

P-O Life

Le magazine anglais des Pyrénées Orientales

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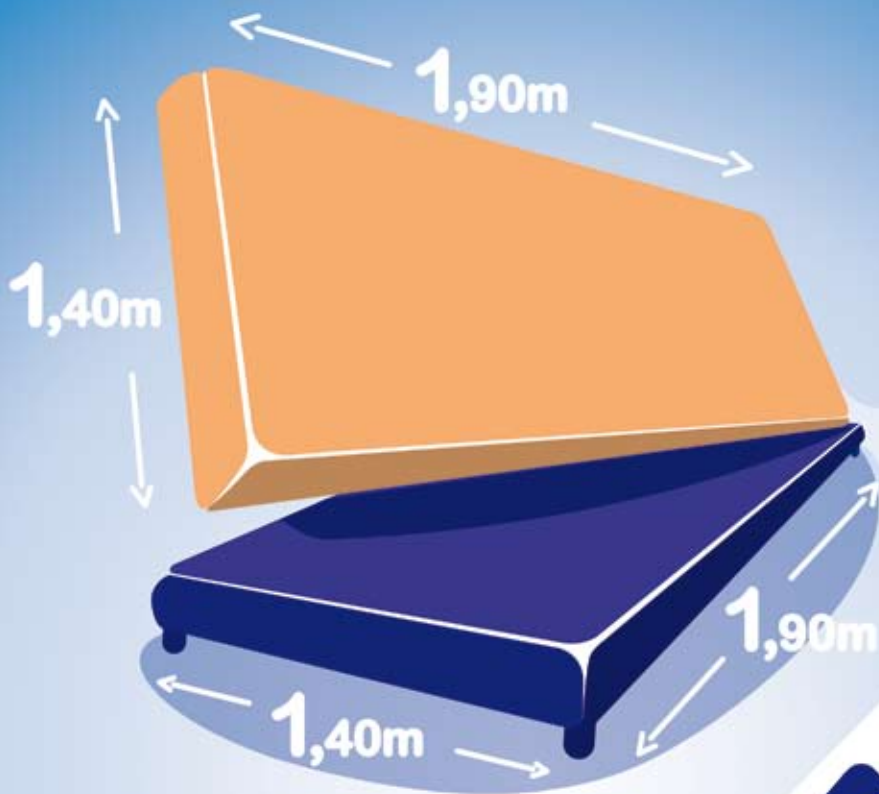
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from the Palais des Congrès

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Bonjour !



Well, it's official ! We're not getting our TGV (Perpignan – Barcelona - 55mins) quite on time. The latest estimates are 2012 so those of you who were thinking of popping into Barcelona for tapas then home for Coronation Street might have to wait a year or two !! But hey ! Are we bovvad ? Can you see the Canigou from where you're sitting ? Are you sitting under a sky as blue as robin's eggs, sipping a glass of something cool or watching the Mediterranean sparkle in the sun, surrounded by that unmistakable "south-of-France" smell of pine and lavender ? Elle n'est pas belle la vie ?

Our August PO Life brings you more restaurant and wines reviews, language exercises, word origins, daft jokes and information about life in the PO, along with a notice board for you to advertise your events, jobs, items for sale or wanted etc. We would love to hear from you with any suggestions for future articles or advice you may have for others gleaned from your own time in the P-O.

By the way...What do you call a scruffy cat that's just eaten a duck ? A duck-filled tatty puss ! (Sorry – irrelevant but couldn't resist it !!)

Fins aviat (Catalan for see you soon) - Kate

SOMETHING TO SAY ...

Contact us on info@anglophone-direct.com

An excellent day

Not that we ever really wonder why we like it so much here, but today was special. Just right for an al fresco breakfast, after which we motored gently down to Port Vendres for lunch and a walk around the port. Banyuls followed (the place that is)

and another wander around the beach and the marina in a warming sun. Then an easy run home in the evening sunshine to a refreshing cuppa.

A very ordinary day, really, but so enjoyable and so much what makes being here such a pleasure - Colin

Edito ...

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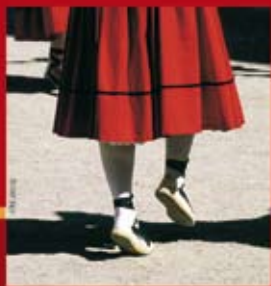
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Welcome to the Pyrénées-Orientales!

Move around, go out...
Consult the events calendar on:

www.cdt-66.com

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GORGES of **CARANÇA** & **CAMI RAMADER**



Quand il pleut le jour de l'Assomption
Il pleut jusqu'à la nativité

Ooops ! Let's hope not : Assomption is 15th
August and the nativité is 8th September !!

The round walk along the Carança valley is a tremendous experience. Walkers with stamina will complete the round trip in one day. Others will prefer the 2-day option with overnight stay at the refuge*. Throughout, the scenery perfectly illustrates the word "dramatic". From 810 m in the Têt valley to 1830 m at the refuge, you will successively enjoy (or fear !) vertiginous cliffs, suspended bridges and metallic "passerelles", over foaming streams. This breathtaking challenge will be rewarded when reaching the serene atmosphere, wild life, and majestic scenery of Ras de la Carança.

Acces : Drive the RN116 up the Têt valley direction Font-Romeu. 10 mn after Olette, on reaching the village of Thuès-entre-Valls, don't miss the signpost *Gorges de la Carança* and turn left onto the bridge over la Têt. Then follow the indications to reach the obligatory parking place. Total driving from Perpignan: 1h25.

Walk : Yellow marks throughout

✓ Walk into the gorges along the river bank then turn right across the first bridge. The footpath ascends to a first crossroad followed by a second. Stay on the main footpath, almost on plain level, to finally reach the vertical cliff. (0:40).

✓ **WARNING!** Grip the handrail, do not look down, secure your steps and generally concentrate on your progression. Still alive and well, you are now down at the river again (0:55), close to a water tank, and about to negotiate a series of suspended bridges, ladders and metallic passages over and alongside the river. The last crossing (2:00) opens way to a "normal" path going gently up (a family walk will reasonably end up here and go back the same way).

✓ The last steep section leads to a crossroad marked with a wooden panel *Campilles-Dona Pa* (3:20). Take the direction *refuge*. After crossing a damp

plateau, the landscape opens up and you soon reach the refuge of *Ras de la Carança** (3:45) - open all year ; resident warden during Summer.

The way back along *Cami Ramader* (transhumance path): From the refuge, go back to the signpost encountered on the way up and take the direction *Campilles-Dona Pa*. The footpath goes for a long and meandering trail along mountain crests. Remarkable landmarks confirm you're on the right path : *le Gendarme*, a big towering rock (1:15) and a perfectly stone-built shelter (2:00). At the next crossroads (2:25), you can make a detour to the old refuge of *Dona Pa*. Back on the main track, keep going down for 250 m and take the direction *Parc auto-la Collade*. The track zigzags down to meet up with the footpath of the gorges (3:25). Turn left to take it in reverse, down to the river and the parking place (3:55).

* *the refuge of Ras de la Carança is as "basic" as can be! It only provides rough dormitory accommodation. You can order a cup of tea but don't take chances with a meal!*

Programmes of Christian's scheduled walks in the "What's on" section of Anglophone website.

