

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales

OUT FOR THE DAY

A ride on the one euro bus

AIRPORT NEWS

Flight possibilities to and from the region

LA RETIRADA

A different vision of the beautiful beaches of the P-O

Winter 2011
FREE / GRATUIT N° 34



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

Edito...

Our P-O autumn has been amazing - hot, sunny days right up to the end of October, confused flowers, birds and bees, warm Med, still swimmable for softies mid october! But now there's snow on the Canigou! Woooooohooooo!! know I get a little over excited about this every year, but it is oh so beautiful looking up to the mountains on a clear, crisp day. From down here on the plain, you could believe that its far off peak is dotted with white paint factories whose massive night time leaks dribble further and further down the mountain each new morning.

The winter sun continues to provide healing light. Don't forget to take your daily dose of brightness when you can. It keeps the smile on your face, lifts the spirits, and chases away the blues.

In this edition, we take you for a ride on the 1€ bus and a drive through the winter vineyards, Lou Sayers hunts down fun eating for little and big kids, Mike Rhodes takes us up to the highest peak of the P-O, and John Fairclough checks out the dwindling choice of flights, which are making travel to and from the region a little 'interesting' at the moment!

*Stay warm, have a great winter,
and see you in the spring!*

Kate & Jane

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organises events, exhibitions, salons, concerts and conferences throughout the year. Check out their website on

www.congres-perpignan.com



Welcome to the Pyrénées-Orientales!
www.cdtl-66.com

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with Mike Rhodes



Pic Carlit at 2921m is the highest peak in the eastern Pyrenees and with such status comes huge popularity. On any given day from spring to autumn, the 'via normal' is trodden by dozens of hikers who litter this splendid summit like ants when viewed from afar. My favourite route involves a little more effort but gives far more satisfaction and nearly always guarantees that you will be alone until you arrive at the top.

👉 We start at Lac de Bouillouses at hotel le Bones Hores ([GPS 42.56012N 1.99653E](#)), after a beautiful drive up the valley on the D60 from Mont Louis. In school holidays there is a navette that runs from 0700 to 1900h at a cost of 5 euros per person ([GPS 42.51994N 2.09757E](#)). The return trip is free!

👉 This walk involves a height gain of 1200m and will take 4 ½ hours in ascent and 2 – 3 hours in descent on the normal route. It is no more technical than the normal route but crosses some spectacular terrain and is best done with good weather both for the views and ease of navigation. This is a great walk for lovers of alpine flowers as well as Marmots, IZARD, Mouflon, Ptarmigan, Griffin Vultures and Golden Eagles.

👉 From the Bones Hores hotel take the broad but rocky, way-marked path climbing

westward into a shallow valley. Take care to follow the way marks as the popularity of this route ensures that there are many false trails leading through the trees.

👉 After about 30mins at a height of 2143m ([GPS 42.56435N 1.98359E](#)), you will arrive at a big cairn and a split in the path. We take the RH path past Estany del Viver and up through a glacial overflow channel on a good path to Estany de les



Dugues.

👉 From the SE corner of the lake, cross the stream by a small bridge and follow a small track that heads N, climbing up to Estany de Castella. Major paths and way marks now disappear as we contour around the E side of the lake and climb the steep hillside to the N, passing spot height 2381m on the RH side and then turning NW into a shallow rocky valley.

👉 Bizarrely a small path climbs up the steep, loose slope and into a second valley, which is followed to the W to a small rocky knoll with stunning views to the S. Ahead, to the NW is a broad ridge leading to a summit at 2790m. Follow the ridge for 400m and contour the slope to the L, heading for a shallow col, with what looks like a giant cairn but is actually a little shelter on the ridge and a good spot to take a break.

👉 Follow the rocky ridge to the W and on to a broad plateau where navigation in bad weather can be really difficult. The shelter is at [GPS 42.58392N 1.94739E](#) and you need to aim for the Stele ([42.57892N 1.94302E](#)), a large monument to an 18 year old boy who died whilst trying to climb Carlit one year in February.

👉 From here the route follows a path on the crest of Puig Sobirans, a spectacular but easy walk with great views down to the normal route to the S and to Etang de Lanoux to the N. Climb up to Carlit de baix (2806) and look down at our final challenge of the breche de Carlit and rocky climb to the summit.

👉 The path descends to the L of the top of Carlit de Baix but don't follow the path all the way down. Just a few meters down, follow ledges to the R until you reach the rocky ridge and continue to the start of the breche, a narrow gap between the two tops. The breche is followed easily on the LH side with a few scrambles up small steps until you

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reach the other side. Here it is possible to scramble steeply up the ridge but the normal route passes to the L into a loose gully. Don't climb the gully but take the LH side up easy rocky steps to a col. Again it is simple to follow the ridge direct but we descend slightly to the R and climb another gully to the lower of the two Carlit summits.

👉 Following the well trod path we reach the summit flag. The top of the Carlit is one of the most spectacular summits in the area and falls away steeply on all sides, especially to the W towards Andorra. Take some time to savour the views from the top as, other than Canigou, they are some of the best in the PO.

👉 The descent from the summit needs care. Re-descend to the small col between the two peaks and then take the obvious path down the scree slope to the E until it traverses to the R across the rocky face. Traverse the face and descend two steep chimneys with care, especially if people are still coming up.

After the traverse you reach a path descending the ridge and a straight forward descent to the lakes below. Save a little energy for the last 30 mins down the rocky track to the hotel Le Bones Hores where a cool beer is a just reward for a superb mountain day.

Mike Rhodes is an International Mountain Leader / Accompanateur de Montagne, lives all year in Les Angles and specialises in guided walks in the high mountains and Snowshoe trips in winter. He can be contacted on +33 (0)4 68 04 37 28 email: mike.rhodes@free.fr web site: www.pyrenean-trails.com

Did you know...?

“1940, le 3e déluge”

Seventy-one years have passed since the infamous 'Aiguat' (Catalan for flood or deluge) of October 1940 when north Catalonia was devastated by the worse floods of the century. The four days of excessive rains that mainly hit the Vallespir and the Conflent caused unbelievable damage, which left around fifty dead.

Catalan Director André SOUCARRAT devoted his film "1940, le '1940, le 3ème déluge' déluge" to this terrible catastrophe. Other regional documentaries from M. Soucarrat are « les Reginas d'Ille sur Têt », « le Maquis de Valmanya », « le 6ème Bouclier », « les Poupées Bella » and « La Saga de l'Ours en Vallespir ».

FOR PUB QUIZZERS.

France is divided into 96 “départements” split into 22 regions each administered by a Regional council (Conseil régional), within which each department is administered by a county council (Conseil Général). (There are also 4 overseas regions - French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Ile de la Réunion - and other overseas territories known as “TOM”) Well, you never know when you might need to know!



A LOAD OF WALLS (COLLIOURE, PORT VENDRES....)

During WW2, the Germans constructed concrete antitank walls to prevent the landing of allied troops on the beaches.

Walls were built at Collioure, Paulilles and Banyuls. Most beaches at Port Vendres were unsuitable for landing motorised vehicles but anti tank walls were built on the Tamarins beach.



Boats and Painters

The bright and varied colours of many of the houses in coastal Catalan fishing towns and villages (Collioure, Port Vendres...) began with the fishermen using up paint left over from decorating their colourful Catalan 'barques'.

In fact, over the border In Cadaquès, Dalí asked the fishermen to clean their brushes on his door after painting their boats. Today, you can see the resulting abstract piece of work when you arrive at his former home, now a museum.



