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Life in the Pyrénées Orientales



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Tradition

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A selection of events
from the Palais des Congrès

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n°21

February
March

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Something fishy is going on in this edition as we whoosh you to the coast to sample fresh fish in Port Vendres with Michael Brady, or walk on the wild side with Leigh and Merry on our favourite cliff-top walk. If you fancy a bit of pure, sweet air, why not pop up to Les Angles and surrounding resorts, where snow cannons ensure snow whatever the weather, and snowshoeing is just one of the many mountain marvels on offer!

As usual, a big THANK YOU to our advertisers without whom we would not exist. If you use their services, please tell them from us how much we appreciate them. And most important, an even bigger THANK YOU to our readers, whose emails and contributions make PO Life what it is – informative, funny and a whole lot of fun to produce!

The snow will soon be melting from the Canigou and the mimosa and almond blossom is already splashing pale pinks and fluffy yellows as it wakes, stretches, and smiles cheekily to greet a new season. . Joyeux Printemps!

Kate & Jane



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CAP BÉAR

to Paulilles and back

This walk is not too difficult, but it is quite long, taking us about 5 hours in total (with a sandwich stop for lunch!). It is approx 10.5km long with about 500m of ascent and descent.

Access : Map IGN 1:25000 Banyuls/Col de Perthus/Cote Vermeille (GPS) 25490T. It starts at Redoute Béar in Port-Vendres and follows the coast westward. There is a well-marked 'sentier littoral' which climbs quite steeply up from 509830E 4707600N, crossing the coast road and tracking parallel to it along the hill below the military base at Fort Béar. If you look back, you can see the docks in Port-Vendres where the fishermen sell their catches, and beyond that Fort St Elme overlooking Collioure and built to protect the town from Spanish invasion.

Walk :

✓ **The dramatic scenery with azure seas and waves crashing on to the steep rocky coast can only be described as breathtaking.** After about 2 km, having climbed 120 meters or so, you start to descend towards the 1905 Phare de Béar, the last lighthouse before Spain. The path joins the road to the lighthouse, and so you can concentrate on admiring the view to the south towards Banyuls. The vegetation along the roadside consists of many prickly pears (which, true to their name, can leave you prickled for



Combien de perroquets peut-on mettre dans le slip d'un homme ?
Ça dépend de la taille du perchoir...
perroquet - parrot slip - underpants
taille - size perchoir - perch



hours – I talk from experience!) and spectacularly tall Agave Americana or 'Century plants'.

✓ If you take a detour to the headland below the rather incongruous-looking Phare, there are ruined German gun emplacements and bunkers abandoned in 1944, overlooking the inhospitable rocky shore. After leaving the headland, you climb back up to the cliff-top path and follow it south and west, perhaps stopping for a paddle and a sandwich at one of the beautiful secluded coves on the way. Continuing along the path brings you eventually to the lovely beaches at Paulilles. If so inclined, you can visit the remains of the first nitro-glycerine factory in France (see page 17 more detail). In season there is also a diving school to help you take advantage of the crystal clear water.



Ironically, as Britain continues to measure distance in miles and the rest of Europe in kilometres, it seems that the word 'mile' comes from the French, mille (thousand) so named because the Roman mile was equal to one thousand double paces (one step with each foot).



✓ From the beach head inland, crossing the N114 and following the small road to Cosprons over the railway line. After about 500 meters at 509420E 4705350N a footpath crosses the road. Turn right onto the path through the vines, and follow it northeast, taking care not to stray left and end up in a dry river bed as we did! After 100m the path turns right and follows the contours of the hill down to a small gully, before turning left again at the foot of a terraced hill shown on the map as Puig de les Cabreres. The path then climbs towards a minor road, and

you should emerge from the vines at 509320E 4705970N, next to an agricultural well.

From here the path leads up the hill northwards, and is signposted Col Del Mig. After about 500m you reach the crest



of the hill overlooking Port Vendres. The path picks its way down behind some villas just being built. On the map it continues to the bottom until it reaches the main road into Port Vendres, which is true, but also involves entering a concrete drainage channel parallel to the road!



✓ From here you turn left over the railway bridge, and follow the road (caution, it's narrow and has no pavement) down into town, turning right to circle the football stadium and then again around the fruit port area until you finally return to your starting point at Redoute Béar. Congratulate yourself on your achievement, and then head home to reward yourself with a cold beer or glass of Sangria!

Do you know of a great walk in the region? Why not share it with us?



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 hour (during the night of Saturday/Sunday morning)

NEW FRENCH NUMBER PLATES

The SIVsystem

My husband used to know the number of every 'département' in France, which was a great help for insulting other drivers on the roads. With the characteristic Gallic gestures, he would shout "Parigot, tête de veau!" (Parisien)..... out of the window as the car in front made an unacceptable manoeuvre. However, from 2009, he has to find another outlet for his road rage as the French number plate system undergoes a complete

✓ Why?

The present numbering system for French number plates dates back to 1950 and has nearly reached saturation point. The computer system which currently manages number plate registration is technically ancient!

Although over 150 million vehicles are currently registered, only around 40 million are actually in use, due to owners failing to declare the scrapping of their vehicles.

✓ When?

From 1st January 2009, number plates in France will follow a new system (The SIV system - "Système d'Immatriculation des Véhicules") for new vehicles. From the 1st March 2009, this will also apply to second-hand vehicles when home moves, and other circumstances require changes to the registration documents (carte grise).

✓ What?