Christian Piquemal invites you to join "Le Club" and benefit from special discounts on the guided walks scheduled monthly.

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FIRE !

☞ Your insurance could depend on it !



In these dry months, a major forest fire can start with a carelessly discarded cigarette or hot embers from a BBQ. Lighting a fire and smoking are forbidden in and around (within 200m) of forest and brush land when it is windy and between June 1st to September 30th.

In rural areas, it is the responsibility of the person

whose property may be at risk, even if he or she is not the landowner. FAILURE TO OBSERVE THESE REGULATIONS COULD RESULT IN A FINE AND MAY AFFECT YOUR INSURANCE CLAIM AND PAYOUT IN CASE OF FIRE.

- ✓ Avoid leaving combustible materials lying around in the garden (gas bottles, paint tins etc)
- ✓ If you have a swimming pool, purchase a pump to enable you to utilise the water in case of emergency

☞ Débroussailler involves getting rid of all dead wood, brush and dry grasses, cutting down trees that are too near to houses, and shrubs beneath large trees, planting trees so that the branches do not touch each other, pruning low branches up to a minimum height of 2 metres.

It is important to throw away all cut vegetation by shredding, taking to a tip, or turning into compost

In no circumstances does "débroussailler" mean cutting down all the trees !

Identifying Markers

There are a number of walks and rides in the region that have been marked out with different coloured paint strokes to represent varying difficulty or activities.

✓ Walking

Yellow paint stroke : short walk (petite randonnée)

Red and yellow paint stroke : Cross country (Tour de Pays)

Red and white paint stroke : long walks (grande randonnée)

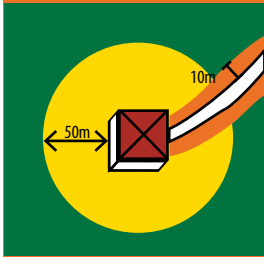
✓ Horse-riding
orange circle

✓ Mountain biking

Two yellow circles and a triangle to indicate direction.

Fire safety advice for property owners

Ensure that dry branches, brush and any other easily inflammable materials are not lying around your garden ; the land should be "débroussaillé"* or cut away before April 15th as follows :



- 50 m around any buildings
- 10 m deep on either side of private paths or roads leading to buildings (this is to enable the fire services to pass in safety)

NB

In towns and on housing estates (lotissements)

it is the responsibility of the land owner to clear the land.

Walking tips

Summertime is a particularly bad period for accidents, especially in the mountains. Here some main points to bear in mind if you are going walking during this period.

- Start early in the morning to avoid heat and afternoon storms.
- Never go out without plenty of water and a light raincoat.
- Do not go over 1600m altitude unless you have mountaineering experience.
- Do not overestimate your physical abilities.
- If you go on your own, always leave your destination and itinerary with family or friends.

The safest way of course is to book a guide !!!

- ☛ The "sentiers des douaniers" along the coast are **strictly pedestrian**.
- ☛ Certain areas of the *Reserves Naturelles* (nature reserves) are also for **pedestrians only**. If you are intending to cycle in a *Réserve Naturelle*, check out the restrictions first with the local tourist office.
- ☛ Private roads and track bearing the sign "*Propriété privé - défense d'entrer*" should only be used **with the permission of the owner**.
- ☛ Reserved for fire engines DFCI tracks (*Défense contre l'incendie*) are situated at regular intervals in most forest areas. These are for the fire engines in case of emergency and are **strictly forbidden for unauthorised motorised vehicles**. Bikers and horses may use these tracks unless there is a fire warning, high winds etc.
- ☛ For your security, do check with the local town hall or **ACCA (hunting association)** where the designated boar hunting areas are during the hunting season. This takes place **from mid-August to the end of January**. It can be very dangerous and frightening to find yourself in the vicinity of an organised boar hunt. Signs should always be put up at all entrances to woodland but this law is not always enforced as strictly as it should be. Here is a typical sign that you may find at the entrance to a forest where boar hunting is taking place.



THE LYDIA, BARCARÈS

This 1931-built 100 metre **Steamship** has been beached in the sands of Le Barcarès, since June 1967. She was originally named **MOONTA** and belonging to Adelaide Steamship Company until she was withdrawn in 1955, sold to Hellenic Mediterranean Lines and renamed **LYDIA**. The 298 by 44 foot, liner was next sold to SEMETA (Société d'Economie Mixte d'Etudes et d'Aménagement des Pyrénées Orientales) to be used as a **symbol to mark the creation of future resorts, Ports Barcarès and Leucate**.

A special basin was cut into the sands where the ship was berthed, then filled in, making her a permanent fixture at the Mediterranean resort. She is now part of a **leisure complex** which boasts a spa, casino, restaurants, bars, disco, laser shows, a pool with waterslide, and exhibitions.

Well, not quite "exclusively" in that its "cousins" exist also on the Islands of Malta and Gozo, as well as other North African and South Italian Mediterranean coastal locations, but, in France, it is known to exist **only in the Pyrénées Orientales** and from there extends southwards to cover the northern coastal region of the Costa Brava... so as far as France and Spain are concerned, it is a "**Catalan Frog**!"

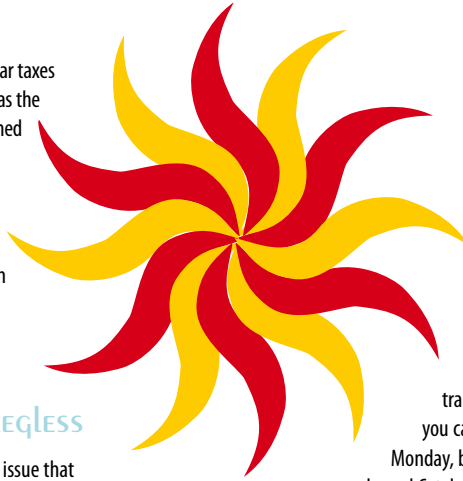
"It" is the **Painted Frog** (*Discoglossus pictus scovazzi*), the very local variety originally introduced to this area from Morocco, a rather pretty little fellow whose voice sounds (as described by a prominent herpetologist) "somewhat like the hushed chuckle a person might make in a library", i.e. somewhat more restrained than the strident voices of some more vociferous cousins!

Seen in and around "left over pools" of the dried up "river" Pouy in the valley behind Collioure leading up to the "*Consolation*".



PASS THE SALT!

One of the most hated and unpopular taxes in France during the Middle Ages was the salt tax or *gabelle*. Collioure was famed for its anchovy production, which involved a great deal of salt and the anchovies were a royal favourite, so in 1466 King **Louis XI of France exempted the town** from the much hated *gabelle* in order to ensure continued production!



SOMETHING FISHY GOING ON IN CANET

Lamparo fishing is fishing at night by lamplight and is particularly successful with blue fish (sardines, anchovies, mackerel), who love a full moon and are lured to the surface by the powerful **spotlight** of small boats called *lamparos*. As more modern fishing techniques have been developed, this traditional form of fishing has been lost, but you can see the fishermen in Canet every other Monday, bringing in their lamparo catch in brightly coloured Catalan boats, followed by a *sardinade* – grilled sardines. Yummy, yummy!

