

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales



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**ST MARTIN
DE CANIGOU**

Autumn **2011**
FREE / GRATUIT N° 33



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Next to the restaurant "Le Clos des Lys"

Edito...

Bon dia!

It's been a strange kind of summer. Plenty of wind and rain to remind us that even the Mediterranean climate can be a bit dodgy if you catch it in the wrong mood... but plenty of sunshine too. Now, the P-O is just waiting to shake off its faded summer finery and slip into something a little more fresh and 'autumn', my favourite season of the year. Warm, bright days, cooler evenings, long deserted beaches, and the potential of a snow topped Canigou one unexpected morning.

In this edition, we take a gentle stroll around Port Vendres with Ted and Kate Hiscock, a look at pirates of the Med with Simon (Ar Jim Lad) Newman, dine Alfresco in Perpignan with Louise Sayers, and meet small nuns and big Pyrenean Mountain Dogs with Courtney O'Brien-Brown.

Oh, and Jane and I take you all over the place!!

As always, a big thank you to everyone, readers and writers, who have made P-O Life the fun, and informative magazine that it is.

We do hope your autumn is golden

Kate & Jane



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Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

organises events, exhibitions, salons, concerts and conferences throughout the year. Check out their website on www.congres-perpignan.com



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with Ted & Kate
Hiscock



“LA MAURESQUE & FANAL” PORT VENDRES

This walk of 3 km (2 miles), very close to the town of Port Vendres, is a gentle exploration of two beautiful, wild and exposed headlands, separated by a deep but charming rocky creek, Anse de la Mauresque, and combines a historical insight with the ruggedness of the rocky coast and wonderful panoramic views.

👉 Start at Le Dome on the Collioure side of Port Vendres, designed in the late 18th century by royal architect Charles de Wailly, originally a hotel, then an army billet and today an art and culture centre.

👉 Head along the road towards Collioure, under the ‘Portus Veneris’ bridge. Continue for about 300 metres and turn right immediately by the cemetery. This simple road leads to the plage d’en Baux, (where a footpath goes down to a pleasant cove) but our route winds round to the right.

👉 By the side of the Rehabilitation centre (IME Mauresque) a simple footpath is marked with a yellow flash. Follow the perimeter of the IME Mauresque, around a recreational court and then out towards the headland Cap Gros.

Scattered amongst the rocks and wild flowers are mementoes of the Second World War. Despite being in Vichy France during the

last war, Port Vendres was occupied by a substantial German force, who, after two years of feigned occupation, destroyed the harbour in 1944. The headland Cap Gros still bears the scars of military installations, which more than half a century on, are a savage reminder of wartime in this area. There is a strange peace about this panoramic viewpoint, which is further endorsed looking out to the point where the Batterie de la Mauresque is found.



Une femme monte une route de montagne, sinueuse et escarpée.
Un homme descend la même route.
Quand ils se croisent, l’homme crie par la fenêtre “GROSSE VACHE”. La femme hurle en réponse “ABRUTI !!”
La femme passe le virage suivant, percute une grosse vache au milieu de la route, et la voiture s’écrase dans la vallée...
MORALITE: Les femmes devraient écouter les hommes! 😊
(sinueuse - winding escarpée - steep se croiser - to pass (each other) hurler - yell abruti - moron virage - bend percuter - to hit)

👉 This interesting ruin is first mentioned during the reign of the Kings of Majorque, (1292) and then late in 1700, formed the basis of a battery (fortified emplacement for heavy guns) by the famous military engineer Vauban, when Spain and France were at each other’s throats over the frontier.

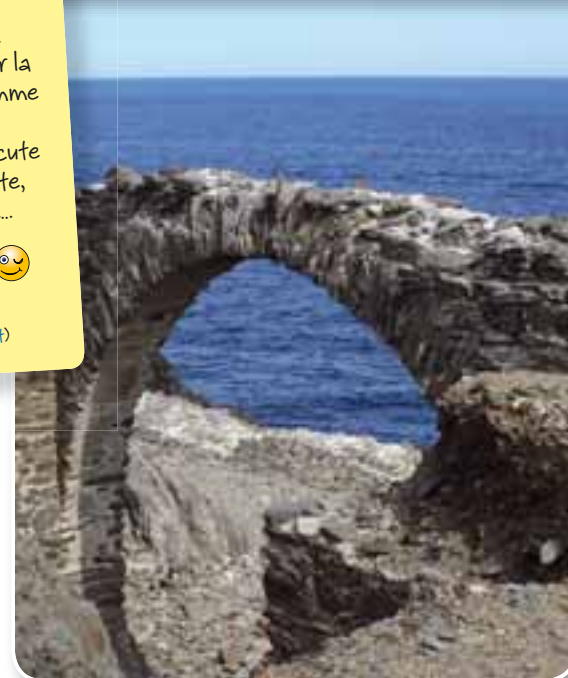
👉 It is worth taking some time to enjoy the stunning views to Collioure and beyond, to Tour de Madeloc, and the chance to appreciate the full extent of Port Vendres’ charm from the tip of this headland.

👉 Take the footpath back along the edge of the cove Anse de la Mauresque, where a token to Charles Rennie Macintosh marks the site with a copy of one of his drawings of the crumbling fortress sketched in the 1920s.

Within a few metres, a simple footpath drops down to the cove, (a favourite spot for rock diving), and then beyond, leading up again along the edge of the second rocky headland, Fanal.

👉 Follow this path across the headland to its highest point and the views across the bay to the steep hills of Fort Bear are well worth the effort.

The path then returns to civilisation with steps down to Rue de la Mirande. A detour to the left leads to the lighthouse at Redoute du Fanal, a further reminder of Vauban’s magnificent military engineering at the end of the 17th century.



👉 Stroll along the Rue de la Mirande and pause a while in the charming memorial garden, Square Henri Bes, sacred to the memory of the inhabitants of Pyrenees-Orientales who died in the almost forgotten Algerian War.

👉 On leaving the memorial garden, follow the road round to the right to return to the Dome, or if the Criée aux poissons, (fish market) has not already been explored, it is worth a detour down the next left turn and into the area that is fenced off, weaving between fishing boats being repaired and wagons rushing out with fresh fish. This is a magnificent experience for fish lovers; everything imaginable for the palate (for the adventurous, try oysters and Collioure blanc!)

👉 After the excursion to the fish market, the journey back to Le Dome is very simple, either along the quai du Fanal, (lower road) or by returning to the upper one, where once again a token to Macintosh demonstrates another favourite view he painted in the last few years of his life.

Did you know...?

Lady Killers

The 'affaire des poisons' (poison affair) which rocked France during the 17th century, resulted in several infamous lady poisoners being chained up in the 'prison des dames' of the chateau Fort Liberia at Villefranche de Conflent. Paranoia amongst the nobility, Louis XIV himself having his servants taste all his food before eating, quickly led to hysterical pursuit of murder suspects, for poisoning and witchcraft. Many of the condemned were transferred to France's safest fortresses such as Salses, and chateau Fort Liberia in the P-O, where they were chained up and imprisoned for life



THE PRESIDENT'S ROOTS

It would make a great novel. Two young boys leave their native Ireland. The first, from Drumaroad, County Down, heads for France. The second, from New Ross, County Wexford, settles in the USA. Many years later, their descendants meet, each now president of his adoptive country. You might even have heard of them? Charles De Gaulle and John F Kennedy? A great legacy for a couple of Irish immigrants out to seek their fortunes?