The new plates will be made up of two letters, three numbers, and two more letters, eg "AB-123-CD" The characters will be black on a white background with an "F" for France under the EU logo, on a blue strip to the left of the plate and a blue strip to the right with the owner's département number of choice, below the regional logo of the chosen département. The vehicle will keep the same registration number throughout its life. You may choose to change or keep the departmental number and logo.



✓ How?

Owners will be able to register their vehicles anywhere in France, regardless of domicile, via authorized garages, dealers or prefectures.

This removes the previous necessity of changing the vehicle registration number when moving to another department. A provisional "registration certificate" with the new registration number will be issued on payment of the relevant tax and valid for a month, allowing the driver to drive immediately. The carte grise will be sent by registered post to the owner's home address within a week.

Things you might need to know...



VITAL VITALE

More than ten years after its initial launch, the carte vitale 2 is gradually

replacing the original. 'Vitale 2' will contain more information (family doctor, organ donation, complementary health insurance, blood group, who to contact in emergency etc.) as well as photo ID.

The new cards are being issued gradually over a period of around four years, and don't seem to have reached the P-0 yet, so don't worry if you still have one of the original cards (ie without a photo). You should eventually receive an application form entitled 'ma nouvelle carte Vitale' which you should sign and return with a photo and a copy of your passport or identity card, after checking that all details are correct.

Your new card will not be operational until you 'cancel' the old one by taking it to a chemist or CPAM.

A MOVING EXPERIENCE

If you're wanting to transport a load or a large piece of furniture, visit www.truckspace.co.uk to find removal and van companies who may be going your way with a small or empty load. You will be able to say what you need and anyone with room on a van covering the route will send you an e-mail.

School holidays for our region (Zone A) 2009
February half term : 7th - 22th february

THE ESSENCE OF CHEAP PETROL

Check out this site to find out the best petrol around the region www.prix-carburants.gouv.fr/index.php.

Take a look also at www.zagaz.com, a site which asks you to note down prices when you fill up your car in France, and update them on the site. Of course, this site its only as good as the people who fill it in, but if done conscientiously, it allows you to find the cheapest fuel in your area, bearing in mind regular price changes.



BURGLAR ALERT !

There seem to have been more break-ins over the past months. Do not assume that our sunny paradise is burglar free! Houses which are clearly unoccupied through the winter months for long periods of time are easy targets. Make sure your house is secure, keep an eye out for any unusual cars, or activity in your area, and check your insurance policy – most companies will not pay out unless you have receipts, photos, keep valuables in a safe... ..and there will often be no indication of this on your policy.

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FETE DE L'OURS

Prats de Mollo (4 days) - 8th February 2009

Prats-de-Mollo comes out of hibernation in style, with the Fête de l'Ours followed by three days of carnival!!

The Festival

Blackened from soot, oil and sweat, biting and clawing at any obstacle, magnificent and majestic, the last of the bears of Costabonne come down into the town. Beware pretty ladies! At 15h, three shots ring out from the redan Ste Marguerite at Fort Lagarde and the hunt begins. The bears run, hunters follow, the crowd cheers and jeers and screams, deafened by gunfire, excited by the smell of gunpowder, drunk on

"The crowd cheers and jeers and screams"

the atmosphere.... Eventually the 'hommes en blanc' or 'barbiers', provocative and insolent, covered in flour and dressed in white with lace bonnets, intervene to bait the bear! They are armed with heavy chains. One has an axe, another carries a botifarra (locally made black pudding!!) and a cuvette (basin)

A final struggle between man and beast, and the chained bears are taken to the place du Foiral, accompanied by the 'coblà' (traditional Catalan music) where they are 'shaved' and 'humanised' by the 'barbiers', using the axe for a razor and the black pudding for soap

The day of the bear finishes with a Bal de Corre in which bears, hunters and barbers dance around in a frenzied circle

until a gun shot rings out and the bears fall to the ground, dead.

Of course, these are not real



*Les chasseurs et l'ours
toutes photos OMT Prats de Mollo - P. SALES*



Les barbiers

bears! They are men and women dressed in sheep skins, their faces and hands blackened with a mixture of suie (soot) and huile (oil), the hunters carry shot guns filled with blanks and a gourd of 'bon vin'. Bears, hunters and barbers are regularly revived with copious swiggles of wine!



THE LEGEND

The events, according to the legend, took place near the Col d'Ares, about 13 km from Prats de Mollo, at the foot of mont Falgas,

Long ago, a young shepherdess was spirited by a bear, actually the devil in disguise, who intended to seduce her and steal her virginity. The young damsel however, prayed to Notre Dame du

Coral, in a nearby chapel overlooking the valley, to preserve her virtue, and the bear was unable to approach her.

Every time he tried, he was repulsed, causing him to howl with frustration, and attracting the attention of woodcutters felling trees in the area on the 'jour de la Chandeleur, (Candelmas) who pushed aside the heavy stone blocking the entrance, rescued the young shepherdess and returned her to her parents. The thwarted bear was furious, his enraged howling resounding throughout the valley. The hermit of Notre Dame du Coral followed the howling and spotted the bear at the top of a large tree overlooking a precipice, eating berries. When he descended for the night, they cut the branch so that it was much weakened, and on the bear's return the next day, he climbed on the branch and fell to his death!



Rasage de l'ours

The word pancake is probably derived from the French word "pannequet," a small stuffed crêpe.