BOGGLE EYED AND LEGLESS

We've already mentioned in a past issue that the P.O. holds the official record of **90 cm for the biggest four-legged lizard in mainland Europe**, well surpassing the average maximum of 60cm for the species. (In fact, a bigger one does exist in the Balkans, but it is legless !! Honestly ! These lizards when they go out on the town eh !!) But did you know that the **Gecko lizard**, most common around here, can stick upside down or even cling to smooth vertical surfaces such as windows thanks to the sticky pads on their toes?

CONFUSED? YOU SOON WILL BE!

Land around here is measured in *hectares* : A **hectare is equal to 10,000 square metres** (approximately 2.5 acres). Not to be confused with an *are*. There are approximately 0.025 acres in an *are*, and 100 ares in a hectare.

KNOW YOUR COASTS

The Côte Vermeille (vermillion coast) stretches from Argelès-sur-Mer to Cerbère via Collioure, Port Vendres and Banyuls-sur-Mer. This part of the coastline covers a mere 15 kilometres but the winding road from Port-Vendres to Cerbère makes it feel much longer, despite the superb views! Take a sick bag for the folk in the back seat!

The Cote Radieuse takes less than half an hour to drive from Barcarès to Argelès, passing through Torreilles, Ste Marie la mer, Canet en Roussillon, and St Cyprien.

Quelle est la danse préférée des chats ! Le cha-cha

THE TGV^{AND}PROPERTY PRICES

The big question that is on everyone's lips is "Will the TGV from Perpignan to Barcelona increase real estate prices?" We spoke to **Gabriella of Cyprimm** Real estate and letting agency in St Cyprien who told us: "YES, YES, of course... well maybe... well, actually, who really knows?"

Looking at other regions where the TGV has been installed, the same speculations were made, but in reality there wasn't much increase. A colleague in Strasbourg which has recently welcomed a new TGV line told me that there was not a substantial increase as predicted, despite estate agencies in the neighbourhood of the train station really expecting a big boost. However, everyone agrees that the TGV is good for the local economy, easier access to cities, increased hotel reservations, restaurants, cultural events, etc...

In some cases, it may cause a slow-down in sales of certain areas... do you really want to hear the TGV fly by when you are having your annual corgolade party in the garden? In the end, is it not all this speculation that causes the prices to increase?

CNNMoney.com has advertised that the **Languedoc Roussillon** is one of the 7 up-and-coming second home destinations. Now, if you think the TGV fever will boost prices wait till the Americans start buying... all hell will break loose!

Let's just sit back, relax, sip our glass of chilled rosé and see what happens before we jump on the band wagon and cause it to tilt!"

CHALK & CHEESE...

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin! This is the story of two young estate agents, Gabriella, Canadian and Stéphanie, pure Catalan, who worked together for over 6 years in an agency. Their professional relationship flourished into a beautiful friendship but it was not always easy. Gabriella is from the cold Canadian north, Stéphanie, from the passionate Mediterranean south: Gabriella retains her Canadian ways and accent, calm, relaxed, discreet, Stéphanie is loud, always on the move, tendency to blow her top... you know, something like "LA TRAMONTANA". As they say in USAP circles... "SEMPRE EN DAVANT"

Yet despite, or maybe because of these and many other differences, they found a certain harmony in their work and relationship.

When Stéphanie ventured out on her own and took over LA BAGEENNE IMMOBILIER in Bages, Gabriella was excited for her but a little melancholy. Who would make her morning coffee and afternoon tea?

LITTLE AND LARGE

L'Insee (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études), the French statistics agency, estimates that the population of the PO is around 422,300, compared to 393,000 in 1999. With 30,000 more inhabitants, the department has grown on average by 4000 inhabitants per year, compared to 3,200 between 1990 and 1999.

According to the French statistics agency, INSEE, (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études), the **most populated** town or village in North Catalonia is **Perpignan** with 122 000 residents and the **least populated** is **Sança**, in the Conflent, 30km from Prades, with a tidily 17 residents!

UNINVITED GUESTS

If you enjoy a real fire on a cold evening, remember to **stack your wood away from the house** unless you want to come home to find uninvited guests snacking on your priceless antiques! **Termites** are very keen to lunch on your logs and can find all kinds of inventive ways of entering your home on an extended visit from the log pile!

ROUSSI-SHIRE

Catalonia is divided into **comarques** – vaguely similar to a county or district, with no judicial or administrative powers as such in French Catalonia, but recognised historically, traditionally and socially by the Catalans. They are: **Roussillon (Rosselló)**, **Conflent**, **Vallespir**, **Capcir** and half of **Cerdagne**.

After much discussion and reflection, numerous apéros, lunches and bottles of wine, they decided to take their professional relationship to another level. Et voilà! Agence CYPRIMMO Real Estate was born.

Both agencies handle sales and manage properties for long-term lets. Cyprimm also handles holiday lets throughout the year.

If you have a real estate project in mind, give us a call, we would be more than happy to guide or advise you on different possibilities.

Our door is always open...even between midday and 2 pm! Pop in and say hello but do give us a call first - we just might be having another one of our "REFLECTION LUNCHES"...



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Flying from GIRONA?!

The newly-created Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) is expected to **double the time** it takes for passengers arriving in Britain to pass through immigration. New passport scanning equipment designed to **improve passport security** has already created havoc at Luton and Stansted and is expected to extend to other airports as the holiday traffic builds up. The scan is also for UK and EU citizens so no escape!

A spokesman from the BAA, which runs all main airports, said "We have spent over £20million, recruited another 1,400 security staff and put another 21 checkpoints in place to handle passengers as they leave but it is not our job to ensure their smooth entry into the country - that is down to the Border and Immigration Agency to provide enough staff".

Passengers travelling to Spain have been the first to be hit, with airlines required to provide information about people on their planes before take-off.

NEW PERPIGNAN STATION

Building has started for the new Perpignan train station, in preparation for the arrival of the TGV in 2009. The three year delay means **that builders can slow down** the building and extend their siesta! The building, to be constructed on more or less the same site as the present station, is to be ultra modern with an arty slant. At the moment, however, the only thing on residents' minds is the dust, dirt and inconvenience, as a trip across Perpignan involves at least a ten minute detour, not to mention increased traffic jams and grumpy drivers!

It's official! The expected date for completion of the TGV between Perpignan and Barcelona is now 2012, **three years later** than promised. It seems that the Spanish have decided to take the TGV UNDER Barcelona via a tunnel, rather than the original plan of taking it around the western side of the town. The present works are already proving a problem for the foundations of buildings such as **Gaudi's Sagrada Familia**, so the decision has been made to build a tunnel which is expected to be safer, but will take a further three years to complete. Perpignan to Figueras will be completed by 2009

DANGER!

There have been several **fatal accidents** recently due to lack of security on **road railway crossings**. It seems that there are 56 unprotected "level crossings" in the P-0, the decision to put barriers being decided by a vehicle counter, which must show more than 100 vehicles per day in order to qualify.

St Cyprien PORT – new building project

"Las routes" – a new project in St Cyprien port
The mayor of Saint-Cyprien has recently signed an official undertaking for the go ahead for the creation of 265 residential houses, and new business premises, situated by the port, to be started in 2008. The project is being thrown open to architects throughout Europe to present their ideas and suggestions in order to win the considerable contract. In the autumn, the plans will be made available to the public who will be invited to comment, although some feel that this is a 'softener' to persuade the public that their views are being taken into account, in order to scale down the expected complaints.