WHERE DO WE SEND OUR FRENCH LETTERS.....

....if the postie cant find the village? Yes, it seems that the town of Condom in the department of Gers, has its town signs stolen regularly, allegedly by British tourists. Can't imagine why!



THE START OF WW3?

No, of course not. If you are treated to a blast of the emergency sirens which blare out regularly in small towns and villages around the region, don't panic or head for the shelters! This national network of 4,500 sirens is called the 'réseau national d'alerte' (RNA). On the first Wednesday of each month at midday, the sirens are tested out for one minute. Short sequences are also used in some communes to alert volunteer firemen to man their posts for fire or accident.

DO panic if you hear the siren sound in three sequences of 1 minute each, separated by a silence of five seconds. This warns of imminent and major catastrophe!

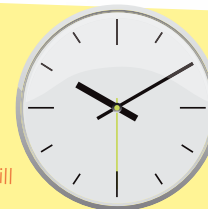


PARDON MY FRENCH

French used to be the language of the nobility throughout Europe until English replaced it in the mid-20th century.

In fact, it is likely that the origin of the phrase 'pardon my French', used to excuse inappropriate swearing arose initially from aristocracy apologising for using French words which others did not understand in everyday conversation.

Don't forget to turn your clocks back Sunday 30th October 2011 (during the night of Saturday/Sunday morning)
Mornings will be lighter but it will grow dark earlier.



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Trick or treat?

Halloween is still catching on slowly in France – an American creation much scorned by some.

However, too much telly has given 'les petits Français' (and quite a few grands Français) a taste for dressing up and 'trick and treating' becomes more popular each year. 'Des bonbons ou une farce' is one way to beg for sweets on Halló'ève, 'friandises ou bêtises' is another, but as there is no literal translation, just about anything goes!



Blague bête
Why are there no
French restaurants in
Davy Jones Locker?
Because dead men
sell no snails!!

by Simon Newman

Pirates of Catalunya

Whilst the Caribbean might be more normally associated with swashbuckling and yo-ho-ho-ing, our nearby Mediterranean shores have seen their fair share of piratical antics over the centuries.

It all started on our doorstep in 75 BC with arguably the most audacious maritime kidnap of all times. Julius Caesar was returning from his Catalan outpost at Empuries (near L'Escala) when a Greek pirate ship stumbled upon the Emperor's personal galleon which had somehow become separated from the main Roman fleet. They launched a surprise attack and couldn't believe their luck when they discovered the identity of their principal captive. Legend has it that when the pirates called for a ransom of twenty Talents of gold, our Jules (known for his incandescent tantrums) threw a major hissy-fit insisting in no uncertain terms that he was worth at least tenfold this paltry amount. The inflated ransom was eventually paid and after his release Caesar had the Greek miscreants tracked down, treating them to a magnificent banquet (followed

by the mandatory orgy) as thanks for the "returning-hero" status he now enjoyed in Rome. Then he had them all thrown to the lions. There's Caesar for you. Petulant, vengeful and brutal but fair.

Fast forward a millennium or more and the next malevolent matelot to terrorise our Catalan coast, steal our daughters and marry our sheep was the much-feared Turkish pirate Hayreddin Pasha, aka Baba Oruç or Barbarossa (Redbeard.) He is known to have attacked settlements near Port Vendres, Cerbère and further down the coast at Palamos where a particularly grisly massacre took place in 1543. In fact pirates such as Redbeard should be more accurately described as Corsairs, maritime mercenaries licensed by a sovereign nation to disguise state-sponsored acts of terror. It's good to see some of those old traditions alive and well today, isn't it? Redbeard (who in many accounts is described as being neither red-headed

nor bearded) was eventually rewarded for his "heroism" by being made an Admiral in the Ottoman navy. Covert thuggery on behalf of the

The first known pirate to have a wooden leg was Frenchman François Le Clerc, also known as 'Jambe de Bois' (or 'Pepleg' by the Spanish), 16th century brigand from Normandy, who lost his leg during a raid on the English at Guernsey in 1549.

Another French pirate, Emanuel Wynne, is believed to have been the first to hoist up the skull and crossbones of the Jolly Roger. The name, taken from the French 'joli rouge' referred to a plain red flag, flown to indicate that the ship would fight to the death.

realm aside, the main preoccupation of Mediterranean pirates was rarely the stereotyped quest for treasure such as gold and jewels. They were mostly after spices, wine, ceramics and the altogether more wretched trade in slaves. It was a truly international profession too, for apart from Greeks and Turks there were British, French, Italians, Moors, Corsicans, Lebanese, Barbary Coast pirates from Algiers and Morocco, and even those eternal scapegoats the Vikings etched on the dastardly roll of honour. That said, a great number of pirate ships were operated by renegade crews with little or no allegiance to a particular flag including sailors liberated from naval vessels who had been "invited" (code for press-ganged) into service on behalf of a grateful nation. It seems that naval recruitment officers were not averse to paying bordello girls to lure hapless lads using their natural charms and a cocktail of rum spiked with opium. Sounds like a good night out in La Jonquera to me.

Old style piracy in the Mediterranean is these days all but eradicated (unlike in Indonesian and Somalian waters where it's enjoying a big comeback) though the smuggling of illegal immigrants, counterfeit goods and cigarettes, especially from North Africa to the Balearics, is a huge and expanding industry.

For a taste of how life on the high seas used to be, rush down the coast to Estartit during the summer months where the crew of the pirate ship "El Corsari Negre," a beautiful replica wooden sailing-barque, offer tours of the remote creeks and inlets where ruthless buccaneers preyed. Stale

biscuits and grog are included but eye-patches, parrots and a dose of scurvy are all extras.

www.nautilus.es



September

LA GRANDE SCÈNE CATALANE

Sat 3rd September
Château Royal, Collioure

"Els Ben Parits" are the Catalan equivalent to the 'Enfoirés', some of France's biggest stars who perform in an annual benefit concert, donating proceeds to the Restos du Cœur, French charity which provides food packages and free meals to the poor and homeless. These stars of North Catalonia will meet up once again this year to present 10 hours of entertainment at the magnificent Château Royal in Collioure, in aid of 'les Restos du Cœur'. Part of the event will also pay homage to Jordi Barre, "the finest ambassador of all things Catalan in France", singing legend of Catalonia. Sadly, Jordi passed away on the 16th February 2011 in Ponteilla at the age of 90.

More info: 04 68 85 04 53



OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

September and October

Around the region

Festival Jazzèbre
Jazz and world music
www.jazzebre.com

Fri 2nd - Sat 3rd

Amélie-les-Bains-Palalda Festival Festibanyes
Bull games and acrobatics
04 68 39 01 98

Sat 10th

Saint Cyprien Horse show. More than 20 horses on the beach perform acrobatics and burlesque, accompanied by a gypsy band.