Carnival time

The 'taming' of the bear is only the beginning of several days of carnival and tradition in Prats de Mollo. On Monday 9th, the Mascarade opens the festivities as the village children, dressed in white with faces covered in flour parade through the streets making as much noise as possible, banging on pans and bin lids... In the afternoon, it is time for the Encadenat (link up) - men dressed as women, and women dressed as men, in flam-

"In olden days, this dance was a judgement on vice and virtue!"

boyant and colourful costumes, joining together in solidarity to form a long line as they dance through the streets of the town, conga-like, followed by the Ball de la Posta. The 'posta' is a plank with a picture of a pretty girl at one end, representing the virgin, and a devil on the other side. Dancers range themselves in couples opposite the carrier of la posta and his colleague who carries a wooden sword. The dancers advance three times, in couples, towards the armed pair. The first time they bow, the second time the lady must kiss the face on the posta, choosing devil or virgin, and the third time, she gets a smack on the bottom with the plank! In olden days, this dance was a judgement on vice and virtue!

On Tuesday 10th, a masked ball leads at midnight to the Tio tío and the ritualistic burning of the carnival king. Dressed in white, covered in flour, and equipped with a lit candle, participants dance round in a circle and try to set the person in front alight!!!! Le porteur du balai is on hand with a broom to put any unfortunates out! (Tio means log and is actually represented by a roll of paper stuck on the back of each dancer. It is this that they try to set alight rather than the whole person!!)

Great fun, a little bit different and well worth the trip!



February and March see carnivals all over the P-O – fancy dress, street parades and fireworks, along with the symbolic burning of evil spirits.

However, the origins of 'carnival', believed to come from the Latin 'carne vale', meaning "farewell to meat" are actually less frivolous than the word denotes today.

In fact, Mardi Gras used to represent a 'last fling' before the thin times of lent when winter stores of food were running down, in a society before fridges and freezers allowed us to store provisions indefinitely. It was necessary to use up all remaining meat and animal products such as eggs and butter so why not make a party of it? Hidden behind masks, it was also a chance to be just a little bit wicked!

Watch out for the burning of the straw-filled Carnival king,

symbol for infertility, sins, and bad luck – an important character in the traditions of modern carnival, who is burned in a spectacular ritual at the end of the festivities.



Spotlighton...

“If you can walk you can snow shoe”

Jane Mann tries the Snow Shoe Shuffle

“Crunch, crunch, crunch” : Jane Mann discovers that the “if you can walk you can snow shoe” quote bandied about by the snow-shoe-walking-fraternity is absolutely true.

Snow shoes strapped to walking boots, a couple of sticks in hand and it's off into the snow. Or rather on top of it. You really do not sink in, no special skills required and the manoeuvrability is magic. The snow crystals crunch beneath your feet giving a walking on crisp packets effect. No wonder that this has been how trackers and trappers have got around since time immemorial. Or indeed that the French and the English in North American colonial times learnt to snow shoe. In the winter of 1690, a French raiding party clad in this useful local footwear attacked a British encampment near New York. The Brits, already connoisseurs of what the French called “raquettes” leapt onto their snow shoes and pursued the attackers for



50 miles, eventually recovering all their people and goods. Their use became recreational a century or so ago taking a further century to become the light and easy kit of today.

Following in the footsteps of my guide, the snow already flattened by his snow shoes, my first steps were a doddle. The world was silent, pine scented and fresh. Bright sunlight filtered through to glint and glitter on snow in the clearings. After an hour or so we arrived at the ruined chapel of Valsera. The population had been wiped out by the Black Death at the beginning of the XIV century. A contradictory notice tells of two sisters, the sole survivors, who gave the church and land to the commune of Les Angles, then states that this story was not strictly true as it was the Abbey of St Michel de Cuxa who ceded Valsera to Les Angles in 1701. . .

Mike takes groups of four to fourteen people snow shoeing and arranges monthly snow shoe walks with a convivial barbecue lunch of generous proportions organised by his wife, Mumbles in the Mountains, Jen. An absolutely great day out!

Easy to get kitted out, all you need is walking boots, sticks and a pair of waterproof trousers (as well as normal cold weather clothing). Snow shoes can be hired for a few euros a day or bought from around 100euros:

mike.rhodes@free.fr for details.

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What's on?

Our pick of events around the region. For a more detailed events calendar, visit us on www.anglophone-direct.com

7th -23th February

Ski for FREE

Les Angles

During the half term hols every evening- 17h-19h. Free night ski (no lift pass required) Every Thursday. Torchlight descent, fireworks, mulled wine and hot chocolate are offered at the foot of the pistes

5th -7th March

Snow golf

Font Romeu



Based on golf but played on snow instead of grass, this golf competition, at an altitude of 1800 metres, in temperatures well below 0°, is very much 'something completely different'. Specially adapted course with fluorescent orange balls.

Registration on: www.snow-golf.fr or contact the Office de Tourisme de Font-Romeu on 04 68 30 68 30.

A selection of...

TRUFFLE FESTIVAL 1st Feb Arles-sur-Tech
Snuffle a truffle in.... 8th Feb Lesquerde

CARNIVAL 9th-11th Feb Prats de Mollo
28th Feb - 7th March Argelès
28th Feb - 1st March Le Barcarès
7th - 14th March Céret
14th March Toreilles

BEAR FESTIVALS 1st Feb Arles-sur-Tech
8th Feb Prats de Mollo
15th Feb St Laurent de Cerdans

RACES 22th March Arles-sur-Tech
Nowhere to run? Les 10 km de la Corrège: a race along the beautiful coastline of Leucate
28th March Port Leucate
The Arles-Belmaig mountain race (11 km)
the Ronde de la Fontaine des Buis (10km)

Rugby LEAGUE WITH THE CATALAN DRAGONS
14th Feb H Huddersfield
22nd Feb A Warrington
27th Feb A Hull FC
7th March H Castleford
15th March A Wakefield
21st March H Bradford
27th March A Leeds



Selection of events from the Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

For the full programme of events visit www.congresperpignan.com

PARC des EXPOSITIONS

Salon Animaliades - 21th-22nd February

Puppies and kittens of every shape, size and breed for sale and exhibition, are just a part of this week end of animal magic.