Did you know that “La Marseillaise”, France’s national anthem, was actually composed in Strasbourg in 1792, not in Marseilles as we might assume. Originally entitled ‘Chant de guerre de l’armée du Rhin’ (War Song of the Army of the Rhine), it was renamed La Marseillaise because of its popularity with volunteer soldiers from Marseilles. Ironically, this patriotic and passionate song adopted by the Revolution was written in one night by staunch royalist Rouget de Lisle!



A fountain of names

Did you know that inhabitants of Font Romeu are called ‘Romeufontains’, after the Pilgrim’s Fountain which gave the resort its name?



A load of balls?

Rumour has it that the tradition of decorating Christmas trees in France actually started in Alsace in the 16th century. Trees were festively decorated with red apples until a drought in 1858 destroyed the apple harvest. A glass blower from the Lorraine village of Goetzenbruck quickly started to make apple-shaped glass baubles, which soon caught on around Europe.

SOME FAMOUS NAMES IN PERPIGNAN ‘PLACES’

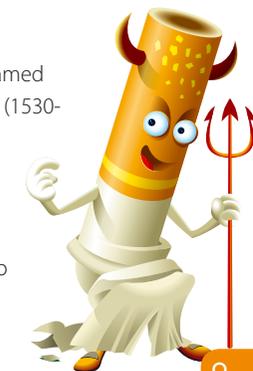
Place Bir Hakeim is named after a WW2 battle in which the French troops were defeated. However, the conflict seriously delayed advancing Italian and German armoured divisions and enabled British troops to win the next important battle, that of El Alamein.

Estagel born **François Arago** (1786-1853), was a physicist, astronomer and politician, responsible for the abolition of slavery in the French colonies in 1853. He has also had craters on Mars and the Moon, and a ring of Neptune named after him!

Canet born **Joseph Cassanyes** (1758-1843) is mainly remembered as a member of the National Convention, (the new administration during the French revolution) who voted to lop off the head of Louis XVI in 1793, and also for his part in the defence of the Roussillon against Spain.

Naughty Nico

Nicotine was named after Jean Nicot (1530-1600), a French diplomat and scholar who introduced the tobacco plant to France in 1559 from Portugal.



AIRPORT NEWS

With JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



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 to driving to Barcelona & Girona

One of the big plus points to living in P.O. for UK and Irish Citizens has been the plethora of low cost air routes.

The combined problems of the recession, poor Sterling to Euro exchange rate, higher fuel prices, and the cutting back of local government provided airport subsidies has recently meant big changes to the availability of flights to and from nearby airports, particularly during the winter months.

Here is an up to date rundown of all available flights during this winter period, ie from November till April, to/from airports within a couple of hours of P.O. with emphasis on routes involving the British Isles.

The new owners of **PERPIGNAN** airport have apparently been trying to attract new routes and Airlines there, and did manage to tempt Aer Lingus to start a twice weekly flight to Dublin during the summer, but, despite regular promises of «redevelopment and expansion», nothing else seems to be on the immediate horizon, and there will be no direct flights to UK/Ire during the winter. Changing in Paris with Air France, is, of course, an option, but a very inconvenient and expensive one. The decision of BMI Baby to pull out of Manchester in 2012 means that there will be a search for a new carrier to provide a flight there next summer.

Up the road in **CARCASSONNE**, there have been the usual winter reductions in flights. Ryanair enjoy a monopoly of the flights there, so from time to time experiment with new routes, some of which continue, others do not (see table).

BEZIERS airport is trying hard to gain a foothold,

and again Ryanair are the only player. Routes have never been extensive here, but there are a couple this winter (see table).

Beziers' gain has clearly been **MONTPELLIER'S** loss as there are very few UK/Ire flights scheduled from there this winter. In this case by EasyJet:

Over the border in Spain has seen the biggest turmoil, with claims and counter claims being made by the Airlines, the airport operator AENA, and the Catalan Regional government. It all seems to surround the provision of subsidies by government, but this article is not really the time and place to go into the details about this. Suffice to say **GIRONA** airport seems to have been the big loser. There are no Costa Brava charter flights in the winter, so Ryanair have had a pretty free run as far as UK/Ire flights have been concerned, but they have cut back dramatically. It seems scarcely believable that as recently as 3 years ago they served 24 different UK/Ire destinations from Girona. This winter there will be only 2 (see table).

A number of the ex-Girona Ryanair services have been moved to **BARCELONA**, as the Irish Airline move into the old and now vastly under used Terminal 2 there. Barcelona offers by far the best choice of UK/Ire flights this winter (see table).

This list is correct at time of writing (end Oct 11), but if you find things change, services are added or removed then please let us know at P-O Life. I hope to repeat things in the Spring when, presumably we'll know a little more about the schedule for Summer 2012. Until then, happy travelling and have a good flight!

BARCELONA	
Stansted	14x pw (Ryanair) 7 x pw (EasyJet)
Gatwick	30x pw (EasyJet) 5x pw (Monarch)
Luton	14x pw (EasyJet)
Heathrow	56x pw (BA/Iberia)
Edinburgh	4x pw (Ryanair)
Leeds Bradford	3x pw (Ryanair) 3x pw (Jet 2)
Newcastle	4x pw (EasyJet)
Bristol	7x pw (EasyJet)
Liverpool	7x pw (Easyjet)
Manchester	4x pw (Monarch)
Belfast	2x pw (EasyJet)
Dublin	7x pw (Ryanair) 5x pw (Aer Lingus)

GIRONA	
Manchester	2x pw (Ryanair)
Birmingham	2x pw (Ryanair)

CARCASSONNE	
Stansted	2x pw (Ryanair)
Liverpool	2x pw (Ryanair)
Dublin	2x pw (Ryanair)

MONTPELLIER	
Gatwick	5x pw (Easyjet)

BEZIERS	
Luton	2x pw (Ryanair)
Bristol	2x pw (Ryanair)



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CURIOUS CATALAN CHRISTMAS CULTURE

El Pessebre is the representation of the traditional Nativity Story, but don't forget to look out for the 'caganer' (pooper). This small statue of a Catalan peasant stands with trousers down 'fertilising' the land, and is usually tucked away somewhere in Nativity scenes. Finding this unique hidden figure is a popular game for children.



El Caga Tio (pron "cacka-tee-oh") is a hollow wooden log with smiley face painted on one end, wearing traditional Catalan red hat. He is covered with a blanket and 'fed' throughout December. At Christmas he is hit with a stick to make him 'poop' out the sweets and gifts stored inside his wooden tummy!



The 'Home dels Nassos (man of noses) has a nose for every day remaining in the year according to Catalan legend. He can only be seen on the streets on December 31st, so we only ever see him with one big one! One of his relatives is the 'home de les orelles', (the man of ears), who appears on the 30th.



What's on Around the Region

DECEMBER

December

Take a ride on the Santa special from Rivesaltes to Axa with the TPCF (Train Touristique du Pays Cathares et du Fenouillèdes) - Reservations: 04 68 59 99 02 or www.tpcf.fr

Saturday 3rd December

Maureillas salle de fêtes
Salon de Thé Britanico
Scones, shortbreads, home-made biscuits, chocolate and fruit cakes, small Christmas cakes, mince pies..... and all for charity. In aid of the Telethon 2011

Thursday 8th - 7.00pm

St. George's Vernet-Les-Bains
Traditional service with prayers, carols, mince pies and mulled wine. More info: 0468962458.