Fri 16th

Bages Grand concert in aid of cancer research (étoile de Martin).
04 68 21 89 50

Sun 18th

Céret La Ronde Céretane - Céret marathon
Challenging marathon through the vineyards and cherry orchards of Céret.
04 68 87 00 53

Sat 17th-18th

National National heritage weekend.
Free entry to many monuments, museums...
www.journeesdupatrimoine.culture.fr

Our Suggestion

« Ce que murmurent les murs »
Guided visits, exhibition, concert and show at Rivesaltes concentration camp
04 68 80 13 00

Fri 23-25th & 2nd Oct

Argelès-sur-Mer Fête de la St Côme et St Damien
Sardanes, castellers, and bals, with parade of the Giants and Big-Heads (gegants i capgrossos) on Sun 2nd, when more than 500 giants dance in the streets!
www.argeles-sur-mer.com

Sat 24th-25th

Perpignan and Serrat d'en Vaquer (nr Auchan) Trobades Médiévales
Medieval fun, fights and frolics

Sat 24th-25th

Perpignan International Record and Comic Strip Festival
04 68 62 38 57

October

TOURISME DE TERROIR October

Coming from the French word 'terre' for "soil," the word 'terroir' originally described the special characteristics of a region, or piece of land, which gave different varieties of wine, coffee and tea their individuality. (Soil, climate, position, regional traditions...)

Over the centuries, French winemakers developed and took for their own the concept of terroir but the word is still often used to describe rural activities, harvest festivals etc.

In October, the P-O celebrates every imaginable 'produit de terroir', be it animal, vegetable or mineral. Here is a selection... Check in with any local tourist office or visit-

www.anglophone-direct.com/Tourisme-de-Terroir



◆ 2nd October
Espira-de-l'Agly Fig festival

◆ 9th October
Mont Louis Autumn fair based around fishing, hunting and nature.
Casteil Chestnut fair

◆ 14th October
Prats de Mollo Autumn fair

◆ 15th - 16th October
Matemale Potato festival

◆ 22nd - 23rd October
Ur International Horse Fair

Le Boulou Flavour's Day

◆ 23rd October
Olette Fête d'Olette
Saint Laurent de Cerdans Fête de la Chataigne (chestnut fair)

◆ 30th October
Sahorre Fête de la pomme (Apple festival)



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

School holidays for our region

Toussaint (half term) - Sat 22nd
October - Thurs 3rd November
Christmas - Sat 17th December -
Tues 3rd January

BANK HOLIDAYS

September 11th - Diada de Catalunya - national holiday throughout Catalonia
1st November - La Toussaint (All Saints Day)
11th November - Armistice of WW1 (1918)

OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

Until Sun 9th Oct

Musical Autumn in the Vallespir A series of concerts in 6 different villages of the Vallespir
06 99 88 90 43

Sat 8th - Sun 9th

Banyuls-sur-Mer Fête des Vendanges BBQs, bands, dancing, juggling... on the beach along with excessive tasting of vino!

22nd October

Perpignan, (Rue Mailly) Fête des Vins Primeurs
Join the wine makers in celebrating the arrival of the Vin Primeur.

Sunday 23rd October

Le Boulou, Maratrail, Transpyrenean marathon www.maratrailcatalan.net

30th & 31st October

Scary Halloween - Train ride fancy dress optional!
Tickets and info: 0468599618.
www.tpcf.fr

November

HALLOWEEN, TOUSSAINT AND LA CASTANYADA

31st October/1st November

La Toussaint (All Saint's Day) was originally created by the Catholic Church to honour the poor old saints and martyrs who didn't have their own holy day. The church also hoped to detract attention from the Celtic, Pagan celebration of Samhain, (pronounced sow-in), born in the British Isles and later to become Halloween. Of course, it didn't work and Halloween soon became a yearly festival of masks and disguises to scare away the spooks and evil spirits.

Not in France though. Halloween has only become fashionable over the past ten years via American sit coms, and McDo style restaurants. It grows more popular every year, despite the disapproval of many French purists.

Don't forget that November 1st, All Saints' Day is a major French holiday and most shops and public places will be closed.

La Castanyada, celebrated on All Saints Day, was to honour saints and dead ancestors. Whole villages would stay awake all night in vigil, eating high-energy foods such as castanyes' (roast chestnuts, hence the name) to prevent them from passing out from lack of sleep and the effort of ringing the heavy bells.



Vide Greniers

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

NOWHERE TO RUN?

for a list of all the marathons and running events in the P-0 -see www.anglophone-direct.com/-What-s-on-in-the-Pyrenees-

OUR PICK OF EVENTS IN BRIEF

End October/November

**Palais des Expositions, Perpignan
Foire Saint Martin**

Friday 11th November

Palalda - Fete de la Saint Martin

Live music and dancing with cobra and sardanes.....

04 68 39 01 98

Sunday 13th November

**Theatre de l'Archipel - Perpignan
Khoom**

Three dancers suspended by wires, one singer and seven musicians tell the story of love and death in a distant land www.theatredelarchipel.org

Thursday 17th November

Celebration of Christmas Muscat.

Events in Perpignan and local caves . www.muscatdenoel.com

Friday 18th November

**Parc des Expositions, Perpignan.
Moscow Circus on Ice**

Saturday 26th November

**Vernet-les-Bains
Fete de la Saint Saturnin**

A weekend of festivity, to honour this patron saint. 04 68 05 55 35 (Rudyard Kipling mentions St Saturnin in a story written during a stay in Vernet-les-Bains 'Why does it snow in Vernet' poking fun at the English habit of talking about the weather. Check it out at www.anglophone-direct.com)

Wed 30th November

**Palais des Congrès, Perpignan
Soy de Cuba**

Legendary Salsa band & spectacular Cuban dancers

Lest we forget

SECRET ARMY

The WW2 escape route known as the Comet line (Le Réseau Comète), inspired the 1970s BBC television series, **Secret Army**. The line, so named because of the speed needed to whisk stranded airmen down through occupied France to safety, helped hundreds of allied soldiers and airmen to escape from occupied France.

The original route started in Brussels, with several main routes south through occupied France and on to the western Pyrenees into Spain. Escapees were moved via a chain of safe houses, leading ultimately to the "last house" in the Basque village of Urrugne, where Basque guides led by a giant known as Florentino, accompanied them across the mountains.

Courageous Belgium lady, Andrée de Jongh, (codename Postman, nickname "Dédée") was one of the principal creators of the Comet line.

With support from MI9, and famed Colditz escapee Airey Neave, she helped 400 Allied soldiers to escape from Belgium to Gibraltar, personally accompanying more than 118 airmen over the rugged Pyrenees herself.

In 1943, the line was betrayed and Dédée and

others were captured at the house in Urrugne. Under Gestapo torture, she admitted to being the leader of Le Réseau Comète, but they did not believe her – how could this petite, young girl have possibly set up such a massive working network? She was sent to Mauthausen and Ravensbruck concentration camps until, desperately ill and undernourished, the allied armies liberated her in 1945.

After the war, she was honoured by Britain, Belgium and America and made a Belgian countess in 1985.

Escaped airmen described her as "... always smiling and brimful of enthusiasm" and "...the force, the power and the inspiration that brought us from Belgium to Spain."

Andrée de Jongh died in Brussels on 13th October 2007



Le Figuier PERPIGNAN

**Restaurant
Review**
with
Louise Sayers



Alfresco eating in town doesn't get much prettier than this and Le Figuier is lucky enough to have this diminutive square all to itself. There isn't actually a fig tree in sight, but the square, which is bordered by olive trees, oleander, bamboo and traditional shuttered townhouses, is a lovely spot to dine outside in Perpignan. Le Figuier is just as good a choice in winter when the weather is less clement, with an interior which offers 70 covers in a cosy and convivial atmosphere.

The management

The trio of three friends who run the restaurant bring their different but complementary skills to the table (quite literally!). Jean Roure is the charming Catalan front-of-house man who speaks very good English if you need help with interpreting the menu.