Magic Park - Bouncy castle theme park - 4th, 25th, 7th, 22nd, 28th February - 11th, 14-15th, 18th, 21-22th, 25th 28-29th - Festive fun in this indoor theme park for children with jungle run, mini slides, ball park, soft mountain.

PALAIS des CONGRÈS

Les Rendez-vous du Caveau de la Huchette. This regular jazz 'club' brings together talented jazz musicians.

2nd February - American singer Gilda Solve

3rd March - Quartet J-Paul Amouroux Boogie Machine

BIG BAND 31 - 31st March - reform with a new repertoire and surprise guests to bring you the best of jazz and swing.

KINGS OF DANCE - 14th March - Medley of cult musicals and variety of dance with 80 dancers in front of giant screen.



CHÂTEAU DE CALADROY

lies west of the Col de Bataille at the foot of Forca Real on the road to Belesta de la Frontiere.

Viewed from afar it looks like a village clustered round its ancient castle. Dating from the XII century and once a fortress on the old frontier with the kingdom of Mallorca, the Chateau with its 130 hectares of vines and 7 hectares of olives dominates the valleys of both the Tet and the Agly. The combination of eight grape varieties grown produce both dry and naturally sweet wines of great quality and complexity. Hand picked and

selected, it is not surprising that the resulting wines feature on the menus of many of the best restaurants in France, notably the Le Fouquet's and Le Martinez in Cannes and are exported to Belgium, Germany, Italy, the UK, the USA and Japan. Or that they have won medals and appear in the Guide Hachette, Parker and the Wine Spectator to name but a few of the most recognised wine guides.

If you drive between the stone lions flanking the entrance, you will be made welcome and given a tasting in the converted chapel of the old chateau. There are crisp whites, light and fruity; rosé, perfect for summer drinking; Rivesaltes and Muscats, naturally sweet and delicious; and, above all, several spectacular rich red AOC Côtes de Roussillon Villages.

Since 1999 Serge Maurin, director of the Domaine and Nicolas Lebarq, the Cellar Master, have worked on the grape varieties, notably introducing several parcels of Syrah, a grape that blends perfectly with the existing Carignan and Grenache vines already many years old.

Look around the estate, appreciate eight centuries of history, the Square tower, the Round Tower, the new Chapel; admire the views across the plain of Roussillon to the sea, over the vineyards to Canigou; fill your car with remarkably reasonably priced wines of outstanding quality: at least ten exceptional crus for under 10 euros a bottle!

and very high quality. Ideal with grilled meat or cheese, the taste of red fruits, soft spices and supple tannins give way to a well rounded smooth glow of pleasure. The blend of Syrah, Carignan, Grenache Noir is perfectly matured in oak. As with all Chateau de Caladroy's wines, every stage is controlled with care and pride.

Both wine available in Caves St Martin, Port-Vendres



Chateau de Caladroy
046857 1025

Email: chateau.caladroy@wanadoo.fr
66720 Belesta de al Frontiere

PARTICULARLY RECOMMENDED

"Expression de Caladroy"

Vin de pays des Cotes Catalanes, 2007

At 6.60 a bottle and 14.5% this elegant, predominantly chardonnay wine is perfect to drink with oysters (see page...) or fish or as an apero. It is light, well made, matured in oak and the fruit comes through to give a finish that is delightfully dry and crisp.

Cuvée Les Schistes

Côtes du Roussillon Villages, 2004

For a more wintery drop the Chateau de Caladroy Cuvée Les Schistes, 7.20 a bottle was listed in both the Guide parker and Le grand guide des vins de France. The name comes from the stony soil of the vineyards, low yield

Restaurant reviews

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

ANONYMOUS



LE CHALUT Port-Vendres

The restaurant Le Chalut is a bit of an institution in Port Vendres. Always busy and mostly with locals, the food is predominantly, but by no means exclusively, seafood.

✓ Dramatic plateaux of Fruits de Mer range in price and value of ingredients from 16.50 per plateau per person to a luxurious lobster filled version for 98 euros for two. Menus start at the good value 14.50 for 3 courses to 41.50 for a long and lingering feast. A fine selection of local wines, red, white and rosé range from 17 – 29 euros a bottle and there is a choice of Burgundies, Loires, Rhones or Bordeaux as well.

✓ We chose from the 14.50 menu of the week and enjoyed Soup de Poissons de Roche with all its trimmings, Oysters and Moules Marinieres, the only complaint being that the moules could have been hotter. . . My Darne de Morue, a generous portion, was a little bland but the signature crispy spinach and a quick shake of salt soon sorted that out. Zara's Filet de

Daurade, as she had insisted, was completely devoid of bones and excellent. (We all agreed we hated meeting an unexpected bone in so called filleted fish) and Kate's Grilled Faux Filet with black pepper sauce was perfect. She had wisely ordered "a point" knowing that the French habit of undercooking meat would guarantee the rare version she hoped for.

✓ We washed it down with carafes of wine, very drinkable at 3, 6 or 11 euros a carafe of ¼, ½ or 1 litre. Tangy Tarte au Citron was the perfect dessert and coffee was served with tempting truffles.