Sunday 18th at 10:30am

Perpignan Riverchurch Bilingual Christmas service
www.riverchurch.fr

31st December

Party on the beach
Theme " Collioure fait son cinéma"
Book a table under the marquis on the beach for just 5€ (04 68 82 05 66), and bring your own banquet or dine bodega-style. Music, dancing and fireworks

New Year Fireworks

Canet Hot wine and music followed by a musical firework display
Les Angles Torchlit descent of the piste followed by firework display, wine and hot chocolate.



JANUARY

Sunday 1st

First dip of the year
Argeles Organised sea dip for the very brave!

Sat 7th January

Perpignan centre
Cavalcade des Rois Mages
Procession of the Three Wise Men through the streets of Perpignan on horse and camel back.

Concert «Hommage à Piaf».
Bages salle de fête
For Edith Piaf fans.
Proceeds to cancer research.

FEBRUARY

Sat 25th-Sun 26th

Parc des Expositions, Perpignan
Puppy and kitten fair

5th - 19th Feb

Fête de l'Ours
Prats-de-Mollo, Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans and Arles-sur-Tech come out of hibernation in style in February, with the Fête de l'Ours.
5th February - Arles-sur-Tech
12th February - Prats-de-Mollo
19th February - St-Laurent-de-Cerdans

School holidays for our region

Christmas - 17th December - 3rd January
February Half Term - 11th - 27th February

for detailed information visit:-
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SNUFFLE A TRUFFLE....

Truffles sell at 800 to 900 Euros a kilo. They are harvested, in great secrecy, during the late autumn and winter. The truffle is well protected by law with heavy fines and the possibility of prison sentences for poaching. All reputable truffle fairs have experts to ensure that only the genuine article is on sale.

You can snuffle a truffle...

Sunday 18th December: **Villefranche de Conflent**

Sunday 15th January: **Montner**

Sunday 29th January: **Arles-sur-Tech**

Sunday 12th February: **Lesquerde**

Sunday 19th February: **Calce**





La Retirada

In early 1939, the Second Spanish Republic collapsed. As General Francisco Franco, aided by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, declared a fascist government, nearly half a million Republican civilians and soldiers fled over the border, via the frontier towns of Cerbère, Le Perthus, Coustouges, Puigcerda, Prats-de-Mollo..... This was the Retirada.

They were not welcomed with open arms in the Pyrénées-Orientales, which at the time had a population of around 250,000 inhabitants. Dubbed as the "Reds", they were admitted as "foreign undesirables", meaning they could be imprisoned legally. Women and children were initially sent to accommodation centres, men were at first refused entry and gathered in miserable huddles in the Spanish border towns.

On the 5th February, as Franco's troops advanced towards Figueras, the borders were opened for all and around 60,000 men were herded into internment camps on the beach at Argelès-sur-Mer, behind barbed wire fences, supervised by 'Gardes Mobiles' (a special branch of the gendarmerie) and brutal Senegalese troops. These camps had no

Dictionary definition
Retirada (catalan) - *withdrawal of troops to a more favourable position to escape the enemy's superior forces, or after a defeat*

protection from freezing temperatures and biting winds apart from a few improvised flimsy shacks. Most men slept in holes dug in the ground. There was no water, no sanitation and scarcely any food. Men died of exposure and were buried where they lay.

Similar internment camps soon followed at St Cyprien and Le Barcarès. Unspeakable squalour, food and water shortage, dysentery, rat-infested conditions.



Many returned, willingly or by force, to Franco's 'new Spain', to be met by harsh reprisals against Franco's former enemies; persecution, prison, torture and death.

Others were later moved to designated "concentration camps" spread over the South of

France: Bram (west of Carcassonne), Agde, Vernet in the Ariège, and Rivesaltes where they were to be joined, following the German occupation, by other 'undesirables' including East European Jews and "gypsies".

The repression of the exiles intensified under the German occupation, and thousands of Spanish >>



Republicans perished in the Nazi gas chambers, especially at Mauthausen.

Still others, despite their treatment in France, joined the French Resistance and, as 'Guerilleros Espagnols', contributed substantially to the Liberation in 1944.

On 15th March 1945 the exiles were finally granted the official status of 'Political Refugees'.

A third of the Languedoc-Roussillon's present-day population are descendants of these Spanish refugees.

Retirada Museum - another side to La Jonquera

La Jonquera isn't all white plastic chairs on the roadside, cheap booze and cigarettes. The quaint old village off to the left of the main road, direction Le Perthus - Girona, is well worth a visit. In the middle, near the church, is the Exile Memorial Museum (MUME), an immaculately kept and poignant reminder of the Retirada, a place for 'memory, history and critical reflection'.

Distressing photos and original footage of crowded beaches, the wreckage of emaciated bodies piled up in concentration camps, eye witness drawings and paintings of desperation and despair, lists of names of the dead and disappeared..... You will not come away unmoved.



Museu Memorial de l'Exili,
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La Jonquera
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Wood is sold by the stère (cubic metre) and there are 1000 dm³ in a stère. The price varies with its efficiency as heating material. It can be ordered by length (usually 50cm) although some stoves may take shorter lengths of wood.

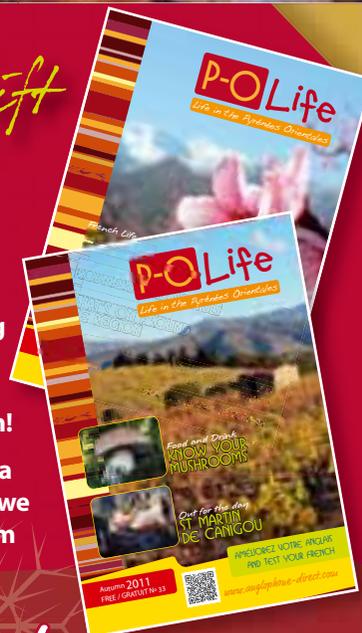
	FRENCH	ENGLISH	HEAT RATING
GOOD	Charme	Hornbeam	10
	Chêne	Oak	9.9
	Frêne	Ash	9.2
	Érable	Maple	9.1
	Bouleau	Birch	8.9
	Orme	Elm	8.4
AVERAGE	Hêtre	Beech	8
	Saule	Willow	7
	Sapin	Fir & Pine	6.7
	Aulne	Alder	6.7
	Pin Sylvestre	Scots Pine	6.7
	Mélèze	Larch	6.6
	Tremble	Aspen	6.5
	Tilleul	Lime	5.7
Peuplier	Poplar	5.1	

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Rocher des Pirates CLAIRA

**Restaurant
Review**
with
Louise Sayers



Ahoy there me hearties! How about a meal out with a difference as the winter draws in? Rocher des Pirates is a unique dining experience in a pirate-themed restaurant, and they don't do themed by halves! Although this restaurant was conceived as somewhere exciting for children and families to eat, whenever we have eaten here, there have been plenty of 'big kids' from young couples on dates to groups of 30-somethings and even retired couples getting in touch with their inner pirate!

Entering Rocher des Pirates is like being transported into a whole new world. A statue of a pirate greets you at the door swiftly followed by extremely friendly waiting staff, dressed as pirates and in character, who welcome you in to an immense dining room bedecked with skulls and crossbones, skeletons hanging from the ceiling, bawdy wenches and, when we visited at Halloween, all manner of ghosts and ghouls. For young eyes, it is a magical site which provokes some

wonderful reactions.