The chef de cuisine, Cyril Deroche, has worked in a number of Perpignan eateries, including Al Très, before taking over Le Figuier and his seasonal

menu is a showcase for local products and small-scale regional producers. Menus include such delights as rosée des Pyrénées veal, pork cheeks and Mediterranean seafood.

The third member of the team is Frédéric Prieur, the sommelier who has put together an interesting selection of wines – 80% of which are from the region, others coming from other parts of France, Spain and Italy. No pichets here! The restaurant also offers organic lemonade

and cola, as well as beers, from Argelès-based award-winning producer Cap d'Ona.

The service

The food is best summed up by the words "fresh" and "simple". There is an à la carte menu as well as a selection of tapas, which can also be eaten as starters. At lunchtimes (except Saturdays) there is a set menu priced at 9,12 or 15 euros respectively for the plat du jour, 2 courses or 3 courses.

The staff were happy to answer the myriad of questions we had about the dishes and their friendliness made up for service which was generally good but teetered towards slapdash when the dinner service was in full swing and the restaurant was at its busiest.

The food

So what did we eat? I kept it sea-based with enormous and very tasty flambéed prawns from the tapas menu as a starter and beautifully cooked and simply presented whole sea bream. I would recommend both. Mark went for the gazpacho, packed with flavour and the succulent and generous beef skewer. No complaints there either. The in-laws went for pinxos de casa (marinated pork skewer) which

was probably the weak link of the meal, and described by my mother-in-law as "fairly ordinary". We couldn't fault the portion sizes except that they didn't leave room for desserts!

For children

There is an 11 euro children's menu, although we weren't offered it when we ate so do ask. The salmon or bavette (steak) with potatoes and vegetables made a refreshing change from the standard steak hâché or ham and chips offered at most places, dessert was ice cream or chocolate cake.

Louise Sayers runs Med and Mountain's Help in France service, providing assistance for homeowners and non-French speakers throughout France
www.medandmountain.com

Le Figuier

7 rue du Figuier
Place Joubert de Passa
66000 Perpignan
Tel : 04 68 63 14 82
*Open Tuesday to
Saturday, lunchtime
12-2pm and evening
from 7.30pm*



All in all I'd say convivial atmosphere and personal touch pretty much nails it – this is well worth a visit when you're in Perpignan.



Planning a day out in Perpignan? - here are some ideas for things to do:

Shopping – rue du Figuier leads off rue de la Révolution Française which houses a number of studios of local artists and photographers where you can browse. The city's old streets mix high street names with quirky one off boutiques.

The Castillet – climb to the top and appreciate the views then visit the Casa Païral which houses the Musée Catalan des Arts et Traditions Populaires
Castillet Cinema – the cinema in this beautiful art deco building often shows films in English, including some of the big latest releases (look for




VO in the listings which stands for version originale)
Le Palais des Rois de Majorque – views and impressive architecture dating back to the 13th century at Perpignan's most important historic monument.

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L'ARBOUSIER (STRAWBERRY TREE)



These pretty fruit trees, native to the Mediterranean region, Western Europe and Ireland, are difficult to miss as you wander around the Pyrénées-Orientales in autumn. The arbousier is a tough, easily grown and trouble-free plant, surprisingly tolerant of strong winds, making it a great success in this region!

The 'Arbousier' produces masses of beautiful white flowers in November and December after which the fruits start to fall off the trees. From a distance, the colourful fruits (les arbouses), which ripen from green to red to yellow, look a little like strawberries, hence the common name Strawberry Tree. However, if you have already had a nibble, you will know that the taste is most certainly nothing like the strawberry, sweet but insipid. Interestingly, its Latin name, 'unedo' meaning 'I eat (only) one', suggests that you might not wish to eat too many!

If you wish to pick them before they fall, you should wait until they are deep red in colour and very soft to the touch. They need to be eaten within 24 hours as they start to decay very quickly.

However, due to their lack of flavour, they are more often used to make jellies and jams, particularly due to their high pectin content which allows for rapid setting without additives. They are also used to ferment and make drinks such as 'medronheira' (strawberry tree firewater), a Portuguese brandy-like drink with a high alcohol content

Health benefits

It is said that one should not eat too many of this fruit as it ripens very quickly, ferments in the stomach and makes you feel drunk! However, to combat that, the fruit is supposed to have antiseptic, astringent and diuretic properties which have not yet been researched as thoroughly as they deserve


STRAWBERRY TREE JAM

- 750gr strawberry tree berries,
- 1 orange
- 100 g brown sugar
- 5 tablespoons brandy

Rinse berries in cold water, and place in pan, sprinkling with the juice of an orange. Cook on low heat for about ten minutes, stirring frequently until fruit becomes soft.

Sieve softened fruit, crush berries with a wooden spoon and collect pulp in a saucepan. (Expect a lot of waste). Return the smooth, orange and velvety pulp to the heat and stir in the brown sugar and 5 tablespoons of brandy. Bring back to the boil and keep on stirring for about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and ladle into sterilized glass jars.





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Food & drink

As summer fades into autumn and the grapes are harvested, the air fills with the scent of wines to come. Slowly the leaves change colour, each grape variety turning a different shade, throwing a multicoloured patchwork quilt over the Pyrenees Orientales. Time to drive the 'Routes des Vins': From Banyuls to Collioure for example, or, from Estagel in the Agly Valley to Latour de France, Belesta and Caramany..... to taste the fruits of harvests past in the many wine caves with which our Département is blessed. A non-tasting driver is much to be recommended.

Look out too for the Fete des Vendanges in Banyuls sur Mer on October 9th, the Fête des Vins Primeurs in Perpignan on October 22nd....





À la recherche des champignons

In many regions of France, the ritual gathering of mushrooms in the autumn (but also in spring and summer depending upon the weather), is a culture in itself. Whole families or groups of friends make a day of it, and trek off 'à la recherche des champignons'

Eating the wrong mushrooms can be fatal. Never eat wild mushrooms without checking with a local pharmacie or an expert mycologist. In case of poisoning, contact the Emergency Service on 112 or your local anti poison centre on 04 91 75 25 25. If possible, take along a sample of the poisonous mushroom for identification



Cèpe

Boletus Edulis, commonly known as penny bun, porcino or cep (catalan). The King of all mushrooms - and totally delicious! A prized ingredient in world cuisines, slice into small strips, and brown in olive oil with garlic and parsley, use in soups, pasta, risotto or dry for later use



Girolle

Cantharellus Cibarius, commonly known as the Golden Chanterelle. One of the most prized wild mushrooms, exquisite taste with apricot aroma. Add wonderful colour to sauces. Tend to grow in clusters in mossy beech and birch forests. Can be confused with the poisonous "jack-o'-lantern"

Coullemelle

Macrolepiota procera commonly known as parasol mushroom. Body resembling a lady's parasol. Very sought after in Europe, it can be prepared similarly to a cutlet, coated in egg and bread crumbs and fried in oil or butter.

When small, can be confused with the deadly Amanita!! To be sure, only pick parasol mushrooms past their button stage.



Vesge-de-loup

Lycoperdon Perlatum - Translates as "Wolf's Fart" from its scientific name in french, we call them puffballs as they let out puffs of "smoke" when trodden on. Similar in taste to Tofu and soak up other flavours easily. Can be confused with the "Death Cap"!! Always cut in half and check that it has undifferentiated white flesh, unlike the gills of immature Amanita mushrooms which can be seen if examined closely.