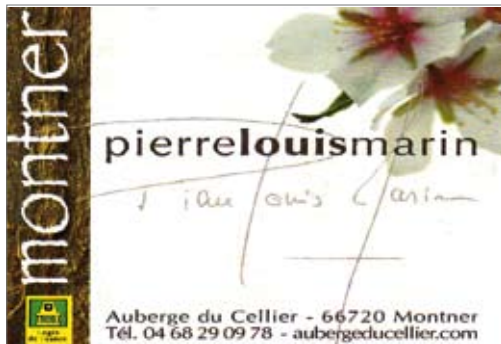
✓ Le Chalut offers a children's menu at 9 euros and is open for lunch and dinner. 04 6882 0091



2 Quai Pierre Fargas - 66660 Port-Vendres
04 68 82 01 51

Rising star in the Port Vendres restaurant firmament, La Tramontane, recently renovated, offers inventive, interesting and excellent quality menus at reasonable prices. Its ever-increasing popularity makes booking

essential. Either in the comfortable bar or restaurant or at a sunny table outside, you can expect a warm welcome and a delicious meal.



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Arles sur Tech



In common with Prats de Mollo and St Laurent de Cerdans, Arles sur Tech has a **Bear Festival** each February, but Arles is probably best known for its Abbey of Sainte Mairie, founded in the XIII century by Sunifred, brother of Wilfred the Hairy (whose shield became the Catalan flag). It was destroyed by Viking raiders and replaced by the present church in 1046. The **beautiful cloisters** were added two centuries later. In the X century a plague of “monkey men”, dragons, bears and other beasts were causing havoc in the area. Abbot Arnulfe set off to Rome in search of relics to safeguard the population and ward off all evil.

*“La Sainte Tombe”
has run with pure
water ever since*

He returned with those of **Abdon and Sennen**, obscure Persian saints martyred in the Arena of Rome. They did the job. One man was instantly cured of leprosy and the monkey men and co melted away. The IV century sarcophagus in which their bones used to be stored and known as “**La Sainte Tombe**” has run with pure water ever since, defying scientific explanation. The water is drawn off periodically and distributed to the faithful.

The church is rich in baroque art and XII century frescoes decorate the apse of the high chapel. It also houses a superb XIII century **Schmidt Organ**. An old refectory in the cloisters contains a small museum of local iron mining history.

The medieval city centre is full of winding narrow streets with rather elegant houses. Tourist Office 04 6839 1199.



Halfway between Ceret and Prats de Mollo, Arles sur Tech is the starting point for excursions to **St Laurent de Cerdans** and on, via Coustouges, into Spain ; or for the drive through mining history to Corsavy, la Batterie and over to Valmanya and the Tet valley; or why not visit **Gorges de la Fou**? Overhead, a stout net protects you from falling rocks, beneath is a safe and sure metal walkway. Clad in a compulsory helmet, you enter the narrowest gorge in the world. The

*“Les Gorges de la Fou:
the narrowest the
gorge in the world”*

visit takes an hour. The walkway leads through **dramatic caves**, occasional glimpses of the sky remind you are not actually pot-holing, tumbling water thunders below you as the stream continues to carve its way through a cleft in the cliffs. Small plants and ferns flourish in the moist air, the temperature is cool, not much wind but slippery if wet and closed from November to March.





Paulilles



the positions from which he painted the originals.

From 1838 onwards Port Vendres's trade with North Africa was on the increase, particularly with Algeria. A connection brutally broken in 1962. The Sidi Ferruch Monument, originally one of Vauban's defences, houses a small museum dedicated to French Algeria. Today the cargo trade is on the increase again and huge ships manoeuvre in the tight space between the quays.

"inventor of dynamite, Alfred Nobel"

There are two sandy beaches and numerous little coves line the coast in either direction. The walk to Cap Bear is easy and has marvellous views. Not surprisingly there is a semaphore station and the Phare Béar (lighthouse) when you reach the point..

On the Coastal path, along cliffs covered in wild lavender and rosemary, halfway between Port Vendres and Banyuls sur Mer, is Paulilles. There has always been a small beach backed by a delightful summer restaurant but, in 1908, the old Nobel Explosive factory; derelict, dangerous and

stripped of all useful accoutrements; was opened to the public. There had been threat of redevelopment as a pleasure port but the conservationists won through, huge amounts of money have been invested and the result is spectacularly good.

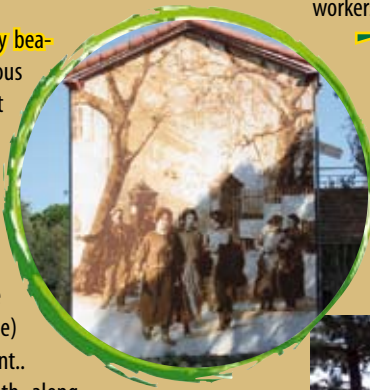
There is parking and safe access. There is a reception centre with small museum and café.

Some of the old buildings have been preserved and contains a museum to Catalan Barques. Plaques describe the history of the factory begun in 1870 by the Swedish engineer and inventor of dynamite, Alfred Nobel. The explosives made

there were first used in the mines of La Batere near Arles sur Tech as well as in the making of the Panama Canal.

This factory became a village, employing more than 400 inhabitants of Port Vendres and Banyuls. The work and conditions were hard. The murals on the restored buildings are a fitting memorial to the Paulilles workers.

The beach, backed by the old German defensive walls and parasol pines, is sunny and sheltered the waters clear and sparkling. Rumour has it it is to be known as "Port Vendres Plage". Whatever name it goes by it is a beautiful spot. The opening hours of the Site vary from season to season but run in winter 9h – 17h and, in mid summer from 9h – 21h.