If pirate décor, pirate waiters, pirate food and a soft play area aren't enough to tempt you, on Tuesday and weekend evenings and weekend lunchtimes the waiters also put on a 15 minute show of swashbuckling and silliness. A custom-made platform acts as a stage and zip lines over diners' heads make for a dramatic and entertaining diversion while you finish off your meal. The show changes four times a year.

The

pirate theme is carried through to the menu with dishes such as La Jamb' de bois (wooden leg) or Parillade de Filibustiers (Buccaneer's Grill). The food on offer is a cross between your typical French brasserie (steaks, seafood) and an American diner (pizzas, burgers). There is certainly plenty of choice. Prices are fairly standard and given all the extras here, I'd say they are fair. Pizzas

start at €7.90, mains at €13.90 and starters at €7.90.

Let's face it, you don't really come to somewhere like this for the gourmet cuisine but the food surprised us in a good way – it was fresh, well presented and tasty. The child's menu is €6.80 with a choice of burger and chips, spaghetti bolognese or pizza and an ice cream tub for dessert. Drinks are extra – I was told that a free "cocktail" was offered to those in costume but my little four year old pirate was not given one. I went for the Harr!!! burger and it exceeded expectations – good quality meat, a nice bun and tasty fillings. Mark went for a pizza – it was heavily laden with toppings and in fact he couldn't finish it – a testament to the

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

Rocher des Pirates

Zone Commerciale Carrefour
Claira
www.rocherdespirates.com

Open daily from 12-2pm and
from 7-10 pm (10.30pm on
Saturdays)
Closed Christmas Day and
New Year's Day



generosity of the chef as this is a rare occurrence! In addition to the à la carte menu, on weekday lunchtimes outside of school holidays there is a two course menu for €9.80 with two choices for each course.

All in all, this is a fun and unique way to spend an evening or lunchtime so go on, unleash your inner pirate and celebrate the festive season at Rocher des Pirates.



Rocher des Pirates is proving a big hit, but it was not ever thus. Initially, getting the finance together for this venture was a struggle. Famously averse to risk, the French banks laughed at what they perceived to be a crazy scheme to launch a themed restaurant in an undeveloped commercial zone near Perpignan. Persistence paid off though, and the restaurant opened its doors in June 2007. The former cabaret owner whose brainchild it is has had the last yo ho

ho! He is currently rolling out what promises to be an extremely successful franchise. Marketing manager, Thomas Trainini explained to me that the Perpignan restaurant has acted as a "laboratory". Based on their findings there, the owners reworked the concept and the logo, and have launched a flagship restaurant in Toulouse as a showcase for potential franchisees. This is a whopping 2000m² with 600 covers and has served an astonishing 500,000 covers in 6 months. Shiver me timbers!



Escudella i carn d'olla

Escudella (meaning bowl in Catalan) - a large stew-soup traditionally made at Christmas, a favourite cold-weather dish to warm the soul! Normally made from anything available and boiled all day. Here is one of many versions!

Make a broth with the water, veal and ham bones, simmering slowly. Add the saffron. Blanch the salt pork to remove excess salt, and dice. Heat the oil in a large frying pan, add the diced salt pork and chopped onions. When the onions begin to brown, add the pieces of chicken and/or veal and cook slowly. Peel potatoes, leek and carrots, chop, and add to sausage, chicken and/or veal. Chop cabbage finely and add. Remove bones from broth and discard. Empty contents of frying pan into broth, adding beans, rice and pasta, and pepper to taste. Continue cooking over medium flame until newly added ingredients are cooked through and serve.



Ingredients :

Water	1/2 chicken OR 1/2 lb veal cut into bite-sized pieces
Ham bone	1/2 lb potatoes
Marrow bone (veal or beef)	1 medium Leek
Generous pinch of saffron	5 oz carrots
3 tablespoons Olive oil	4 oz cabbage
4 oz Salt pork (soak 1hr in water beforehand to reduce salt)	4 oz rice
1 catalan sausage (butifarra)	3 oz pasta
4 oz Peeled, chopped onions	1/2 cup white beans/chickpeas



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Food & drink



MARRONS GLACÉS

First created during the reign of Louis XIV, these candied glazed chestnuts are eaten around Christmas time in France, a fairly costly luxury as true marrons glacés take several days to cook from start to finish.

- 1 kg chestnuts
- 1 kg sugar
- 650ml water
- 1 vanilla Bean (gousse de vanille)

- ☞ Remove shell and membrane from chestnuts.
 - ☞ Place in large pan, cover chestnuts with water and boil for 8 minutes.
 - ☞ Drain and discard water. Rub with kitchen cloth until skins come off.
 - ☞ Cook sugar, water and vanilla bean over low heat stirring until all sugar dissolves.
 - ☞ Allow to simmer for 5 minutes then add chestnuts.
 - ☞ Bring to boil and cook for 10 minutes.
 - ☞ Remove from heat and discard vanilla bean.
 - ☞ Cover and soak overnight for 12 hours then boil again for 1 minute.
 - ☞ Allow to stand for 24 hours, repeat process until all syrup is absorbed.
 - ☞ Preheat oven to 65 deg centigrade or 150 deg fahrenheit and place chestnuts on greaseproof paper and leave to dry in oven with door ajar for 2 or so hours until firm.
 - ☞ When completely cool, store between greaseproof paper in airtight container et voila.
- Bon Profit.** (Thanks to Cindy Guilbert for this recipe)



Visit this famous ancient Lintel in the nearby church in Saint Genis des Fontaines

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So very Céret

Opened in 1927 as a 'cooperative' by local workers, Le France is very much an institution in Céret.

Many of us have whiled away a pleasant hour beneath the shady platanes of the terrace in summertime, nursing a cold beer and watching the world go by, but did you know that there is a fabulous restaurant upstairs for the winter months? Warm and welcoming, serving up quality fare at very reasonable prices for the high standard of cuisine, (17€ for three delicious and beautifully presented courses + well priced à la carte + excellent pichet wine) the decor combines all things Céret.

Lovingly designed and personally renovated and decorated by local artists Alias & Alias, the salle à manger boasts a bar that is a hand crafted mosaic of cherries, snails, 'porrons', and pebbles from the River Tech, the floor has been stripped back to its original tiles, the colourful walls are adorned with painted swirls of 'feuilles d'acanthé' and mirrors made up of hundreds of splinters of broken mirror. Think Gaudi, think Klimt.

And don't we all know that you can judge a restaurant by its loos? Whether you want to spend a penny (10 centimes?) or not, it is worth a trip to this fabulous 'petit coin' for the artwork alone!

Bon appétit!



Le France RESTAURANT

A hidden jewel in the heart of Céret. Not just for outside summer dining!

You have whiled away the hours, "people watching" from our shady terrace, enjoying a meal with friends or coffee with clients. We now invite you to discover our "hidden restaurant" - perfect for those chilly winter evenings

Uniquely re-designed by local artists Alias et Alias, our stunning, upstairs dining room combines charm and atmosphere with art and creativity

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A PET IS FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS!

"L'homme est le seul animal qui rougit ; c'est d'ailleurs le seul animal qui ait à rougir de quelque chose."
George Bernard Shaw
(rougir - to blush
d'ailleurs - what's more)

La SPA (Société Protectrice des Animaux) was created in 1845 by Doctor Etienne Pariset. Touched by the poor treatment of many cart and carriage horses on the streets of Paris, the society was at first devoted to the welfare of horses. It grew quickly, thanks to support from several renowned French 'intellectuals' such as Victor Hugo and Guy de Maupassant.