Le lactaire délicieux

Lactarius deliciosus saffron milk-cap, (Catalan - Rovelló). A widely collected mushroom in the P-O and used in Valencian and Catalan cuisine. Lovely when fried whole cap down in olive oil with a small amount of garlic and served drenched in olive oil and parsley (do not use butter)



Coriolette

Marasmius oreades also known as the fairy ring mushroom (Catalan: Cama-sec). Grows abundantly in troops, arcs, or rings. Usually a pale tan or buff colour, its sweet taste is great for soups and stews. Traditionally, the stems are cut off and the caps are threaded and dried in strings.



Rosé des prés

Agaricus campestris commonly known as the field mushroom. Grows in fields and orchards just like it's english cousin.



Tête de nègre

Boletus aereus or Black Porcini Like the famous Cèpe but much, much tastier and far harder to find!





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THE COL DE BANYULS

A stunningly beautiful drive or a pretty steep cycle ride of eight kilometres from Banyuls sur Mer will take you to the Col de Banyuls. From the Town Hall head towards the Maillol Museum, taking the Route des Mas and follow the valley of the Baillaury. The twisting road rises through the steep vineyards until, at 361 metres you reach the Col. Stop there to enjoy the stupendous views: behind you to France and the Côte Vermeille, ahead of you, Spain and the Bay of Roses.

The Col, marking the frontier between France and Spain, is immortalised in a huge oil painting in the Town Hall. The dramatic scene depicted shows the good folk of Banyuls beating back the attempted invasion of the Spanish troops of General Ricardos in 1793.

There are two explanations for the fierce and successful defense. One version claims valiant French patriotism as the driving force, the other, and a rather more likely one, supposes that should the Spanish have won, the widespread smuggling between Spain and France by the local fishermen/pirates would have been wiped out... For a good two centuries the fishermen of

Banyuls had supplemented their income by trading illegally in sugar, tobacco, rice, cloth and leather. Indeed Maillol's beloved grandfather was one such fisherman.

During the Retirada at the end of the Spanish Civil War, streams of unfortunate republican refugees fled over the Col and, just a few years later, refugees from the Nazi occupation were fleeing in the opposite direction. A small monument bears witness to their plight and reminds us to remember that not everyone who crossed the frontier there had the luxury of merely admiring the view.

The road ahead into Spain leads to the small village of Espolla, or, turning left at the



bottom of the hill after a little bridge a drivable dirt road goes to St Quirze. It is an easy hour and a bit walk or a slightly bumpy drive. The view from the top is, again, stunning and, as you descend, you see, encircled by mountains, the Monastery of St Quirze. A fairly basic but good fun restaurant, the Corral de Sant Quirze is open everyday except Wednesdays. tel 0034 972 19 31 86

Either on the way there or back, a visit to the Maillol Museum is well worth the minor detour. Banyuls sur Mer is the birthplace of Aristide Maillol. His large thighed ladies tumble in the Tuileries in Paris and his "Jeune Fille Allongee" relaxes on the seafront of Banyuls. His tomb lies beneath his beautiful "La Mediterranee" sculpture in the garden of the museum. He was very much part of the turn of the century art scene, friends with Matisse, Derrain, Picasso, Dali. A sculpture of Dina Vierny, aged 17, his last muse and model, and one of the "passeurs" who guided refugees to safety during the Second World War, stands beneath the huge jacaranda tree behind the town hall.





ST MARTIN DE CANIGOU

The Benedictine Abbey of St Martin de Canigou has held its position on the slopes of Canigou for over ten centuries. Framed by mountain peaks and rich forests, it is a dramatic and wonderful 45 minutes walk from Casteil. Fairly steep but well worth the effort. Or you can get a 4x4 taxi from Vernet les Bains (04 68 05 55 35)

You are aware it has been a place of worship and meditation for centuries. Religious life continues to this day and one is asked to respect the silence and enjoy the beauty in peace.

In 1428 it was badly damaged by a terrible earthquake and, by 1506, had fallen out of use. It

was slightly restored in the 1600s but, by 1783, the monks had abandoned it.

It wasn't till 1902 that the Bishop of Perpignan bought the ruins and started the restoration of the abbey that continues to this day. Of special note are two tombs hewn out of the rock by Count Guifred de Cerdagne, founder of the Abbey. His earthly remains lie in one, in the other those of one of his wives.

It is possible to make your way down through the woods, a path that brings you to the start of a lovely walk up the Gorge of the Cady river. You can walk its length in an hour and a half. The river bubbles along beside and below you, there are rock pools



© Acoma

by which you can picnic and in Autumn the colours of the trees are superb.

Both excursions start in Casteil, just 8 kms from Villefranche de Conflent via Vernet les Bains.

Tel: 04 68 05 50 03



...AT THE GRAND HOTEL MOLITG LES BAINS.



Impossible to miss when driving the D14 from Prades to Mosset, the splendid Grand Thermal Hotel dominates the deep gorge cut by swift running water of the Castellane River. On the left, a tall rocky outcrop is topped by a ruined castle and, hidden from immediate view, a small chapel. On the right, the gothic, grey granite Chateau de Riell rises out of luxuriant grounds, exciting curiosity and firing the imagination.

Water and Mud

The waters found in the gorge are no ordinary waters. Back in the 13th century, the Catalan troubadour, Dauré, sang of their power to change a toad into a dove. More recently, in 1754, the Marquis of Llupia, lord at the time of the now ruined Chateau de Paracolls, was hunting in the area when his favourite hound,

who suffered from incurable eczema, went missing. The dog was eventually found rolling in the mud of a hot spring. His skin was miraculously healed.

Locals with similar afflictions followed the hound's example. They constructed a small basin of a couple of square meters in which to wallow in the curative mud. The reputation of "Les Thermes Llupia" spread, changing owners until, by the end of the 19th century, they were flourishing, grand and extremely popular.

Chaîne Thermale du Soleil

Construction began on Chateau de Riell. On the site of an ancient medieval stronghold, it rose up, a nineteenth century fairytale folly of a castle, bizarre, baroque, never completely finished, overlooking the very Grand Hotel des Thermes.



In 1946, Adrien Barthelemy of Toulouse, delighting in the idea of being cured of skin disorders by healing waters and impressed by the beauty of its position, fell in love with and took over both the Grand Hotel and the Chateau de Riell. It became an important member of the Barthemely family's "Chaîne Thermal du Soleil", twenty Thermal Hotels including, in the P-O, those of La Preste, Amelie le Bains and

Le Boulou. Adrien Barthelemy, worked closely with the Health Service, ensured that patients could and still can receive a prescription for a cure of three weeks at the Grand Hotel. (One can, of course, take lesser treatments starting with a half day "Discovery" package for fifty or so euros.)

He dammed the Castellane River, creating a lake surrounded by beautiful gardens. A footpath winds its way up behind the chapel by the lake to the ruined castle of Paracolls passing an impressive dolmen, twisting and turning through scrub oak trees and huge granite boulders. It is possible to return by a meandering path that brings you back to the lake and the possibility of a welcome drink on the terrace or in the bar of the Grand Hotel.

Facilities, festivals and chocolate

Residents and non-residents alike



can enjoy the walk and the many varied concerts organised in the hotel, as well as the excellent restaurants, health and beauty treatments, and, if eating, use the swimming pools. Children are also well catered for with special menus, programme of artistic courses, sporting activities....

This year, on October 2nd, there will be a Festival of Tang'ean Argentine featuring music and tango and all things Argentinian.