An 80 metre wide strip, starting at the route d'Argelès and stretching as far as the port, will be turned into a tree lined promenade. The project is intended to be collaboration between the private and the public sector – the area will be ZAC, (zone d'aménagement concertée) meaning it will be turned into a built up area, with a mix of different standard housing and business accommodation.

Building will take place on 26,000m2 of land and will house around one thousand residents. Accommodation will include business, private, council, retirement and tourist residences and there will be 500 further public parking spaces and 1,200 private spaces.

Vide-greniers (car boot sales)

If you're a car boot sale fan, or have items you wish to get rid of, it's well worth checking out the vide-greniers around the region, which take place mainly on Sundays. Get there early if you want to get the bargains and avoid the rush!
If you wish to display/sell at a vide-grenier, you will normally need to register in advance to book your "emplacement" and show some proof of identity and residency (electricity bill etc) when registering. More information on how to do this from your local town hall or tourist office.

AUGUST

Saturday 4th

Sainte-Marie
Théza (evening 17-24h)

Sunday 5th

Trilla / Mont Louis / Trilla
Maury / Ponteilla-Nyls

Saturday 11th

Saint-Pierre-del-Forcats

Sunday 12th

Valcebollère
Saint Cyprien
Salses le Château

Wednesday 15th

Eus / Torreilles

Sunday 19th

Torreilles plage

Sunday 26th

Claira

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 2nd

Vinça

Sunday 9th

Canet / Bompas

Saturday 15th

Colloure

Sunday 16th

Osséja / Llupia /

Rivesaltes

Sunday 23rd

Le Boulou

Sunday 30th

Saillagouse

OCTOBER

Sunday 5th

Mont-Louis

An oeuf is an oeuf!

The origin of 'love' meaning 'nil' in tennis scoring is believed to have come from the French word l'oeuf - an egg - as the egg has the same shape as a nought. (0)
 (The same applies to the expression 'out for a duck' which is short for 'out for a duck's egg', the duck's egg being the large nought recorded on the scoreboard)

FESTIVAL of ST. VINCENT AND FÉRIA

Collioure 13th - 17th August

This festival was first celebrated in the year 1701, on the day when the relics of St. Vincent, the patron saint of Collioure, were returned to the village. Numerous festive events have been preserved such as the *ronde du clocher* (swimming around the port and bay), and there are games and competitions on the water, dances for everyone, concerts and street music. The Catalan Procession on the Sea is a highlight of the celebrations, there are bodegas selling food and drink, and the streets are filled with music, dancing and all manner of entertainment as well as a grand firework display.

FREE ALCOHOL TESTING WILL BE AVAILABLE AT MANY OF THE BODEGAS

(Excerpt from My Life in the PO - on-line diary)

Yesterday morning, I got breathalised! Pulling into Gifi carpark on the outskirts of Le Boulou, to look at some of their classy pool accessories (4€ for a lilo but you get what you pay for) the "Gendarmerie Nationale" were out in force. I believe that it was much to do with the festa major (three days of festivities over the weekend) which must have meant that a large percentage of locals and tourists alike, were still driving around the next morning with blood in their alcohol! Anyway, once the gendarme had cleverly assessed that 12 year old Lulu was not the driver, and had made his way round to the other side of the car (we are 66 registered but still right hand drive in order to confuse the police!) the conversation started off like this.

Gendarme : Bonjour (unsmiling)

Kate : Bonjour (smiling)

Gendarme : Gendarmerie Nationale (very unsmiling)

Kate : Enchanté! Kate (slightly giggly - holding out hand politely for hand shake)
Now I didn't see the problem with introducing myself, but Lulu was cringing and the gendarme did not want to shake hands with me. How rude. Doesn't he realise that he is in France and that it's the custom? Instead he gave me a sealed plastic bag, asked me to open it, fit it to his appendage and blow in it. Unfortunately, by then I had a bit of a problem with the giggles, and the machine kept making the wrong noise, so he asked me to pull off the road, park up, and sent an older and hairier gendarme to try and shock me into blowing instead of sucking. Success - faced with the size and threatening stance of the hairy one, I managed to produce a large puff, proving myself to be sober, if slightly dizzy! What an adventure, spoilt by the fact that, when asked if they would remain there until I came back with my camera, they sent me packing!

FESTIVAL Tok TRAD 24th - 26th August

Festival of dance music

Céret

Three days of music, dancing, laughter and colour as Céret opens its streets to this long weekend of entertainment. Irish and folk music, dancing and much fun.

Arles sur Tech

18th - 19th August

FÊTES MÉDIÉVALES

The ancient village of Arles-sur-Tech goes back in time for two days on Saturday 19th August when more than 500 people will dress up in the costumes of the XIIIth century.

Rendezvous in the old part of the town where you will find: la Cour des miracles (thieves, beggars, lepers and all manner of street walker found in the region during the middle ages)

le marché medieval, (from apothecary to potter, glass blower to weaver, wood sculptor to blacksmith, wander amongst the stalls of this medieval market with a difference) la taverne de l'Ours (quench your thirst in this 'medieval' tavern!).... and all manner of medieval entertainment throughout the two days

LES JEUDIS DE PERPIGNAN

July - August Perpignan

Music, street theatre, jugglers, acrobats, flamenco, salsa, jazz... and late night shopping! This is **Thursday evening** in Perpignan when local, national and international artistes light up the streets and the *places* with a sparkling mixture of colour, sound and rhythm. A weekly event throughout July and August. Sit on the *café trottoir* with a glass of wine and be a part of it all!

MEDIEVAL MARKET

1st - 2nd September Canet village

Great fun for all the family, this medieval market takes the town back in time with medieval crafts, stalls, people dressed up in the costumes of the XIIIth century, fire eaters, sword fighting, re-enactments of medieval scenes, jugglers.....

Lively and colourful, with music and dancing from medieval times and grand firework display along with the 'setting alight' of the chateau

Saturday from 16h - midnight and Sunday all day (10h00 - 19h00)

Rue de l'église St Jacques - Impasse du Lion - Avenue du château

Anyone for tennis?

Apparently, the word 'umpire' comes from the French 'non partiere' (impartial, neutral). The original word was nunpire, but morphed from a «nunpire» to an«umpire».

Un thon téléphone à une sardine :

- Allô ?

- Non, à l'huile

2nd - 17th September

Perpignan

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU PHOTOJOURNALISME

"Can anyone tell the story of the tsunami without showing bodies ? Can we talk about Iraq without showing bomb attacks or mentioning the number of victims ?" - Jean-François Leroy (Director General)

A two week exhibition of **in-depth reports, photos and stories** which have often not been published, **Visa pour l'Image** is a free event attracting thousands of visitors every year and offering the public the opportunity to discover **news photos they may not have seen**, either because they had never been published or because they might shock, invite disapproval or offend.

Evening screenings and exhibitions are presented in a variety of historical and cultural spots around Perpignan, which also enables the visitor to discover the city.

The exhibitions are open every day from 10 a.m to 8 p.m, including week-ends.