In 1903, the first SPA refuge opened in Gennevilliers, in the suburbs of Paris.

There is now a national network of 'refuges', thanks to the generosity of thousands of volunteers, and animal lovers with big hearts and welcoming homes. There is also a growing number of free animal hospitals, to treat pets whose owners are unable to pay vet's fees.

The SPA today is not just about sheltering and rehoming the hundreds of thousands of pets abused and abandoned every year.

It is about the fight against cruelty to any animal: seal bashing, bull fighting, dog fighting,

the fur trade, the illegal trafficking of rare species...

It is about rescuing animals who need us and prosecuting those who deliberately cause them harm.

Research has shown that pet owners are generally healthier and happier than non-pet owners. They have lower blood pressure and cholesterol, are less likely to become depressed. Pets can lift our spirits and help us relax.

They are waiting behind bars right now, hoping for release - a visit, a walk, a home.... Isn't it the least we can do?

Some of the hopefuls at the SPA Toreilles



Charman

I'm described by the staff here as a bit of a cutie. In fact, they say I'm 'adorable'. Purrrrrrfect pet for anyone



Chat Joueur (7 months)

I'm a young playful pussycat who adores people, but keeps getting passed over for younger models, despite my lovely character.



Onyx (7 months)

I've been here since I was a little baby, along with my two brothers. We are Labrador crosses and visitors think we are very cute. I would so like to come home with you.



Shadow

No lead needed for me on walks, I am sunny, loving, faithful and obedient.



Gullu (6 months)

I arrived as a baby, with my little brothers. They were lucky and were adopted. I am still here on my own. Everyone finds me adorable!!!! please give me a home.



Liou (6 years)

I was abandoned by my owner and I don't know why. I have a small problem with one of my back paws, but I am big hearted, good humoured and ever hopeful. I just want to love and be loved



Mia (7 years)

I love cuddles, I am soft and good natured. I speak but no one realises that I am saying << Please take me home with you. You wont regret it >>



Syrah and Toy 10 months

We are 2 friends who have had a rough time, good natured, obedient and we get on well with everybody. Separate or together, we would give you bucket loads of love in exchange for a tiny share of your life.

Refuge de Toreilles - Route de Villelaugues, Toreilles - Tél: 04 68 28 20 36



Driving through Wintery Vineyards

Driving through wintery vineyards is like driving through a landscape of living sculptures. Each vine, pruned to its minimal gnarled and twisted trunk, is a work of art. Set out in geometric patterns they form a patchwork design on the steep mountainsides. Easy to see the crows foot forms of the drainage ditches, created to ensure that the precious soil is not swept away in winter rains. Easy to wonder at the harsh working conditions on the near vertical slopes, to marvel at the myriad dry stone walls, to spot the little casots, each with its sheltering almond or fig tree, chosen as much for their fruits as their welcome shade.

Starting off in Banyuls sur Mer turn inland at the town hall and follow the road past Carrefour towards the Cave des Templiers. If you stop for a tasting you may well miss the rest of the drive and risk returning home with a car full of bottles of delicious naturally sweet Banyuls wine or rich red Collioure. Continue and, on the left, a small piste leads to the Chapelle de la Salette. The little white chapel, standing sentinel over the slumbering town, catches the first rays of the morning sun as it rises out of the bay of Banyuls. Well worth the small detour for the view over the valley leading to the Col de Banyuls (see edition 33)

Back on the road, high on the skyline, the Tour de Madeloc was built in 1285 by James II of Majorque. At 652 meters above sea level, the guards of the watchtower could signal warning of possible attacks from France in the North or from his brother Peter of Aragon in the South. Fire by night and smoke by day.

The two-story tower was further improved and used by Vauban in the 17th century. Nowadays it is used by the local fire brigade and as a TV relay station. Or as a picnic spot with breathtaking views of the sea, the plain of Roussillon and the

mountains. Park the car and walk the final few hundred metres to the Tower.

Actually the whole drive via Madeloc from Banyuls to Collioure is breathtaking, the twisting hairpin bends through the terraced vineyards, Banyuls, Paulilles, Port Vendres and Collioure, the whole of the Cote Vermeille spread out below. It may require careful driving but is worth every moment of effort. From Collioure, the road back along the coast to Banyuls to pick up any members of the party left in the Cave des Templiers is simple indeed.



Le Perthus



Not the Le Perthus of blatant consumerism overcrowded with hordes of bargain hunting shoppers in search of the cheapest booze, flamenco frocks, guns and music, but the Le Perthus of Vauban, of the Via Domitia and the Romans.

Just before entering the wall to wall supermarket that is Le Perthus High Street, turn right following signs to Fort Bellegarde. Louis XIV's military architect Vauban (who else) was responsible for the massive fort with its sixty-two meter high, six meter thick walls and, at sixty three meters deep, the deepest well in Europe. He removed the rather pretty Spanish stronghold that topped the mountain and, considering it's base too small for his design, ordered 20 meters of the mountain top to be sliced off to accommodate the fortress he had designed. And that was long before the days of mechanised earth moving machinery...

From its terrace there are spectacular views over Canigou, the new TGV line that one day will link Paris to Madrid and the Pyramid of Ricardo Bofill on the A9 border crossing, symbolising the junction of the two Catalonias, north and south.

In the opposite direction, one can see a much older border crossing where

the Panissars archaeological site marks the point at which the Via Domitia became the Via Augusta. In the old Officers Quarters in the Fort is a museum documenting twenty three centuries of history since Hannibal first crossed the Pyrenees en route for Rome.

From Bellegarde it is an easy walk or short drive to the Panissars site. The Via Domitia divided in two just South of Perpignan after Ruscino. The part running more or less parallel with our A9, ran along the Gorges de la Rom, and, via Les Cluses, crossed the Alberes at Le Perthus. Initially a military route built by the Emporor Domitius in 118 BC, connecting Rome with Cadiz, it was part of the 100,000 odd kilometres of roads built by the Romans throughout their mighty empire over eight centuries. In 71 BC, Pompey had a monument constructed at the Col de Panissars to commemorate his victories over the Spanish, who in 77BC, had, unwisely, revolted against Roman rule. His huge three storey monument straddled the road, reminding all traffic forced to pass beneath it of the power of the Roman Empire. The 31 x 15 meter foundations were discovered in 1983 beneath the remains of the Benedictine Abbey of Ste Marie des Panissars. Nearby, the tracks of the Roman wagon wheels are still visible and it is easy to imagine Hannibal crossing the Albères here in 281 BC and Pompey, in the opposite direction, a century and a half later.





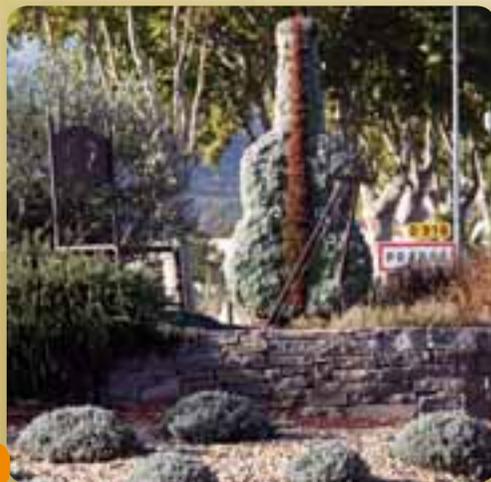
.....On the one euro bus

This is a drive out without the driving and everyone can have a glass of wine or two with lunch. Plus it's a form of transport that is both eco-friendly and economical...

