze, nap

la somme – sum, amount

le vase – vase

la vase – silt, mud

le voile – veil

la voile – sail

Silly but related joke

How do you tell the gender of a table?

Look between its legs!!



Améliorez votre Anglais

1 - Trouvez la définition de ces abréviations d'usage courant
Put these instructions for making a perfect cup of tea into the logical order

AKA	1	a	Ordinateur/policieret les voilà
AWOL	2	b	Bricolage	Also Known As
ETA	3	c	Connu sous le nom de...	Absent Without Official Leave
BOGOF	4	d	Député	Estimated time of arrival
ASAP	5	e	Accident de la route	Buy one, get one free
GBH	6	f	Dès que possible	As Soon As Possible
MP	7	g	Heure d'arrivée prévue	Grievous Bodily Harm
RTA	8	h	Coups et blessures	Member of Parliament
PC	9	i	Absent sans prévenir	Road Traffic Accident
DIY	10	j	Une achetée, une gratuite	Personal computer/police constable
				Do it yourself

Virelangue

(Répétez trois fois)

Think three
thoughts freely

Mot mignon

higgledy-piggledy -
en pagaille, pêle-mêle

Useful expression

Long time, no see!
Ca fait longtemps qu'on ne s'est
pas vu!

2 - Trouvez les définitions de ces expressions
amusantes qui sont souvent utilisées dans
la langue courante

whippersnapper	1	a	un vieux schnock
hunky-dory	2	b	l'essentiel
knick-knack	3	c	un bibelot
pooper-scooper	4	d	du charabia
nitty-gritty	5	e	la tête en l'air
hanky-panky	6	f	un ramasse-crottes
fuddy-duddy	7	g	OK
okey-dokey	8	h	des galipettes
fibbertigibbet	9	i	jeune effronté
mumbo-jumbo	10	j	tout va bien

3 - Confusing words

- He gets _____ very easily.
A boring
B bored
- Would like to get the _____ for Spanish omelette
A receipt
B recipe
- Do they still _____ passport at the Spanish border?
A check B control
- I haven't been to Paris _____ over five years.
A since B for
- I usually finish work _____ 6pm
A by B until
- It is difficult to choose _____ the two
A amongst
B between
- You must _____ him to buy me a present
A remember
B remind

Good Advice

Don't ask for a 'une blonde' in an English pub unless you're looking for trouble!



Great Quote

When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.

Prince Philip

Bad Joke!

Did you hear what happened to the cat who swallowed a ball of wool?
She had mittens!
(mittens - moufles
kittens - chatons)

Worse joke!

Why did the horse cross the road?
He wanted to visit his neigh-bours.
(neigh - hennir)

Worst joke

What's stinky and flies?
A smellycopter!
(stinky - qui pue)

4 - D - is for Dog

Trouvez les définitions des mots suivants, qui commencent tous avec les lettres D

daffodil	1	a	tiny mark or spot
doughnut	2	b	related to milk products
daughter-in-law	3	c	small, sharp arrow
dust	4	d	pretty yellow weed
dainty	5	e	yellow Springtime flower
dice	6	f	cake with hole in the middle
dandelion	7	g	fine dry powder
dairy	8	h	small and delicate
dot	9	I	cubes with dots on each side
dart	10	j	your son's wife



REGISTERING a BRITISH car in France – C'est DU GÂTEAU !

REGISTERING YOUR CAR

Gone are the days when it was easier to ride a unicycle than to register a British car in France.

Unless your car is a US or Japanese import or classed as a light commercial vehicle, the whole process is comparatively quick and easy to sort out. Of course, this IS France, so treat yourself to a smart folder to carry around all the paperwork you are about to accumulate!

First of all you will need a certificate of conformity (COC) to prove that your vehicle conforms to EU norms. You can order and pay

for this on line (<http://european-certificate-of-conformity.com> or www.eurococ.eu)

and you will normally receive your certificate within 10 days. Prices vary according to the make and model of your car.

If your vehicle is more than 4 years old you will need a 'Contrôle technique' (CT) – the nearest equivalent to an MOT. Even if your vehicle fails the CT, you have 2 months to put it right and have it re-tested free of charge. Beware. Not following up on this could null and void your insurance.