Fish market

with MM Brady

with pride. Many are linguistically capable, speaking Catalan, English and other languages, in addition to French. The menu of **reasonably-priced** small dishes is a single A4 sheet, printed both sides, encased in plastic, oysters, shellfish and crustaceans on one side, tapas and wines on the other. Everything on the menu is available on the shelves and counters in the shop; few counter customers leave without buying something to take home.

“Live lobsters and langoustines stare out from tanks”

It serves no proper meals, just dégustation, samples of its retail selection of seafood. It has no tables, so you cannot book one. It doesn't advertise and has no website. It closes at 7 pm, just as traditional dinnertime starts. Yet the retail niche in the **Port Vendres wholesale fish market** (Criée aux poissons) is a popular seafood eatery and shopping point.

With good reason: the best of raw materials are close at hand, as the market is among **the largest** in the western Mediterranean. Vans and lorries come and go, and the fishing fleet based in the port docks just a quay away.

Along two walls, there are shelves lined with seafood delicacies, condiments and wines. There are counters with fresh shellfish and prepared dishes. Live lobsters and langoustines stare out from tanks. Just outside the entrance, there's a pavilion dedicated to fresh fish of **innumerable species**. It's the seafood shoppers' delight.

The focal point for sampling shoppers as well as snack seekers is a pub-height counter toward the back of the retail shop. Here, you rub shoulders with the real stuff: the waiters are **seafood workers**, wearing rubber boots and waterproof aprons. They speed back and forth, opening oysters, cleaning mussels and serving customers at the counter. They are workmen, doing their jobs

To navigate to the market, first find the **memorial Obelisk** at the head of the old part of the port (Vieux Port). With your back to it, you are looking East. At your left is the church and quays for fishing, customs, rescue and pilot boats. Follow the quays to the northeast: first Quai de l'Artillerie, then Quai du Fanal and finally, Quai de la Quarantine to **Criée aux poissons**, a large rectangular building adjoining a fishing and leisure boat works and yard. Go to the left around the building and follow the large signs to the entrance of the retail part of the market. It's about a five-minute walk, but you may drive if you wish.

Poissonnerie Côte Catalane, Anse Gerbal, 66660 Port Vendres, open 08:30-12:30 and 15:30-19:00 Tuesdays to Saturdays; 09:00-12:30 Sundays and holidays; closed Mondays.



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Répetez cinq fois ! **Virelangue**
Son chat chante sa chanson

Work out the translation for these confusing idioms

- 1
- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Etre habillé comme l'as de pique ❶ | a to swallow one's pride. |
| Tomber dans les pommes ❷ | b to tell it like it is |
| Bâtir des chateaux en Espagne ❸ | c To add fuel to the fire. |
| Avoir le cafard ❹ | d To go it alone |
| Payer les pots cassés ❺ | e it's not impossible |
| Jeter de l'huile sur le feu ❻ | f to faint. |
| Avaler des couleuvres ❼ | g To build castles in the air |
| Faire cavalier seul ❽ | h to wear clothes that don't match. |
| Ce n'est pas la mer à boire ❾ | i to be fed up |
| Appeler un chat un chat ❿ | j to suffer the consequences |

Parts of a whole! 4

Here are the parts – find the whole (all answers at end of exercise)

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

Answer : une maison.

1. Une feuille, une tige, une racine.
- 2 La carrosserie, les pneus, le pare brise
- 3 les poils, une queue, une truffe
4. Une souris, un écran, un clavier
5. Les ongles, les doigts, la pouce
6. Un matelas, un sommier, un oreiller
7. une porte, des étagères, un tiroir
- 8 les ouies, les écailles, les nageoires
9. Les plumes, le bec, les ailes
- 10 le guidon, les pédales, une selle

a une armoire - b une plante - c un vélo - d une main - e un chien - f une ordinateur - g un poisson - h un lit - i un oiseau - j une voiture

Remplissez les blancs 3

OUI OUI!

Un petit 1 pleure dans la salle d' 2 de l'hôpital.

« Pourquoi 3 -tu? » 4 demande une 5

»Je viens pour une analyse de 6 et mon frère m'a dit qu'ils te coupent le 7 du doigt! »

Dans un 8, un autre petit garçon 9 met à 10

« Arrggghhhh – et moi je viens pour une analyse d'urine...! »

a infirmière - b hurler - c se - d bout - e pleures - f sang - g attente - h lui - i garçon - j coin

Trouvez la bonne définition 2

1. une casquette

- a) coffin
- b) baseball cap
- c) snack

2. une montgolfière

- a) hot air balloon
- b) golfing retreat
- c) board game

3. arroser

- a) to rise
- b) to water
- c) to prick

4. bachelier

- a) successful baccalaureate student
- b) teenager
- c) an unmarried man

5. une plaie

- a) game
- b) complaint
- c) cut or wound

VARY YOUR LANGUAGE!

Don't say ... très,
Say...
Drôlement
Excessivement
Extrêmement
Sérieusement
Tellement
Vachement

ANSWERS TO 'TEST YOUR FRENCH' PO Life n°20

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

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Améliorez votre Anglais

Répétez cinq fois ! **Tongue twister**
Take three cheap ship trips

✓ Their - There - They're

Ces mots se prononcent de la même manière mais ne veulent absolument pas dire la même chose !