Some years the autumn festival is dedicated to Chocolate in memory of the dog loving Marquis de Llupia's favourite chef who hailed from Catalonia Sud, and, as did many of his countrymen, used a lot of chocolate in his cooking. In fact, the Grand Hotel's Café Pablo Casals was once a chocolate factory.

Château de Riell - remarkably unusual

Mademoiselle Biche Barthelemy, the present director of both the Grand Thermal Hotel and the Chateau de Riell, admits that the Chateau de Riell was a remarkably unusual house to furnish. A warm and engaging woman, she is full of stories of the history and legends surrounding the Château and Grand Hotel. A passionate collector, the mastermind and designer behind the highly original décor. She has created rooms of a delightfully understated luxury, each one intriguingly different, a delightfully understated luxury. The African bar is totally "Out of Africa", the "Dacha", straight out of a Russian novel where breakfast can be taken, the furnishings and paintings, the views of Canigou, the ruined

castle and tall trees framed by the castle windows, the fabrics, the rugs and carpets, all reflect her love of her Chateau, with rooms to dream in, to relax and leave the humdrum far behind.

Actually there is nothing remotely humdrum about Chateau de Riell, neither the rooms, nor the restaurant serving excellent local produce in a dining room whose windows are level with the treetops, nor "Les Oubliettes", the club rooms in the original cellars of the Chateau complete with secret passages for escape in time of trouble.

In the Spring edition we will revisit and explore the Pablo Casals connection, the tale of the clarion, the bear eating from a strawberry tree, the many sporting activities, the surrounding walks and villages....



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Test your French

1 - M POUR MAMAN

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

écraser avec les dents	1	a	maquillage
perdre du poids	2	b	majuscule
une boucle de métal	3	c	marcassin
une grande lettre	4	d	moche
produits pour transformer le visage	5	e	marguerite
jeune sanglier	6	f	marmite
fleur des champs, jaune et blanche	7	g	mâcher
grand récipient	8	h	maillon
chaque mois	9	I	maigrir
pas joli	10	J	mensuel

Remember that communication is far more important than perfect grammar. In fact some people might tell you that a few mistakes and a pronounced 'engleesh' accent are rather sexy! However, some words change their meaning completely depending upon whether you use the correct gender (le or la).

Un gêne - gene	le capital - capital (money)	le moule - mold
la gêne - embarrassment	la capitale - capital city, capital letter	la moule - mussel
un air - air, look,	le cours - lesson	le pub - pub/bar
une aire - area, (services)	la cour - courtyard, playground	la pub - advert
un boum - bang, explosion	le crème - coffee with cream	un somme - snooze, nap
une boum - party	la crème - cream	une somme - sum, amount
le greffe - court clerk's office	le merci - thanks	le vase - vase
la greffe - transplant, graft	la merci - mercy	la vase - silt, mud
	le mode - method, way	le voile - veil
	la mode - fashion	la voile - sail

2 - CAN YOU NAME THE SEVEN DWARVES WITHOUT READING ANY FURTHER?

Well done (but I bet you cheated just a little bit). Here they are... but can you find their French equivalents?

Doc	1	a	Dormeur
Grumpy	2	b	Joyeux
Sneezy	3	c	Prof
Dopey	4	d	Atchoum
Sleepy	5	e	Simplet
Happy	6	f	Grincheux
Bashful	7	g	Timide

RÉFLEXIONS

Pourquoi le mot "abréviation" est-il si long??

Useful expression

Un de perdu, dix de trouvés

There are plenty more fish in the sea

3 - MATCH UP THE WINE VOCAB

une dégustation	1	a	room temperature
un vigneron	2	b	dry sparkling
doux	3	c	sweet
un tire-bouchon	4	d	grape variety
pétillant	5	e	label
cepage	6	f	tasting session
brut	7	g	a wine-producer
une étiquette	8	h	slightly sparkling
Un pichet (de vin)	9	i	cork screw
chambrier	10	j	a jug (of wine)



4 DO YOU KNOW THE PLURALS OF THESE NOUNS?

1	oeil	6	chapeau
2	nez	7	prix
3	monsieur	8	travail
4	hôpital	9	mademoiselle
5	ciel	10	bus

Tongue twister (Virelangue)

(Répétez trois fois)

Saucisses sèches sachant sécher sans s'assécher

(A sausage knowing how to dry must know how to dry without drying out!)

LANGUAGE TIP

NOT ALL PLURALS ARE FORMED BY ADDING S.

Nouns ending in **s**, **x**, and **z** don't change in the plural

Nouns ending in **eau** or **eu** add **x**

Nouns ending in **al** change to **aux**

Some nouns don't follow any rules at all



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Test your French

5 - CAN YOU MATCH UP THESE FRENCH PROVERBS WITH THEIR ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS?

- C'est la goutte d'eau qui fait déborder le vase 1
- C'est la poule qui chante qui a fait l'œuf 2
- Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué 3
- On n'apprend pas à un vieux singe à faire des grimaces 4
- L'habit ne fait pas le moine 5
- La bave du crapaud n'atteint pas la blanche colombe 6
- Un bouillon de chou fait perdre au médecin cinq sous 7
- C'est dans les vieux pots qu'on fait les meilleures confitures 8
- Le monde appartient à ceux qui se lèvent tôt après la pluie, le beau temps 9
- 10

- a Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
- b The guilty dog barks the loudest.
- c Experience always wins the day.
- d It's the straw that breaks the camel's back
- e You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
- f Every cloud has a silver lining
- g An apple a day keeps the doctor away
- h Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.
- i The early bird catches the worm
- j Don't judge a book by its cover.

Mettre en porte à faux - to put someone in an awkward position

Vous me mettez en porte à faux
Je ne veux pas vous mettre en porte à faux

Blague bête

Pourquoi les jardiniers s'ennuient-ils ?

Parce qu'ils n'ont que des potes âgés.

Pote - chum, mate
potager - veggie garden

Faute d'orthographe - spelling mistake
2/10 - Peut mieux faire

Encore une Blague bête

Comment appelle-t-on un lapin qui détruit les champs de blé ?

Un céréale-killer
champs de blé - wheat fields



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6 - PARLONS DE LA PLUIE ET DU BEAU TEMPS (LET'S TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER)

You'll always have something to talk about if you have a good weather vocabulary!

Match up the weather words and phrases

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|---|--------------------|
| une averse | 1 | a | puddle |
| la sécheresse | 2 | b | flash of lightning |
| un coup de tonnerre | 3 | c | heat wave |
| un éclair | 4 | d | gust (of wind) |
| une inondation | 5 | e | sandstorm |
| la pluie torrentielle | 6 | f | drought |
| une flaque d'eau | 7 | g | clap of thunder |
| un tempête de sable | 8 | h | heavy rain |
| une rafale | 9 | i | shower |
| une canicule | 10 | j | flood |

Test your french - answers

- 1 g 2 i 3 h 4 b 5 a 6 c 7 e 8 f 9 d 10 j
2 i c 2 f 3 d 4 e 5 a 6 b 7 g
3 i f 2 g 3 c 4 i 5 h 6 d 7 b 8 e 9 j 10 a
4 i 2 yx 2 nez 3 messieurs 4 hopitaux
5 1 d 2 b 3 a 4 e 5 j 6 h 7 g 8 c 9 i 10
6 1 i 2 f 3 g 4 b 5 j 6 h 7 a 8 e 9 d 10 c
mesdemoiselles 10 bus
5 cieux 6 chapeaux 7 prix 8 travaux 9

Améliorez votre Anglais

1 - BÉBÉS ANIMAUX

Voici les parents - pouvez vous trouver leurs bébés?

goat	1	a	calf
sheep	2	b	cub
horse	3	c	piglet
frog	4	d	joey
cow	5	e	tadpole
pig	6	f	puppy
kangaroo	7	g	lamb
cat	8	h	kitten
dog	9	I	foal
bear	10	J	kid

2 -

TRouvez LA BONNE COULEUR POUR COMPLÉTER LES EXPRESSIONS SUIVANTES.