All over the Pyrénées Orientales the buses of the Conseil Général will take you on a journey of up to two hours for one euro. They are speedy, efficient and, not surprisingly, increasingly popular.

We took a journey up the Têt Valley, from Perpignan to Mont Louis. We rolled up by bus and rattled back on the Yellow Train to Villefranche de Conflent where we changed onto the local train back to Perpignan. Added bonus, from December onwards, the train ticket is also one euro. (The Yellow Train, however, offers no discount.)

The Têt valley adventure begins at the Gare Routière Départementale Bvd St Assisclle, Perpignan.



The buses on line 260 begin at 6.40. We chose the 10.30.

It speeds along, picking up and setting down across the Roussillon plain: Le Soler, St Féliu, Millas, Nefiach. Pretty villages and small towns. On to Ille sur Têt, Bouleternère, Rodes, Vinça. Through the peach, nectarine and cherry orchards, past Marquixanes and Eus, the valley narrowing now, mountains, snow topped from November to April, closing in.

The market town of Prades announces itself by a roundabout with a floral cello, a tribute to Pablos Casals who made it his home after escaping the Spanish Civil War. The stop at Prades' Gare Routière there is about half way to Mont Louis.

Villefranche de Conflent, a perfect mini Carcassonne of a fortified medieval town, is where the Yellow Train begins. It also where you would get off to visit Vernet les Bains.

The road and Yellow Train tracks twist and turn their way up the higher valley of the Têt together now. Sometimes running parallel, sometimes on opposite banks of the river. Small towns cling to the steep hillsides. From the bus the views are breathtaking, especially if you are lucky enough to see the Yellow Train, reduced to dinky toy proportions, crossing the dramatic and beautiful Pont Sejourné as the bus sweeps underneath. Soon after Fontpedrouse, the Pont Gisclard can be



seen on the left hand side. Gracefully spanning the gorge, eighty meters high and two hundred and forty one meters long, the metal suspension bridge is definitely the superstar of the line.

At 12.40 (ish) the bus arrives at Mont Louis. It is possible to continue on to Latour de Carol on the same bus or to change onto one for Les Angles and the Capcir. If you stay in Mont Louis (highest fortified town in France and home to the French Commandos) there is plenty of time for lunch and a visit to the Four Solaire before heading down to the SNCF station.

The Yellow Train arrives at 15.52 or 16.45, tooting as it rolls over the hill from Font Romeu. The descent is slower and considerably noisier than the

bus. It rattles along, through tunnels, over the great bridges, powered by electricity created along its route and arrives in Villefranche de Conflent with time to spare before the 17.27 or 18.27 one euro train back to Perpignan in good time for dinner.

Bus and train timetables, available at most Tourist Offices, are a bit of a must as they will allow you to change your programme as the day unfolds.

And what a wonderfully easy way to explore the P O or to nip into Perpignan for lunch... The run along the coast is a good one too, so is the trip up the Agly valley, or the Vallespir. The days out could be many, the transport cost minimal.

A weekly ticket costs a mere 8 euro, a monthly 30 and an annual one 180 euro.



Test your French

1 - N POUR NATION

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

- | | | | |
|---|----|---|---------|
| personne de petite taille | 1 | a | noix |
| gros bateau | 2 | b | nuque |
| petit fruit avec coquille dure | 3 | c | neveu |
| trou rond au milieu du ventre | 4 | d | navire |
| arrière du cou | 5 | e | noce |
| ouverture du nez | 6 | f | navette |
| véhicule qui fait des allers et retours | 7 | g | narine |
| le fils de mon frère ou sœur | 8 | h | nain |
| petite cabane pour chien | 9 | I | niche |
| fête pour un mariage | 10 | J | nombril |

Not sure exactly how many?

To describe an approximate number, add **-aine** on the end of most numbers.

- une dizaine - about ten
- une douzaine - about twelve (giving the English word 'dozen')
- une quinzaine - about fifteen (often used for fortnight)
- une vingtaine - about twenty
- une trentaine - about thirty
- une quarantaine - about forty etc (giving English word 'quarantine')
- une centaine - about a hundred

but...

un millier - about a thousand

NB This rule does NOT apply to 70s, 80s, or 90s

TO SEND YOUR GOOD WISHES TO SOMEONE....

Meilleurs souvenirs à...

Passes le bonjour à...

Bisous à....

and for your Christmas greetings....

Joyeux Noël - Merry Christmas

Bonne Année et Bonne Santé - Happy New Year and Good Health

Joyeuses Fêtes et Bonne Année - Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Paix, joie et amitié - Peace, joy and friendship

Bonheur, santé et prospérité - Good luck, health and prosperity

2 - FAUX AMIS - SOME MORE OF THOSE FALSE FRIENDS TO CONFUSE YOU

Choose the correct définition

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1 reporter
a) to postpone
b) to inform | 4 un slip
a) petticoat
b) underpants | 7 Parcelle
a) piece of land
b) présent |
| 2 user
a) to use
b) to wear out | 5 marmite
a) cooking pot
b) savoury spread | 8 Laid
a) ugly
b) bed |
| 3 caution
a) guarantee
b) prudence | 6 ceinture
a) a hundred years
b) belt | 9 Grappe
a) raisin
b) bunch of grapes |

Cher Papa Noël,

J'espère que tu vas bien (on peut se tutoyer j'espère) et qu'il neige chez toi!

Cette année, j'ai essayé de me comporter un peu plus correctement pour une femme de mon âge. J'ai bu moins de vin rouge et moins de bière, (et j'ai chanté moins fort quand j'en ai trop bu!) et je n'ai pas trop abusé sur les bonbons. Je t'assure que c'est vrai!

Tu seras donc d'accord que je mérite un petit quelque chose en récompense pour avoir été sage? L'année dernière, tu m'as encore donné des appareils ménagers! Réfléchis un peu plus longtemps cette fois s'il te plaît. Des bijoux en or, ou un nouveau cabriolet sous le sapin peut être en échange pour un grand verre de vin et une mince pie?

Je t'embrasse très fort



Kate

PS Désolée pour le petit problème avec la cheminée. J'espère que tes fesses vont mieux. J'éteindrai le feu cette année.

VOCAB

- se comporter - to behave
- moins de - less
- j'en ai trop bu - I have drunk too much of it
- abuser - to overindulge
- tu seras d'accord - you will agree
- mériter - to deserve
- récompense - reward
- sage - well behaved
- appareils ménagers - kitchen appliances
- réfléchis - think
- bijoux - jewellery
- or - gold
- cabriolet - convertible
- sapin - Christmas tree
- fesses - bottom (bum)
- mieux - better
- j'éteindrai - I will put out

Tongue twister (Virelangue)

(Répétez trois fois)

Son sage chat chante et son sage singe chouine!

His wise cat sings and his wise monkey whines

RÉFLEXIONS

De quelle couleur est un caméléon quand il se regarde dans la glace?



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Test your French

3 - MATCH UP THE USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

J'en ai ras le bol	1	a	he talks rubbish
...et patati et patata	2	b	we'll see about that!
À la limite	3	c	seriously
Tant mieux	4	d	nothing to do with me
Je n'y suis pour rien	5	e	and so on
Il raconte n'importe quoi	6	f	to go window shopping
Un bon rapport qualité-prix	7	g	at a pinch
On verra bien!	8	h	I'm fed up
Faire du lèche-vitrines	9	i	great (all the better!)
Sans blague	10	j	good value

Vary your language!