Port-Vendres

FETE DE MAILLY

15th - 16th September

In **commemoration of the placing of the first stone of the Obélisque** in Port Vendres, on the orders of the Maréchal de France, comte de Mailly, the *Fête de Mailly* takes place every September. Fancy dress parades through the streets, re-enactment of the placing of the first stone, circus workshops, historical games, rides in a carriage, concert Xim Xim (traditional dance music of central France) sardanes, catalan ballet, enactment of a pirate fight, jeu de foulard (bandana game)...

Count Joseph Augustin **De Mailly d'Haucourt** was born in April 1707 at Corbiom, Vilaine-sous-Luce, in the Sarthe. In 1726, he entered military service as a **musketeer**, and in 1749 was appointed lieutenant general for the Roussillon and commander in chief of the province. In true "musketeer" style, he was exiled by the king in 1753 for having "stolen" one of the king's mistresses but in 1758, was reinstated as commander in chief, a post which he continued to hold until 1790.

De Mailly was the **driving force behind the creation of Port Vendres as a port**, and followed plans originally conceived by Vauban to open up and enlarge the existing facilities. From 1776 - 1778, land was dug out and quays were created. As a foil to the enormous amount of construction of flat concrete, De Mailly called in Charles De Wailly, architect and painter to the king, to build the Obélisque which has now become a focal point of Port Vendres. The first stone was placed on 28th September, 1780, by Mailly's wife, Felicité de Narbonne Pelet, and witnessed by much of the Roussillon nobility.

FÊTE DE LA ST CÔME

22th - 30th September

ET ST DAMIEN

Argelès sur Mer

Every year, during the second fortnight of September, Argelès-sur-Mer pays homage to its **patron saints**, Saint Côme and Saint Damien. According to legend, Argelès was struck by plague in the 17th century, an **epidemic which disappeared on 27th September 1652** - the feast of the patron saints - and on which day the population made a vow to carry out a solemn procession to honour them every year...

A variety of different events and entertainment punctuate 10 days of festivities, crashing to a grand finale on October 1st with the parade through the streets of the Argeles giants.

THE DIADA DE CATALUNYA

11th September

Regional

The 11th September is a **national holiday** throughout Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, reflecting the local importance of The *Diada*, an affirmation of Catalonian nationality. September 11th is in fact the anniversary of the day in 1714 when the **Franco-Spanish army captured Barcelona**, bringing an end to the region's independence. This yearly reminder of a bloody and controversial episode of Catalonia's history takes many forms ; political demonstrations, concerts and celebration events such as fireworks, parades through the streets, music, dancing, eating and drinking, punctuated in unique Catalan style by sardanes, *gègants* and *castellers* amongst other events. People wave *senyeres* or *estelades* (Catalan flags) and hang them on their balconies.



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oms.lang@wanadoo.fr

04 68 87 67 51

10

Oh...and
by the way...
she speaks english

17th September Céret LA RONDE CÉRÉTANE

Live music accompanies the departure of the competitors in *la Ronde Céretane* as they set off under the plane trees in the *Avenue d'Espagne*. International athletes, runners in fancy dress, different nationalities all come together in September to share the pleasure and the passion of this **challenging marathon**. Starting off with a 2.5km trot around the town and **old Céret**, the route becomes progressively steeper as it takes competitors out into the countryside towards its highest point on the **Col de Bousseils** (4.5km). A terraced track then takes runners through the vineyards with the mountains to the west and the Med to the east. The course carries on downhill, through the forest and back into the centre of Céret (11.5km and the first *ronde* is over). The runners set off again on the same course which this time ends at the winner's line where arrivals are **greeted with music and festival atmosphere**. All along the course, the organisers arrange stands with various beverages, such as *jus de pomme du verger*, *Sangria flamenco*, *grappe des Côtes du Roussillon*, *Porro de Muscat*, and a chance to taste local fruits. (The alcohol is of course for the spectators, not the competitors!) There are also BBQ stalls and live music all along the course. This weekend is also the **Festa Major de Sant Ferriol**, and Céret throbs with life throughout the weekend with correfocs, sardines, live music, games...

The 15th August ...
The 15th August is the festival of Assomption - a "jour férié" (public holiday), celebrated by Catholics throughout France and commemorating the departure of Mary from this life and the assumption of her body into heaven. Most shops close (although several large supermarkets remain open, in the morning) and there are festivities throughout France

Selection of events from the Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

For the full programme of events for August and September, visit www.anglophone-direct.com or www.congresperpignan.com

Events at the PALAIS DES CONGRES

15th September - 9.00 pm

Election of Miss and Mister Catalonia

More info on www.missmistercatalognord.com

Exhibitions at the PARC DES EXPOSITIONS

27th September - 1st October - 10.00 am / 8.00 pm

Salon de l'Habitat et du Cadre de vie - Ideal Homes Exhibition, Furniture, interior decoration, heating, lighting ...

29th -30th September - 10.00 am / 7.00 pm

Magic Park - Bouncy castle theme park

Events at the ÉGLISE DES DOMINICAINS

1st - 16th September -

«Visa pour l'Image» International Festival of Photojournalism. (see p10 for more info, also at the Palais des Congrès) Free entry.

29th -30th September - 10.00 am / 7.00 pm

International Record Festival. Free entry.



10 am - 12 am / 2 pm - 7 pm
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AK
ATOUT K.R.O.

11

Catalan cuisine

ESCALIVADA



It's barbeque season ! Escalivada comes from the Catalan word *escalivar*, meaning "to char", as the vegetables were traditionally cooked over embers to give the smoky flavour that is the essence of the dish. Serve as an entrée with crusty or toasted bread, or as an accompaniment to roast meat or fish, warm or at room temperature, but never straight from the fridge.

2 aubergines - 2 green peppers - 2 red peppers- 4 red onions - 8 tomatoes - 30 cl olive oil - salt and pepper - 1 large clove of garlic, chopped - 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar - 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley - 2 teaspoons small capers in vinegar, drained

✓ Char-grill or barbecue peppers and aubergines until soft and tender, then transfer to a bowl, cover with cling film, and stand for 15 minutes.

Peel both, removing seeds from peppers and tear into large pieces. Remove stem end of aubergine and tear lengthways into pieces. Chop onions and lightly brush with olive oil, then char-grill or barbecue for 3-4 minutes on each side or until tender and golden. Place char-grilled vegetables on a large platter or in separate bowls.

✓ Place garlic and 1 teaspoon sea salt into a mortar and, using a pestle, pound into a smooth

paste, add ¼ cup olive oil, vinegar, parsley and capers. Season to taste with freshly ground black pepper, drizzle mixture over grilled vegetables, and serve with crusty bread.

Wine to accompany this recipe recommended by Le Cellier des Arcades - Céret : Rosé - Mas Rous 2006

Next issue!
All about mushrooms

Restaurant reviews



John Fairclough

Auberge du Moulin à Soufre

Rivesaltes

Even in France, airport restaurants are not famed for the quality of their cuisine, nor their reasonable prices. To be fair, the Auberge du Moulin à Soufre at 7 Avenue Aeroport, Rivesaltes is not, strictly speaking, an airport establishment, but situated, as it is, a stone's throw from the runway at Perpignan airport, it is the next best thing.