Take your CT certificate (whether it has passed or

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failed) to the sous prefecture along with passport, proof of address (EDF, SAUR or Orange facture) the original registration documents and proof of payment or receipt for the car if you have it. Ask for a 'Demande de Certificat d'Immatriculation d'un Véhicule'.

Now pop along to the Hotel Des Impôts with your ever-increasing pile of paperwork and they will give you a 'quitus fiscal' proving that tax has already been paid.

All of the above can be done in a morning.

The next step is to visit the Prefecture in Perpignan – we advise that you get there early and plan on being there a while. Take your ipad and the latest copy of PO Life. Take a number when you arrive and expect to be shuffled from one booth to another, and much paper stamping. At the final booth you will be given a 'Certificat provisoire d'immatriculation' - temporary certificate, valid for 1 month, which will enable you get insurance and new number plates. The actual certificate will usually arrive in less than 5 days. The price you pay depends on the cv of your car and it's age. There is a 50% reduction for cars over 5 years old.

Almost there! Walk outside and right opposite, doing a roaring trade, is a number plate making shop. Hand him your temporary 'certificat d'immatriculation', (make sure you get it back) and Robert est ton oncle! Not only will you have your new number plate in less than 2 minutes, but he will also give you the screws to fix it to your car! Plates cost about 25€ for a pair.

All finished just in time for lunch! Perfect!

INSURANCE AND TAX

You can drive a foreign car in France for 6 months without it being French registered. Most French insurance companies will only insure you third party for 1 month (some are slightly



more lenient) if the car has not been registered in France.

No duty is charged on a used vehicle imported for personal use, as long as VAT has already been paid in the EU country where it was bought

..... it is at least six months old (date since first registration)

..... it has driven at least 6,000 Km prior to entry into France.

VAT must be paid in France for a new vehicle bought in another EU member state, unless the French Fiscal Services are provided with the original

receipt with proof of payment of VAT,

and valid foreign registration of the vehicle. (A new vehicle is one that was first registered less than six months before or has not driven more than 6,000 Km.)

Some useful vocab

Attestation d'identification -
certificate of conformity

Contrôle technique (CT) – MOT

Carte grise – log book

Plaque d'immatriculation – number plate

Justificatif d'identité – proof of identity

Justificatif de domicile – proof of residency

L'année – the year

Le kilométrage – the mileage

Une voiture neuve / d'occasion –
a new/second-hand car

Un monospace – a people-carrier

Un break – an estate car

Un quatre quatre – a four-wheel drive

Un cabriolet – a convertible

La puissance fiscale – engine rating

La climatisation – air conditioning

Un toit ouvrant – a sunroof

Language Fun

When Charles De Gaulle retired from public life the British ambassador threw a gala dinner party in his honour.

At the dinner table the Ambassador's wife said to Madame De Gaulle:

"Your husband has been such a prominent public figure on the French and International scene for so many years! How quiet retirement will seem in comparison.

What are you most looking forward to in these retirement years?"

"A penis," replied Madame De Gaulle.

A huge hush fell over the table. Everyone heard her answer... and no one knew what to say next.

Le Grand Charles De Gaulle leaned over to his wife and said: *"Ma cherie, I believe zat ze English pronounce zat word - 'appiness'!*



Bad Joke!

Deux œufs discutent dans le frigo:

"Eh, t'as vu là-bas, y a un œuf qui a l'air bizarre! Il est brun et il a des poils..."

"C'est un kiwi, vas t'acheter des lunettes!"



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Tickets are available ONLY via Internet, bookable for a designated train, and can be printed or displayed on smart phones, l pads etc.

Test your French

- answers p44-45

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

Améliorez votre Anglais

- answers p46-47

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



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OR

Maggie on 04 68 96 55 46

sud-po@cancersupportfrance.org

www.csf-suddefrance.webs.com | www.csf-forum.org

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Pablo's Bar Place Picasso, Céret, 10H30 to 12H00 on the First Wednesday of the month

Lizzie's Kitchen, Route de Prades

Ille-sur-Têt 10H00 to 12 noon Third Wednesday of the month

and at our Book Exchange at Café des Artistes, Laroque des Albères 10H30 to 12 noon Third Monday of the month



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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

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