Don't tell your friend or partner he is 'gros'

Tell him he is.....

Useful expression (slang)

Que dalle - **Absolutely nothing!**

Qu'est ce que tu a fait hier?

"Que dalle!"

Bien enrobé	odou	mastoc
bouboule	fort	patapouf
corpulent	gras	rondelet

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4

FIND THE ENGLISH FOR THE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS BELOW

Manquer le coche	1	a	I always keep my word
Motus et bouche cousue	2	b	It'll all work out
Arriver à la bourre	3	c	It's as plain as day
C'est dans la poche	4	d	to be late
Je tiens toujours ma parole	5	e	Heads or tails?
Mettre son nez partout	6	f	to keep a secret
Pile ou face?	7	g	to have a lot on
Cela saute aux yeux	8	h	to miss out on something
Ca s'arrangera	9	i	to be nosey
Avoir du pain sur la planche	10	j	It's in the bag

Useful expression

Ca me dit quelque chose
That rings a bell



Une très blague bête

Comment appelle-t-on un sorcier qui fait de la magie noire avec un yaourt ?

Un faux mage blanc.
sorcier - wizard



5 - ENTRE - BETWEEN OR AMONGST

Match up the following French idioms, all using 'entre' with their English equivalents

pris entre deux feux	1	a	at the end of the meal
entre guillemets	2	b	caught in the crossfire
parler entre ses dents	3	c	between the devil & the deep blue sea
rester entre eux	4	d	in brackets
entre la poire et le fromage	5	e	at dusk
entre chien et loup	6	f	to keep to themselves
entre le marteau et l'enclume	7	g	in inverted commas
entre parenthèses	8	h	to mumble

Test your french - answers

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

Améliorez votre Anglais

Voici quelques expressions pour calmer les stressés!

-  Take a chill pill
-  Relax Max
-  Chill out
-  Take it easy
-  Cool it
-  Loosen up

Useful expression
What a kerfuffle
Quel vacarme

Puzzle
What cheese is made backwards?

Edam



MOT INTÉRESSANT

to binge - abuser ou faire quelque chose avec excès

eg: *binge drinking* - boire beaucoup d'alcool très vite pour être ivre le plus rapidement possible

1 -

TROUVEZ LE BON FRANÇAIS POUR CES EXPRESSIONS COURANTES EN ANGLAIS

- | | | | |
|------------|---|---|----------------|
| Great! | 1 | a | Laisse tomber |
| Forget it | 2 | b | Super! |
| By the way | 3 | c | Au fait |
| Awful | 4 | d | Affreux |
| Have fun | 5 | e | Amuse-toi bien |

'Eengleesh Humour'

I wanted to tell you a joke about a pencil... but now I can't see the point!

For lazy people

Ta! (Abréviation de "thank you")

Useful expression

To do something 'willy nilly'

Faire quelque chose n'importe comment, ou bon gré mal gré

2 - Trouvez le bon sens des ces phrases poilues!

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| bad hair day | 1 | a | s'éclater |
| hair of the dog | 2 | b | d'un poil |
| to split hairs | 3 | c | couper un cheveu en quatre |
| to let your hair down | 4 | d | quand tout va mal |
| hair-raising | 5 | e | remède contre un gueule de bois |
| by a hair's breadth | 6 | f | effrayant |

3 - LES EXPRESSIONS CI DESSOUS SONT LIÉES PAR 'AND'. POUVEZ VOUS TROUVER LES BONNES PAIRES SUIVIES PAR LEUR SIGNIFICATION?

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|--------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | prim and..... | a | out | F | le pour et le contre |
| 2 | pros and..... | b | ends | G | guindé |
| 3 | down and | c | cons | H | sans moyens |
| 4 | to and..... | d | proper | I | va et vient |
| 5 | odds and..... | e | fro | J | bric-à-brac |

A silly joke.

What are prehistoric monsters called when they are asleep?

Dinosnores



A very silly joke.

Why can't a bicycle stand on its own?

Because it is two tired.

4 -

Trouvez la bonne traduction pour les Expressions Idiomatiques

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Bless you! | 1 | a | ça a coûté la peau des fesses |
| Let's get back to business | 2 | b | Ça passe ou ça casse |
| It cost an arm and a leg | 3 | c | A vos souhaits! |
| Straight from the horse's mouth | 4 | d | De source sûre |
| It's sink or swim | 5 | e | Revenons à nos moutons |

5 - N - is for Nation

- | | | | |
|-----------|----|---|----------------------------|
| neighbour | 1 | a | not one and not the other |
| naked | 2 | b | unpleasant |
| naughty | 3 | c | eat with small bites |
| neither | 4 | d | badly behaved |
| neck | 5 | e | bad dream |
| nibble | 6 | f | clean and tidy |
| nightmare | 7 | g | someone who lives near you |
| neat | 8 | h | wild plant which stings |
| nettle | 9 | I | between head and shoulders |
| nasty | 10 | j | not wearing any clothes |

Virelangue

(Répétez trois fois)

Freshly fried flying fish



Les Angles

In the early 20th century, the population of Les Angles was dwindling, due to war and the 'exode rural' as people headed for work in the towns. In 1964, in an attempt to restore life to a fading village, the ski resort was created, resulting in the authenticity of a traditional mountain village, combined with the modern buildings and equipment of an exciting ski centre.

The old village is centred round the church of St Michel, several fountains and the remains of the XIII century tower of the chateau. Attractive old houses have been turned into gites, restaurants and hotels.

Lake Matemale glistens at the edge of the village, there is a good assortment of downhill pistes catering for all levels, particularly beginners and intermediates, and an impressive Snowpark. As well as two restaurants on the slopes, there is a 'Salle de Grillade' at the top of the télécabine where you can leave your own barbecue meat at the

start of your skiing day and arrive to have it grilled and served for you at lunch-time!

Made possible whatever the weather thanks to a battery of snow canons, traditional skiing is only a part of what Les Angles has to offer. Why not try 'Snake Sledging', sitting on segments of sledge slotted together to make one big collective snake, a hysterical, downhill roller coaster ride? You could have a go at (brrrr, dare I say it) under ice diving, spend a night in an igloo, take a ride on a dog sleigh... or just be zen and relax in the nearby hot water springs while the rest of the family wear

themselves out on the slopes!

The Parc Animalier

If skiing is not your thing, why not visit the 'parc animalier' des Angles, where you can see many of the animals of the Pyrenees in very large enclosures, in their natural surroundings. The one and a half to two hour walk through enclosures of boar, wolf, bison, bear, reindeer, marmotte and izards is a pleasure for all ages. Picnic spots and beautiful views through to the lake and mountains add to the pleasure

It's all happening in Les Angles this season!

Hands up for the hands free!

Gone are the days of long shuffling queues, glove in mouth, and ski poles wagging dangerously as you search last minute for your ski pass. The new hands free pass remains comfortably in your pocket and operates the turnstiles automatically as you approach, a little like the French motorway 'télépéage' system!

Buy it online at www.lesangles.com, download your photo straight from your computer... and you're good to go! You can either pick up the pass at the ticket office in the resort when you arrive, or have it posted to you in advance (P&P extra). Recharge it anytime by Internet, Smartphone or Iphone

In the future, these same passes will be able to store information and tell you, for example, how many kilometres you have skied during the season.

A high old time with the big airbag

Ideal for both beginners and experienced jumpers, the big airbag is the ultimate, cool way to practice your ski jumps safely. This giant, soft, inflatable cushion is placed in front of the ski-jump, ready to catch any type of fall. It is specially designed to soften and deflate as you land, ensuring minimum risk of injury, from whatever angle you arrive!