Marcel, the affable host, who runs the place with his father and brother will ask you whether you wish to dine in the stone built plush dining room, complete with open fire, or on the spacious outside tree lined terrace that is protected on 3 sides from any inclement weather. The family hail originally from Barcelona, so the cuisine is unashamedly Catalan, with charcoal wood grills taking centre stage. In addition to the lunchtime-only 14€ formule, menus at 20 and 32 € are available. On the former, goats cheese salad, and Collioure anchovies are examples of starters, with morue (salt cod), and a huge mixed grill featuring Catalan meats such as boudin noir, costellou and butifarra, make up the mains examples. Sweets are also Catalan with Bras de Gitane, Crème Catalane, and seasonal fruits on offer.

A la carte features some more involved (and more expensive) local fare, such as cargolades, with the highlights of a vast mixed fish/shellfish grill at 24€. As one would expect in the Rivesaltes area local wines predominate, with Cazes particularly prominent, and I suspect it is they who provide the excellent pichet wine at 8€ per litre.

Of note are the Moulin's opening hours. Whilst closed both Mon and Tues evenings, Marcel was at pains to stress that, with their proximity to the airport, he tailors his daytime hours to suit Air France, Ryanair and FlyBe's timetable! Basically, the kitchen stays open till the last airport traveller has gone, enabling those of us en route to Stansted etc a leisurely meal right up to the check in deadline.

Bookings can be made on 04 68 64 33 26. To sum up, the Moulin is not a "haute cuisine" establishment. Nor does it pretend to be. What it does, excellently, in my opinion, is to serve well presented hearty Catalan fare in great ambience with attentive service. The easy road and air access with spacious



Wine improves with age -
the older I get, the more I like it !
Anonymous

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR POWINE FORUM

More wine recommendations
and advice on
www.anglophone-direct.com

Seigneurie d'Arse 2004 - vendanges manuelles - Fitou (Toulouges/Pezilla)

*I don't usually recommend Fitou wines but was drawn by the name
I'm afraid to say! (Yes, I was one of those people who bought Old
Fart beer and Silly slapper wine)
It won the Macon medaille d'or and is a very pleasant wine. Goes
down a treat! 3€ from Carrefour*

Les Mauryates Rouge from the Vignerons de Maury

*"How much ?" , I enquired with incredulity to the girl in the shop.
"6 €, Monsieur", came the matter of fact reply.
"6 €, for an ordinary Vin de Pays direct from the Co-Op producer ?"
"But this wine is not ordinaire" she protested, offering a petite
degustation.
To be fair the girl was right. Les Mauryates Rouge from the
Vignerons de Maury is a rather special VdP. 100% Carignan noir,
from older vines, and ripened to produce a whopping 14.5%
alcohol. Plenty of chewy red fruit (I got damsons and plums),
complex with a full tannic finish, it is a perfect apero, and superb
with robust red meats. We had ours with a good old Brit style Roast
Beef dinner, and the cheese to follow. Top whack stuff this.*

*Not available in the Supermarkets apparently, but seen in the independents
as well as the Maury Cave.*

Virtual vineyards ! Become a Winemaker on the Web An original and unique gift

Château Montana in Banyuls Dels Aspres offers you a micro-
parcel of vines in order to participate in the making of your
own wine. You follow all stages in the development of your
vines via internet, starting with the soil in which they grow and
ending with the bottling of your wine. You will be invited to the
Estate to participate in the making of your own wine during the
2 key-stages of the process : **the wine harvest and the wine
blending**. At the end of the vintage year, you will receive the
bottles of your production labelled with your name, a winemaker
certificate including the numbering of your vines, a worksheet
concerning your vines : Estate, soil and grape variety, and a wine
calendar. You will also receive a sample of the soil, and a vine to
plant at home (according to the season).

SAY CHEESE!

If you haven't tasted **Ossau-Iraty**, it's well worth a try. A relatively
hard cheese (about the same as a cheddar) it is quite strongly
and deliciously flavoured. Comparable with Cantal.

It comes from the other end of the Pyrénées.

We recently compared a Tomme Savoie with a Tomme Catalan.

Both good to eat, with the Catalan being softer and milder than
the Savoie. We also visited Papillon, one of the makers of Roquefort
earlier this month. The cheese hardly needs an introduction, but did
you know that they grow the mould for the cheese in stale bread ?

Red wine and prostate cancer

It appears that a glass or two of red wine per day may not only be
good for your heart - it may also **protect against prostate cancer**.
A study in America found that men who drank four or more glasses
of red wine per week saw a **50 percent reduction**
in their prostate cancer risk.

Resveratrol (the "active" ingredient in red wine) apparently slows
cancer cell reproduction and stimulates "cell apoptosis" in the
prostate cancer cells, causing them to die.

The study indicated that this effect was only produced from red
wine and that rosé or white showed no similar results.

Your questions

**CONCERNING THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF
RESVERATROL IN RED WINE, I WONDER IF THIS
EXTENDS TO WINES USED IN COOKING. HOW DOES
THE COOKING PROCESS AFFECT THE RESVERATROL
CONTENT?**

Resveratrol is found in the skins of grapes (and peanuts !) and
may help reduce the risk of heart disease and help prevent
cancer. It is light sensitive and sensitive to oxygen exposure,
but it is heat stable. Cooking shouldn't change the resveratrol
content of red wine, but because red wine is sensitive to
oxygen, once you open a bottle of wine, the resveratrol content
will begin to decrease.

ANSWERS TO "WINE VOCAB" PO LIFE N°10

- Q1 MAURY(c) is the only one not a CdRv village
- Q2 Aha ! Trick question ! ALL these guys own a vineyard.
- Q3 ALL BUT Cabernet Sauvignon (c) are allowed
- Q4 The Ripening Sun(b) is about a lady who sets up a Vineyard in Bergerac

Répétez cinq fois !
Virelangue
Ces seize chats savent chanter

Match up the word with its synonym and its definition 1

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| malin ① | Ⓐ qui évoque la moquerie |
| collation ② | Ⓑ qui a commis une faute |
| voie ③ | Ⓒ repas léger |
| coupable ④ | Ⓓ chemin qui mène quelque part |
| risible ⑤ | Ⓔ intelligence perspicace ou malicieuse |

ridicule / responsable / snack / rusé / allée

LANGUAGE tips

Temps, heure or fois? All three of these words mean time, but have very specific usage.

✓ Temps can mean either 'time' or 'weather' (in which case it is usually accompanied by the verb faire).

Je ne sais pas si j'ai le temps de jouer au tennis. Quel temps fait-il ?

✓ Heure refers to clock time. Quelle heure est-il.? Il est cinq heures!

✓ Foix is used to refer to something which occurs once or several times.
Je suis allé deux fois à Perpignan

Match up the proverbs

- | | |
|---|---|
| Un de perdu, dix de retrouvés ① | Ⓐ No pain, no gain |
| Qui dit fortune, ne dit pas félicité ② | Ⓑ Talk of the devil! |
| Quand on parle du loup, on en voit la queue ③ | Ⓒ Money doesn't necessarily bring happiness |
| La curiosité est un vilain défaut ④ | Ⓓ curiosity killed the cat! |
| Nul plaisir sans peine ⑤ | Ⓔ plenty more fish in the sea |

LANGUAGE tips

✓ Watch out!

- Qu'est ce qu'il y a à la télé ce soir ?

What's on telly tonight ?

- Qu'est ce qu'il y a sur la télé ce soir ?

What's on top of the telly tonight ? (A vase maybe ?)