Their – leur(s) (à eux)

There – là (there is – il y a)

They're – ils/elles sont (contraction : they are)

A is for apple! Trouvez les définitions de ces mots suivants, qui commencent tous avec A

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 Someone who learns a craft | a acorn |
| Grands-parent, great grands-parent | b amethyst |
| semi precious purple stone | c afraid |
| The nut of an oak tree | d Africa |
| joint between foot and leg. | e alike |
| things that look the same. | f apprentice |
| long with sharp point. | g ankle |
| scared or frightened. | h arrow |
| eighth month of the year | i ancestors |
| second biggest continent | j August |

✓ take

take - prendre

take over – prendre la main

overtake – doubler, dépasser

Remplissez les blancs 3

Un A police 1 pulled over a car on the 2. The policeman got 3 of the car and walked 4 to the driver's window: "Excuse me sir, but 5 you know that one of your 6 lights is not working?" To his 7, the driver leapt out, ran to the rear 8 his car, put his head in his hands and 9 into tears. He 10 so distressed that the policeman took 11 on him and said "Don't take it so hard Sir. It's not such a serious 12.."

"I don't think you understand Officer" the driver cried, "I was towing a caravan!"

a looked - b patrol - c over - d of - e pity - f burst - g motorway - h brake - i offence - j out - k did - l astonishment

VOCABULAIRE

Ne dites pas... *very*

Dites... ..

Extremely

Astonishingly

Awfully

exceedingly

incredibly

particularly

pretty

terribly

really

Choisissez le bon mot 2

1 here !

2 Take a look over

3 Do you know what doing tomorrow?

4 I hope they bring swimming costumes.

5 are two of them

a their - b there - c they're

DAFT JOKE

WHAT'S WHITE AND GOES UPWARDS?
A CONFUSED SNOWFLAKE!

Trouvez le bon sens de ces phrases idiomatiques

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4 who is calling? | a c'est à prendre ou à laisser |
| permission to speak | b tu rêves! |
| take it or leave it | c gardons le contact |
| fat chance! | d occupe toi de tes oignons |
| The matter is closed | e qu'est ce qui se passé? |
| Let's keep in touch | f quoi qui arrive |
| Mind your own business | g c'est de la part de qui? |
| Come hell or high water | h Lâche moi les baskets! |
| Get off my back! | i l'affaire est classée |
| what's up? | j demander la parole |

RÉPONSES D'AMÉLIOREZ VOTRE ANGLAIS PO LIFE N° 20

1 2c 3f 4a 5b 6d

2 1j 2k 3f 4e 5c 6b 7l 8a 9i 10h 11d 12g

Farter and Stinky ... are NOT Santa's
reindeer

Did you know?



MAIS WEE!

February and March are just right for gathering wild asparagus (les asperges sauvages) in the Pyrenees-Orientales but have you noticed that it can add a rather 'distinctive' odour to your urine, due to sulphur-containing amino acids which break down during digestion? Or maybe you haven't noticed! Whilst everyone digests asparagus the same way, only about half of us have the gene that enables us to smell the resulting effects on our pipi!! Lucky for some! In 1891, cookbook author, Pellegrino Artusi, wrote that adding turpentine to a chamber pot of asparagus provoked urine, could transform the odour into the "sweet scent of violets." Interesting hobby!



The French don't roast parsnips - they feed them to animals. Let's start a new trend and ask for 'panais' in our local shops!

SIZE MATTERS!

Locals sometimes claim that the mystical Canigou is the highest peak of the Pyrenees. In actual fact, it just feels that way to us little people down on the plain. Pico Aneto, on the Spanish side is the highest of the range at 3,400 metres.

How do you poo?

Do you know where the expression "comment allez-vous" comes from? This courteous enquiry dating back to the Renaissance period is actually all to do with poo! Yes, it really means "comment allez-vous... à la selle" (aller à la selle - to have a bowel movement) therefore 'How are your bowels?? At this time, the quality of the aforementioned was very important in gauging a person's health. Think of that and try not to titter next time you greet someone with this polite phrase!



LEST WE FORGET ...

La Retirada – 70 years on

In January and February of 1939, over 500,000 Republican refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil war, struggled across the high passes of the Pyrenees on foot. They were not welcomed with open arms. On arrival, they were herded into, makeshift open-air camps on the beaches of Argelès, Saint Cyprien or Barcarès where today we swim and build our sandcastles, and later confined in squalid conditions in internment camps around the region. Learn more at a series of conferences, exhibitions, shows from 8th – 22nd February in Argelès, Elne, Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans (more info on 0468958503) and an exhibition of photos based on the statements of political prisoners at the Centro Espagnol Perpignan 0468513437

A MOMENT OF WAR

You may well have heard of Laurie Lee's famous «Cider with Rosie», a well known A Level lit study in the 60s and 70s! In A Moment of War, the final book of this autobiographical trilogy, Lee describes how he walked from Perpignan to Figueres in December 1937 'carrying just a violin and a saucepan' to rejoin the Spanish Civil War, passing through Céret, Las Illas, Banyuls and Port Bou.

MIMOSA

Known as "wattles" in Australia, from whence it originated, the tough mimosa tree should now be splashing yellow and gold fragrant fluffy blossoms around the region, but did you know that it was actually introduced to the south of France in the 19th century by wealthy Brits, who used the blossom to brighten up their winter homes.





LES HUITRES

The world is your oyster

In England oysters enjoy a rather risqué reputation: Erotic, exotic, expensive... but here in

the P O they are treated rather as they used to be centuries ago in the UK when they were very much the food of the common man.

2000 years ago the Roman set such store by them they imported them from all the coasts of their considerable empire. Now, in France, oysters are party food. And, to our advantage, they are farmed here, they are fresh, they are delicious and, certainly, they are not expensive. Whether or not they are an aphrodisiac is up to you to discover, but, should you want to taste some, the best place to go to lies between Leucate and Barcares. Where the lagoon drains into the sea, well signposted off the D627 is the Centre Conchylicole. The oysters are raised in the lagoon and brought to the huts that line the channel to be packed and sold. Tanks bubble with water full of oysters, small tables are crowded with people tasting them and sipping crisp white wine. The oysters for "tasting" are served in multiples of 6, small, medium and large; for buying to take away in whatever quantity you need, opened or closed. Either way very few euros buys you a chance to enjoy the taste of the essence of the sea involving almost no calories and the possibility of an improved love life... maybe...