- _____ herring (une diversion)
- To catch _____ handed (attraper en flagrant délit)
- Once in a _____ moon (une fois toutes les 36 du mois)
- _____ area (ambigu)
- Tickled _____ (heureux)
- _____ tape (la paperasse)
- _____ lie (un petit mensonge)

grey - white - blue - pink - red



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 évènement dure.)

They talked for 2 hours

3 - Remplissez les blancs avec while, during or for

- I fell asleep _____ the meeting.
- Please don't smoke _____ we're eating.
- Traffic in Perpignan is bad --- rush hour.
- It gets cold in the mountains --- the winter.
- I am going on holiday --- three weeks.
- I have lived in the P-O --- 10 years

What am I?

I am as light as a feather, yet nobody can hold me for long.

Breath

Good advice

Always borrow money from a pessimist - he doesn't expect to be paid back.

(borrow - emprunter pay back - rembourser)

Virelangue

Répétez trois fois

She sells seashells,

On the seashore

And the seashells that she sells,

Are seashells. I'm sure

3 - HOW MANY OR HOW MUCH ?

1. How _____ apples did you

buy

- a. much
b. many

3. How _____ was your computer?

- a. much
b. many

5. How _____ mistakes did you make in your exam?

- a. much
b. many

2. How _____ does it cost to fly to London?

- a. much
b. many

4. How _____ water did you drink?

- a. much
b. many

A very silly joke.

Man: I bet I can make you speak like a Red Indian?

Woman: How?

Man: Told you I could

4 -

Voici des expressions idiomatiques qui sont un peu bizarres - Pouvez vous trouver l'équivalent en français?

More than you can shake a stick at	1	a	Calme toi
Why the long face?	2	b	Qu'est ce qui se passé?
Keep your hair on!	3	c	manger son chapeau
OMG!	4	d	être saoul
Pipe down!	5	e	Beaucoup
forty winks	6	f	Si on s'arrêtait là?
to be three sheets to the wind	7	g	Pourquoi si misérable?
What's cooking?	8	h	Tais toi
Let's call it a day	9	i	un somme
eat humble pie	10	j	Mon Dieu!

Another silly joke.

What stories do the ship captain's children like to hear?

Ferry tales!

(fairy tales - contes de fées)

5 - M - is for Mum

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

maid	1	a	belonging to me
mean	2	b	dirty or untidy
melt	3	c	full of laughter
merry	4	d	naughty behaviour
middle-aged	5	e	not generous
mess	6	f	insect like a butterfly
mischief	7	g	solid becomes liquid
mud	8	h	wet, sticky soil
mine	9	I	female servant
moth	10	j	neither old nor young



A CRAFTY LITTLE BUSINESS...

When Susan Burden moved to the PO, her knitting & sewing paraphernalia came with her. It just sat there gathering dust until the stork started to visit friends & family. Demand for baby booties soared and out came the knitting needles again.

Eventually Susan's bountiful button box ceased to runneth over. Buying arts and crafty bits and bobs in the PO was difficult, with a very limited choice and high prices.

Maybe being a part of the Blue Peter generation instilled a love of craft work into many Brits before computer games, play station and Wii took over to fill long rainy afternoons. Perhaps the sunshine (and lack of Valerie Singleton) keeps the French outside in the gardens and on the beaches, making them relative novices to Arts & Crafts. Whatever the reason, you rarely see French kids round here spending days indoors creating masterpieces out of sticky back plastic, egg boxes and fairy liquid bottles. In fact, there



isn't really a French word for 'Arts & Crafts' - 'bricolage' or 'travaux manuels' are probably the nearest, both of which conjure up more of an image of hammers, nails and trips to Leroy Merlin.

Inspired by this lack of all things crafty Susan set up Tricot Créations - a veritable online Aladdin's cave of bits'n bobs - at sensible prices.

For those less handy amongst us, Susan also stocks a range of Kenana knitted toys & gifts. Follow the heart warming story of Kenana on the Anglophone-direct web site in the near future...

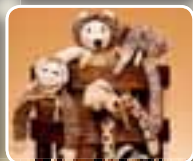
Also available at Coopers Épicerie - see p27



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NUNS, MONASTERIES AND PYRENEAN MOUNTAIN DOGS

by Courtney O'Brien-Brown

Sister Marie-Christine has a commanding presence for a woman her size. The petite nun, who resides at the Monastère des Ermites-de-Marie, is no stranger to dealing with giants. Along with her fellow sisters, Marie-Christine is world renowned for breeding Pyrenean Mountain Dogs. Reaching up to 70kg (154 lbs) in weight and 80cm (31.5 in) in height, they are among the largest canine breeds in the world.

The sisters began breeding the dogs in the Hautes-Pyrénées in 1964, a foundation reflected in the breed's name 'De Gabizos' after the Pic de Gabizos. They later relocated to their current residence close to the Spanish border town Le Perthus. The dogs provide not only a source of

income, but a sense of security. The monastery is isolated, tucked deep into the wooded folds of the Massif des Albères. A seclusion Marie-Christine believes benefits the breeding. "Here there is the calmness of the monastery, it is not stressful. It is regulated by the ring of the bells. The dogs wag their tails when the bells ring!" The daily duties are shared between the sisters, with the Mother Superior helping in the morning and evening. Marie-Christine attends to the dogs during the

day, often taking them for adventures in the mountains where they can "discover the world!"

Scratch the surface and you see the pleasure

with which Marie-Christine speaks of her dogs. I get the impression they are old friends sharing

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

a mutual respect and affection. "The Pyrenean Mountain dog is a protection dog by nature, a keeper... It is very strong and its jaw is very strong... you have to understand that two of them can kill a bear! So it is important to know how to handle this breed of dog. On the other side, it is a dog that is faithful and loving and it is driven by affection... he protects the ones he loves. At my age I cannot hold them anymore. They are much too strong for me. So I control them with my affection." The sisters used to exhibit their dogs, winning numerous prizes, but have since retired from competition.

Equipped with a double-layered coat, double dew claws and admired for their tremendous strength, Pyrenean dogs were an essential asset to shepherds and farmers working on the high pastures. The breed was developed in the Pyrénées and, though estimates vary, most place their origins to around the 1400's. Due to their regal appearance and stunning coat, the Pyreneans soon became popular in aristocratic circles and royal courts. Though Pyreneans are still widely used as livestock



guardians, they have become popular as domestic companions, a role that has not always been in the dogs' best interests.