- Il aime lire dans le train

He likes reading on the train

- Il aime lire sur le train

He likes reading on top of the train (most uncomfortable !)

Find the English for the idiomatic expressions below 4

- | | |
|---|--|
| Arriver à la bourre ① | Ⓐ to be nosy |
| Etre à deux doigts de faire quelque chose ② | Ⓑ to miss out on something |
| Vivre sur son petit nuage ③ | Ⓒ to have a lot of work on |
| Avoir du pain sur la planche ④ | Ⓓ to be late |
| Manger à l'oeil ⑤ | Ⓔ to help someone out |
| Manquer le coche ⑥ | Ⓐ to be a dreamer |
| Mettre son nez partout ⑦ | Ⓑ to eat free, for nothing |
| Motus et bouche cousue ⑧ | Ⓒ to be at the end of your tether |
| Retirer une épine du pied ⑨ | Ⓓ to keep a secret |
| Etre au bout du rouleau ⑩ | Ⓔ to be on the verge of doing somethinging |

Match the useful sayings 3

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Something's not quite right ① | Ⓐ Je l'ai sur le bout de la langue |
| Heads or tails? ② | Ⓑ C'est dans la poche |
| I always keep my word ③ | Ⓒ Ca s'arrangera |
| I couldn't resist ④ | Ⓓ Je tiens toujours ma parole |
| It'll all work out/venons à nos ⑤ | Ⓔ Il me reviendra |
| It'll come back to me.. ⑥ | Ⓐ Ce n'est pas grand-chose |
| It's as plain as day.. ⑦ | Ⓑ Cela saute aux yeux |
| It's on the tip of my tongue ⑧ | Ⓒ Il y a quelque chose qui cloche |
| It's in the bag ⑨ | Ⓓ J'ai craqué |
| It's no big deal ⑩ | Ⓔ Pile ou face ? |

ANSWERS TO 'TEST YOUR FRENCH' PO LIFE n°11

1 1g 2b 3d 4a 5h 6c 7f 8e

2 1 je n'aime pas... 2 il ne boit pas...
3 nous n'avons pas... 4 il ne fait pas... 5 je ne peux pas...

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

4 1b 2a 3b 4a 5a

5 1soir 2 journée 3ans

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Améliorez votre Anglais

Remplissez le blanc avec un chiffre pour compléter ces phrases idiomatiques 1

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. ----- wrongs don't make a right. – | deux erreurs ne font pas vérité |
| 2 He is --- feet under - | Il est mort et enterré |
| 3 It's --- of one and half a dozen of the other | C'est du pareil au même |
| 4 To be on cloud ---- | Être au septième ciel |
| 5. As like as --- peas in a pod | Comme deux gouttes d'eau |
| 6 ----- vision | Vision parfaite |
| 7 To be dressed up to the -----s | Être sur son trente-et-un |
| 8 to take ----- winks | faire une sieste |

Remplissez les blancs avec le bon verbe. 2

1 Why ___ we go out for dinner tonight ?

- a) shall
- b) don't
- c) are

2 I wouldn't do that if I ___ you

- a) were
- b) will
- c) wasn't

3 This time next week, we _____ be sitting on the beach.

- a) are going
- b) will
- c) are

4 What time ---- your plane leave ?

- a) was
- b) is
- c) does

5 Hurry up! It is time we --- leaving

- a) were
- b) are
- c) did

✓ **While/during/for ?**

While (pendant) + sujet

While I was sleeping, he stole my teddy bear.

During (pendant) + nom

I often get up for a wee during the night !

(nb : On ne peut pas utiliser during pour exprimer une période de temps - eg during 2 days)

For (pendant/depuis) + nom (qui indique depuis quand, ou combien de temps un événement dure.)

They talked for 2 hours.

Remplissez les blancs avec while, during or for 4

1. I lived in Leeds --- 20 years
2. Traffic in Perpignan is bad ---- rush hour.
3. They came round --- we were eating.
4. He broke his leg ---- he was playing rugby for the Dragons
5. I will be in hospital ---- three weeks.
- 6 We can meet --- the holidays

Répétez cinq fois ! *Tongue twister*

Three free throws

✓ **Language tip : he does / he is doing**

Employez **I do/watch/work** etc (present simple) pour parler des activités ou routines qui se passent régulièrement.

Eg I play tennis every Sunday

Employez **I am doing/watching/working** etc pour décrire ce qui se passe MAINTENANT, ou ce qui est déjà prévu dans l'avenir

Eg we are sitting in the restaurant at the moment

I am singing for the queen next month.

Choisissez la bonne réponse 3

1. Where are you going ?

- a) in the morning
- b) in Leeds
- c) to the cinema

2. Thank you for the flowers, Olivier

- a) you're welcome
- b) I'm sorry
- c) 12 euros

3 Is John there please ?

- a) I'm afraid he can't
- b) I'm sorry, he's not
- c) Really ?

4 Are you ready to go bungee jumping ?

- a) OK Let's go
- b) Yes, we went
- c) Yes I have

5 Does this belong to you ?

- a) yes, it is
- b) yes, it does
- c) yes it can

Expressions idiomatiques utiles.

Trouvez la bonne traduction pour chaque phrase

5

Heads or tails ? ①

① N'éveille pas le chat qui dort

When pigs fly ! ②

② Je deviens dingue

he is talking rubbish ③

③ Ça me dit quelque chose

It's a one horse town ④

④ Plein à craquer

I'm going bananas ⑤

⑤ Il cache bien son jeu

No kidding ! ⑥

⑥ C'est un trou perdu

That rings a bell ⑦

⑦ Quand les poules auront des dents

Bursting at the seams ⑧

⑧ Sans blague !

Let sleeping dogs lie ⑨

⑨ Pile ou face ?

He keeps his cards close to his chest ⑩

⑩ Il raconte n'importe quoi

RÉPONSES D'AMÉLIOREZ VOTRE ANGLAIS PO LIFE N° 11

- 1 1 red 2 red 3 blue 4 grey 5 pink 6 red 7 white
- 2 blind/busy/stubborn/slippy/light/cunning/old/quiet
- 3 1d 2f 3a 4c 5b
- 4 5,4,6,8,9,7,3,1,2
- 5 1 made 2 do 3 making 4 did 5 make

2 €ttc /line
(max 30 characters/line)

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Bridge partner wanted
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We spoke to Hervé Vigier, director of CLAVIS IMMO and specialist in real estate and related legal issues, who told us how CLAVIS can help you to find your ideal home or "résidence secondaire" and why they are "more than just an estate agent".



What exactly is CLAVIS ?

CLAVIS is a small and prestigious network of estate agents, already established in several regions, who have joined together through a common desire to offer an honest, informative and comprehensive service to new home buyers in France. From the moment you make contact with CLAVIS, they are totally at your service.

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CLAVIS operates through ten agencies in three main regions, dubbed by them 'the dream zone'; Languedoc-Roussillon, Midi-Pyrénées and Aquitaine as well as a Paris agency dealing mainly with investment properties in Paris.



Languedoc-Roussillon – between sea and mountain : some lovely properties around with superb views, but **land is at a premium** here if you are looking for a large garden.



Midi-Pyrénées – country side, for lovers of peace and quiet : many large rustic style properties with large amounts of land attached. **More land for your money**



Aquitaine – many old stone properties with oodles of character and class. **Land prices still quite reasonable here** ('though less so in the popular Atlantic resorts)



A SELECTION of BEACHES...