Fête de l'huitre



In Le Barcares itself, on the 14th of March, is the Fête de l'Huitre, the oyster festival.

An evening devoted to music, dance and oysters! 12 tons of them await you! All in perfect condition, opened by experts, at Mas de l'Ille, Avenue de la Pinède, exit 12 on the D83 direction the Lido. 22 euros for adults and 6 for children will buy you music, dancing, and as many oysters as you can swallow! Saturday 14th - 8pm

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CONSTRUCTION OF A 3RD QUAY AT PORT VENDRES

The cove of "Les Tamarins" across the bay from the fish market, has been the historical beach of the Portvendrais, home until the 1980's to a small hotel-restaurant and before that an outdoor bar with dancing and tables under the trees. This is where the Conseil General is proposing to build a third quay with the intention of attracting more cargo and passenger ships, thus increasing jobs.

A public enquiry was held in November 2008 and buried in all the paperwork two essential questions remain:

- Is the building of a third quay justified?
- If so, what is the effect on the environment?

Cultural: Will the area be closed to the public? What about access to the historical monuments within its perimeter?

Economic: The promise of more jobs is certainly a worthy goal, but is a third quay economically viable?

Environmental: Isn't there a conflict of interest with the Natura 2000 protection of the natural habitat of the posidonia (seagrass)? How will the increase in port activity affect the quality of the water and air?

The final report will be available to the public in 2009. Watch this space...



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GALERIE DE L'Olympe

PERPIGNAN *Elegant niche*

In 2008, Perpignan became the Capital of Catalan Culture, with good reason, as the city has long been a cultural focal point. Its many cultural landmarks aside, in modern times, the works of sculptor Aristide Maillol and the recordings of Pablo Casals at the Great Perpignan

Festival performances are world renowned.

A stroll through the old town brings out its heritage in relief. Here taste pervades in well-kept old facades, narrow streets, upmarket boutiques, cafes, curio shops and galleries. Arguably the most exclusive gallery is Galerie de l'Olympe, south of the Hôtel de Ville and across the small Rue de la Cloche d'Or from the Ecole Lavoisier shown on ordinary city guide maps.

The subdued interior is a splendid setting for the permanent and periodic exhibitions of paintings, sculptures, lithographs, engravings and photographs.

Galerie de l'Olympe, 8 rue de la Cloche d'Or, 66000 Perpignan, Tel: 04 68 34 65 75, jlg-galerieolymp@orange.fr, open Tuesday-Saturday, 10 to 12 am and 2 to 7 pm.

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SAMU (medical emergency)	15
Police emergency	17
Fire service emergency	18
European emergency line	112
directory enquiries	118 008
International directory enquiries	118 700 NEW
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)	08 10 333 066
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Emergency vet	04 68 55 55 83
Anti-poison centre	04 91 75 25 25
Perpignan hospital	04 68 61 66 33

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Argelès: Carrefour

Laroque: Champion

Le Boulou: Expert, Leclerc

Perpignan: Leroy Merlin

Canet: Château Esparrou,

Pollestres: Intermarché

Hyper Casino

Port Vendres: PV Immo

Céret: Intermarché, Champion

Prades: Super U, Inter Marche

Collioure: Chateau Royal

Thuir: Champion

Elne: Champion

Trouillas: Cave de Trouillas

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P. H. Insulations - Céret 04 68 22 56 65
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 kitchens/bathrooms - pwardrenovations@orange.fr
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English-builders-66.com
Ute LIEBSCHER 04 68 84 55 27
 traditional plaster & all finishing - agroh@aliceadsl.fr
Yves Le Belge - all exterior work 06 43 78 18 74
 Terraces, drives... - yveshuguier@msn.com

Car repair/breakdown

Garage du Tech - Céret 04 68 87 33 51

Computer help & Maintenance

Philippe Kessler - 06 30 41 07 13
 04 68 98 02 33 - philippe.kessler@free.fr

Education & translation

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 Language training - carole.howarth@neuf.fr
Carole Cassoly 04 68 96 21 46
 help with administration - translation
Lucie Grimal - Albères, Vallespir 06 80 67 83 29
 PromoLangues - Céret 04 68 87 48 10
 Schola Mediterranea - Argelès 04 30 44 63 41

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First Immo 04 68 84 81 81
 Ille sur Têt - first-immo2@wanadoo.fr
La Bagéenne - Bages 04 68 37 26 07
Loreto Immobilier 04 68 82 05 70
 Collioure - loreto.immobilier@wanadoo.fr
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 throughout P-O - www.medandmountain.com
Port Vendres Immobilier 04 68 82 59 39
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Health and Well Being

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 Life-Coaching - www.ShantalOneSupport.com
Radiant light yoga 04 68 05 77 45
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Axa Assurances - Prades 04 68 81 02 10
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 fortnightly around France - info@sandersteads.co.uk

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L'entre Mer - Ille sur Têt 04 68 84 25 95
Le pied dans le plat - Céret 04 68 87 17 65
Pose Café - Font Romeu 04 68 30 54 31
 Tea & coffee shop and crêperie

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Chalet du ski - Les Angles 04 68 04 49 84
Les Angles tourist info 04 68 04 32 76

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