As with all pedigree dogs, irresponsible breeding practices have lead to problems in the breed. Marie-Christine insists that potential buyers must be careful when choosing where to buy a pup. "In our ermitage we are careful about the pedigree, the ancestry and then we socialise the dogs, because it is important to socialise. We don't breed many. The most we do is three litters a year. So, it is more

Les chiens ne m'ont jamais mordue.
 Seulement les humains ...
 Marilyn Monroe

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humane. But if you have more than that then it is industrial and it is harder to take care of each pup specifically." Marie-Christine explains that people make the mistake of thinking that Pyreneans have a bad character. Instead, the breed is recognised for their stable character, their ability to make decisions and act independently. But, she emphasises that the Pyrenean dog is not for everyone. "They need a lot of space... and it is preferable not to have any close neighbours because they bark a lot at night. Some people can't stand it and it can finish very badly with the neighbours! In the lotissement it is

not possible, even if you have a big garden...and in an apartment, don't even think about it!"

The monastery sells puppies for 950€, micro-chipped & vaccinated. You can find out more details by visiting: www.chien-des-france.com & www.monastic-euro.org or by contacting the Réunion des Amateurs de Chiens Pyrénéens (R.A.C.P) www.chiens-des-pyrenees.com "These days with internet it is quite easy to find us, but even before the internet we were quite renowned. It is not very common for nuns to breed Pyrenean dogs!"



Photo: Jérôme Bon

Ouaf justice

Un chien arrive dans une boucherie, avec un porte-monnaie dans sa gueule...

« Alors mon chien. Tu veux de la viande? » demande le boucher

« Ouaf! »

« Ca, c'est un chien doué. Tu veux des côtes de porc et des saucisses? »

« Ouaf! »

Quel chien intelligent!

Le boucher prépare des côtes de porc, prend le porte-monnaie, se paie, et rend le porte-monnaie au chien. Le chien prend tout (dans un sac en plastique) et quitte la boucherie.

Intrigué, le boucher décide de suivre le chien pour féliciter le propriétaire car c'est un chien vraiment bien dressé. Le chien rentre dans un immeuble, monte

au deuxième étage et frappe deux fois à la porte avec sa patte. Un type ouvre et commence à engueuler le chien.

« Mais monsieur, arrêtez! C'est le chien le plus intelligent que je n'ai jamais vu » dit le boucher.

« Lui, intelligent? Vous rigolez! Ca fait 3 fois cette semaine qu'il a oublié ses clés! »

porte-monnaie - wallet
gueule - mouth (animal)
doué - clever
se paie - pays himself
rend - hand back
prend tout - takes everything

suivre - follow
féliciter - congratulate
propriétaire - owner
bien dressé - well trained
immeuble - block of flats
patte - paw

type - guy
engueuler - tell off
que je n'ai jamais vu - that I've ever seen
Vous rigolez - you must be joking

SILLY SNAPS

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Did you know...
...that the word mushroom comes from the French 'mousseron' meaning growing on moist moss?



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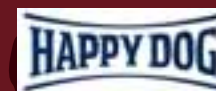
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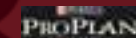
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Gamele - doggie/moggie bowl
Ramasse crottes - poop scoop
Chatière - cat flap
Panier - basket
Niche - kennel

chenil - boarding kennel
Griffoir - scratching post
Bac à litière - litter tray
Porte-adresse - address holder
Collier - collar
Laisse - lead

Chiot - puppy
Chaton - kitten
Traitement anti puces/antitiques - flea treatment
Vermifuge - worm treatment
Jouet à mâcher - chew toy

HEALTHCARE IN FRANCE

To your health - your most precious asset.

Our health has surely got to be the most important thing in our lives and yet those of us who live, holiday or plan to settle in France, are not always clear on the very complex issues of financing health cover, or the enormous bills awaiting us if we are not fully covered.

The French healthcare system is under severe financial pressure, and therefore constantly under reform, and what is true today may not necessarily be true tomorrow. This summer, the EU Commission stated that France is breaking EU rules by requiring that early retirees moving to France complete five years legal residence before becoming part of the French health system. New guidelines (not entirely clear at time of writing this article) confirm that most 'inactive' EU citizens will now be covered by the 'Sécurité Sociale'. Good news - but it is still advisable, and in some cases essential, to take out a top up insurance policy (a 'complémentaire santé' or 'mutuelle').

Why do we need top up insurance?

A complémentairesanté (a mutuelle is an old fashioned way of saying the same thing) is a policy which reimburses medical costs not covered by the Social Security. Depending on the policy chosen, it will cover some or all of the remaining percentage NOT reimbursed by the state. This can be an enormous amount if you need hospital or emergency treatment

as hospitalization, a private room, ambulance costs, along with dental and optical treatments, are expensive and refunded only minimally, or not at all by the Sécurité Sociale (la Sécu).

Choosing your 'complémentaire santé'

It is worth exploring different insurers and policies in order to find the right one for you and your family. Some insurers now offer 'made to measure' flexible packages where you can choose to add or subtract what is more, or less relevant to you personally. For example, if you know that you have regular problems with your teeth, but

your eyes are mostly fine, you might choose a higher level of reimbursement for your dental care than your optical needs or you may wish to put the emphasis on a policy which reimburses routine care such as GP or osteopathy and 'dépassements d'honoraires' (charges exceeding the 'Tarif de Convention', standard fee set by the state) but less on actual hospitalisation.....

Basically, you don't need to pay for what you are unlikely to use, but may add on to the policy each year, if you feel it necessary.

Whatever you choose, the monthly premium is surprisingly low compared to British health insurance policies, although be aware that this does not entitle you to queue jump, or private health care - it simply pays the bills for what is already available from the French Health Service.



If you are on a very limited budget for healthcare, you can take out a top up policy for hospitalisation only, the greatest expense.

What are the conditions to take out a complémentairesanté?

Age is obviously a factor, but different insurers have different age criteria. On average, you should have no problem taking out a policy up to 85, after that it is negotiable.

Importantly, unlike English health insurance policies, there is no medical questionnaire and you can take out a 'complémentaire santé' in all circumstances, even if you have a pre-existing condition, without it affecting your premium.

Beware! 100% reimbursement does not really mean 100%!

Reimbursement of 100% of the 'tarif de convention' (standard fee) does not mean that you will be fully reimbursed! It means that you will be 'topped up' to the full amount reimbursed by the sécurité sociale, which may only be a tiny amount. To be sure of receiving full payment for treatment that is poorly covered by the state, you should be looking at policies that reimburse a fixed sum or 'frais réels' - the actual cost.

Check out....

...if there is an initial period during which you will not be reimbursed (some insurers do this in order to stop clients taking out insurance only

when they become ill)

...if you can benefit from the 'tiers payant' system (payments made directly by your insurance company to the healthcare provider), meaning you do not have to pay upfront out of your own pocket.

Don't wait until you are ill to take out top-up health insurance.

Useful vocabulary

Frais médicaux - medical expenses
rembourser - to reimburse
A votre charge - payable by you
le pourcentage de remboursement - percentage of reimbursement



Docteur, docteur

Quand j'appuie là, j'ai mal ... et quand j'appuie là, j'ai mal aussi. Et quand j'appuie là, j'ai mal
Je crois Monsieur que vous avez le doigt cassé !!

TNT (TÉLÉVISION NUMÉRIQUE TERRESTRE)

Since 2010, the old analogue television service throughout France has gradually been replaced by digital (numérique) TV.

From the 29th November 2011, if you do not have a television adapted to TNT, be it via a new aerial, satellite, cable service, 'boitier

de décodage' (TNT decoder box) or internet broadband, you will no longer be able to watch the main French television channels. (TF1, France 2, France 3, France 5/Arte, M6) Most new televisions now have TNT aerial decoder built in.

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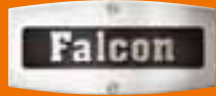
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