Argelès North

Superb, **long sandy beach** with stunning views in the distance, this beach is separated from the hustle and bustle of the souvenir shops by a shady, tree lined walkway. Rarely OVERcrowded.

Le Racou (Argelès)

Tucked in at the very southern end of the miles of beaches, this is a handy beach for those staying in the Albères. There's a loo (if you're brave!) and there are *cafés* and shops nearby. Somewhat coarser sand compared to Argelès north.

Between St Cyprien and Canet

The road between the two towns runs **between the sea and an étang** (a kind of salt water lake separated from the sea by a narrow isthmus). Long stretch of fine sand uncluttered by buildings, with fantastic views: look one way out to sea and the other way over the étang to Canigou. No shops or toilets.

La Franqui (Leucate)

Between sea and lagoon, La Franqui beach boasts miles of un-spoilt sand, **ideal for all wind and water sports** - windsurfing, sand surfing, funboarding, kitesurf... It can get quite crowded in high season. Best to avoid on windy days if you don't want sand in every orifice!

Le Barcarès

Much more attractive than you might expect of a purpose built resort - helped of course by the *étang*. Boating, windsurfing etc available. The stretch of beach immediately past the town (heading north) is relatively quiet and has a beach *café*. Free parking. Behind it is a water park with the usual flumes and chutes which is great if you have children. (Access to this beach is at Exit 15)

Ste Marie Plage and Toreilles Plage

Pleasant small resorts with campsites, apartments and villas, the beaches are good with a number of shops and *cafés* and there is free parking. If you want to bare all and get that complete tan, there is a *plage naturiste* (**nudist beach**) at the southern end of Toreilles Plage. (Exit from the Canet/Le Barcarès road at the roundabout to Toreilles

Plage and turn right a few metres along on to a track that doubles back parallel with the road before turning towards the sea).

... AND LAKES

Lacs du Massif du Carlit

This cluster of a dozen lakes of various sizes, nestled amongst the wild and **beautiful landscape** of the "hautes Pyrénées" make the climb to a height of 2100 - 2300 metres worthwhile and rewarding. Quiet, remote and atmospheric, the views will take your breath away. A **fisherman's paradise**, it is necessary to check out the fishing regulations before setting up at the side of some of the lakes as there is a section of "no kill" area where all fish must be thrown back. Some of the lakes are nature reserves and fishing is not allowed. The lakes are supervised by "mounties" on horseback. In stormy weather, or just somewhere to get out of the sun at siesta time, there is an "abri" or shelter between the Estany Sec and the Lac de la Comassa, close to the lakes del Viver and Negre.

Les Bouillouses

Between Font Romeu and les Angles, Les Bouillouses is one of the most beautiful lakes in the area at an altitude of 2070 metres. A dam was built here at the turn of the century (an important water reserve: 16 million cubic metres) which provided some of the electricity necessary to run **the little yellow train**, and a pathway leads to the summit of the CARLIT peak at an altitude of 2921 metres. It can be accessed by road from Mont-Louis but because of this ease of access, it becomes very busy in summer, when shuttles operate from nearby car park la Borde in order to limit traffic. The best way to visit this lake is, of course, on foot. From the lake at Matemale, also worth a visit for lake fans, visitors can take the **chairlift** to the station at the Roc d'Aude (2325m high). From there, there is a walk of about two hours to Les Bouillouses.

Villeneuve-de-la-Raho

Intended as a reservoir to supply local agriculture, the lake at Villeneuve-de-la-Raho quickly became a leisure area for **sailing, fishing and sunbathing** on the beaches specially created to accommodate the growing number of locals and tourists attracted to it for its easy access. Only 15 minutes from Perpignan centre; this lake is used all year round for walkers and joggers and also provides the water necessary for the *canadairs* in case of forest fires.

Vinça and Caramany

Created from dams to supply water for agriculture, the lakes at Vinça and Caramany (Agly) are respectively thirty and ten years old, therefore very recent in "lake years". Both have become "leisure lakes" with beaches, sailing, and supervised swimming as well as picnic areas, fishing etc. The lake of Vinça is just off the main road from Perpignan to Prades, and the Caramany lake is just outside Caramany (known for its excellent wine) near Ille sur Jêt.





If you wander around the vines and fruit orchards of the PO in August or September, you can't fail to notice the wild figs ripening on the small trees which grow to a height of 3-10 m tall.

Thought to be indigenous to western Asia, the edible fig is actually one of the first plants to have been cultivated by humans. Adam and Eve, (and subsequently painters and sculptors) have long used fig leaves to protect their dangly bits. Stone tablets dating back over 4,000 years record the use of figs in southern Iraq and the harvesting of figs is depicted in an Egyptian tomb painting from around 1,900 B.C.

Figs are also easily propagated from cuttings. Cuttings should be taken in the winter, when the fig trees have lost their leaves, and planted in pots, bags or in the ground itself.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Figs are rich in minerals and a good source of potassium, which helps to control blood pressure, manganese and iron. They also contain vitamins A, B and C and a decent amount of fibre.

The leaves of the fig are also edible, and known to have antidiabetic properties, reducing the amount of insulin needed by those who need insulin injections as well as lowering levels of triglycerides (fats which circulate in the bloodstream),

PICKING

They should be picked ripe from the tree, as they don't ripen well once picked. A very firm fig is not ripe and will not properly ripen further. A perfect pick is when the fig is just on the point of bursting. Look for the telltale honey-like

drop of moisture on the surface to tell you that it is just ready to eat. Attention! The sap from the fig can burn your skin. Wear gloves or long sleeves when picking!

STORING

Fresh figs have a very short shelf life. Keep in the refrigerator and use within a day or two. They are very delicate and bruise easily. Arrange them in one layer in a container. Cover or wrap them very carefully in order to ensure that they do not dry out or pick up odours from other food in the fridge.

FREEZING

Wash them, towel them dry and store them in the freezer in zip-locked bags or trays to prevent them from getting squashed. Best frozen whole.

BUYING

Choose figs that are richly coloured, plump and soft but with unbroken skins. At peak ripeness they may be covered with a light, fuzzy bloom. A sour smell indicates figs that are past their best.

PREPARING

Wipe with a damp kitchen towel. Gently remove the stem if the stem end is hard, cut it off. To show figs at their best, halve them or cut a cross in the top and press your finger in to splay them out.



Figgy recipe **Roast Figs** with Cinnamon, Thyme & Honey

3 tbsp clear honey, such as orange blossom or acacia - small knob of Butter - 1 tbsp orange liqueur - 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon - 12 ripe figs - 1 tsp Thyme (serves 6)
 ✓ Preheat the oven to 190°C/gas 5
 ✓ Put the honey, butter, liqueur and cinnamon in

a small saucepan. Heat gently, stirring, until liquid.
 ✓ Using a small, sharp knife, make a cut like a cross in the top of each fig, cutting almost down to the base.
 ✓ Place them upright in a roasting pan, splaying them out

as you go. Pour the liquid over each one. Roast for 15 minutes.
 ✓ Sprinkle a bit of thyme over each fig. Return to the oven; switch it off, leaving the door ajar. Leave the figs in the oven for 5-10 minutes before serving.



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