It allows you to perfect your techniques, and is a great way to practice until you are ready for 'the real thing'.



SKI FACT FILE

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Letsgetphysical...

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Today's snowshoes are lightweight and easily manoeuvrable, making you feel as if you are floating across the snow, and snowshoeing has become a fun, low impact exercise - the perfect way to visit the winter wonderland of the high Pyrenees.

For an added dimension to your walk, why not explore the mountains with a qualified guide? Do you know how to tell if a squirrel is left or right handed from the way it eats a pinecone? Or the difference between the way finches and tits eat a hazelnut? Can you identify hare and fox tracks in the snow? Do you wonder about the origins of a church or the name of familiar wildflower and



butterfly, or worry about getting lost, or caught out in a thunderstorm? An International Mountain Leader (IML) will plan your itinerary, animate your walk, take pleasure in introducing you to the mountains, inspire, educate and above all, provide a safe way to enjoy a potentially dangerous environment.



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WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

Wooden chalets are charmingly traditional up in the mountains but a rarity down here on the plain. In fact, until recently, all kinds of rules and regulations prevented the building of wooden houses in the P-O. below a certain altitude.

Extreme heat, termites and earth tremors were amongst various reasons cited as culprits, but as more research has provided positive results, the law has changed, and more people are looking at this attractive and eco friendly alternative, which can actually save energy and reduce environmental impact through the use of renewable resources.

In fact, for every tree cut down, always at the end of its growing cycle, replacements are planted, young vigorous trees, which remove CO² from the atmosphere and convert it to oxygen as they grow to maturity.

Many traditional timber log buildings in Scandinavia, Canada and the USA have lasted generations, some dating back to the 15th century. On the other hand, reinforced concrete homes start to need major renovation after about 25 years and there is no viable use for concrete at the end of the building's life span – it will just be added to landfill.

In countries such as Canada, where temperatures

vary from -30°C up to +40°C, log-houses weather very well. Heat, strong sunlight, extreme cold does not affect well-treated, solid timber adversely and wood is a good insulator, keeping your home cool in summer and warm in winter. In fact, did you know that it is 15 times more thermally efficient than the same thickness of concrete and 400 times better than steel?

And if you're worried that yermite get termites and other insects, fret no more. They love to munch on damp and rotting wood, whereas the timber used for wooden homes is first kiln dried, then treated with preservative and built on solid concrete bases or piles which avoid contact with the ground.

During P-O summers, fire risk is a worry, but timber houses always meet and usually exceed all the EU directives concerning fire.

They are also designed to survive earthquakes, as wood will flex and cope well with vibration, but will not crack and distort in the same way as concrete.

Kits can now be ordered and delivered for a full house, and put up (by a team who knows what it is doing!) in only a few days! Incroyable non?

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NOT JUST ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Commissioned by the Mayor of Opoul in summer 2011, the old smithy on Rue de la Tramontane in the village, now the terrace of café restaurant Le Léopard, has a new face thanks to artist Robert Prouty. Sadly, the former owner and blacksmith jumped out of the window to his death many years ago, but Robert was able to recreate an original scene from an old photo belonging to the gentleman's granddaughter.

Interestingly, the face at the window is not the

unfortunate old blacksmith, but Robert's own son at 7 years old.

The mural took a month to finish, but Robert tells us that the hardest part was actually putting up the scaffolding!

Graffiti loving village kids apparently appreciate it so much that they keep trying to add their own 'artistic contribution!' Hrrrrump!

Robert says philosophically "That's OK. Maybe the mayor will pay me to repair it!"

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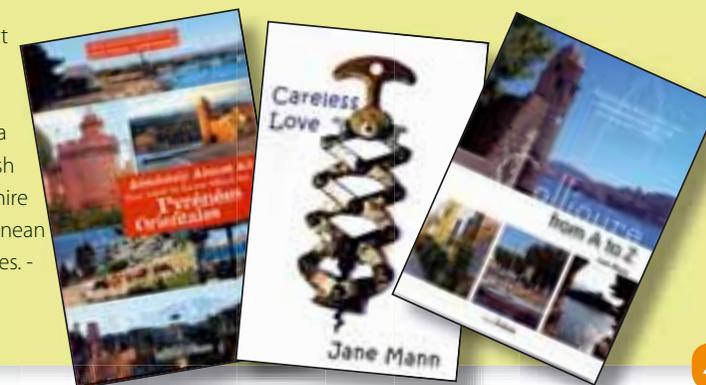
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According to the WHO (World Health Organization, not the rock band!), France has the best healthcare system in the world and more people visit the doctor here than in any other country – and of course, doctors write prescriptions.

A good place to start

'Pharmacie' staff are highly trained, (six or seven years of university studies are required) and therefore generally very competent in providing diagnosis and over the counter treatment for many common ailments. Whilst certainly not a substitute for a doctor, they can be a good place to start if you're off colour. Do not be afraid to ask advice, describe your symptoms etc. Many pharmacies in this region will be happy to provide you with an English speaker. Just ask.

More than just a chemist

Most pharmacies will carry out first aid, lend blood pressure gauges (and show you how to use them), advise on the edibility of mushrooms picked (take them into the chemist and they will try to identify them for you), rent out and deliver materials such as crutches, wheelchairs, beds for the disabled....

Always open somewhere

Pharmacies open shop hours and are closed Sunday and Bank holidays. However, there

will always be at least one 'service de garde' in each area providing out-of-hours service in case of emergency. Look for a notice in the window of any pharmacy, or in your local newspaper, to find out which pharmacy is scheduled to be open each week.

Non-prescription drugs

Only pharmacies are allowed to sell over-the-counter, non-prescription drugs, so you will not find paracetamol or haemorrhoid cream at your local corner shop or supermarket. There is no state reimbursement for over the counter drugs, unless they have been prescribed by a doctor.

No needle necessary!

Many French chemists have a wide range of homeopathic remedies

Cul-de-sac

While we're on the subject of bottom-related treatment, did you know that the expression 'cul-de-sac' actually originated in England when speaking French was trendy amongst the English aristocracy... and very posh it is too, meaning literally 'arse of the bag'! Ironically, the French use 'impasse' to describe a dead end!

and pharmacists often recommend them. Some are even reimbursed by the state when prescribed by a doctor. For example, if, like me, you are a little needle phobic but should have a flu jab, ask your pharmacist for Influenzinum, homeopathic remedy of granules made up each year according to the current virus, and just as efficient as the nasty needle.

Name dropping!

You will often be given 'generic' drugs with different names, cheaper equivalent of the 'branded' drug you may be used to. You can ask specifically for branded drugs but you will only receive reimbursement at the rate for the equivalent generic drug.

Left over drugs?

Medicine in France is dispensed by the pack, so you will often end up with much more than you need. For example, if you are prescribed a twelve-day course of antibiotics and these come in packs of ten, you will receive two packs, nearly half of which you will not use. Take your surplus drugs into your local pharmacie and they will send them for recycling.

A drop in standards?

The high standard of French healthcare and low price of prescription drugs could soon change, as state contributions towards medicine are about to be substantially reduced. This reduction will also affect the amount of reimbursement from your 'complémentaire santé', so this is a good time to check the conditions of your top up health policy

And finally.....

...we can't possibly end without mentioning the good old suppository! Used in France to cure sore throats, fevers, inflammations, and a whole range of ailments, whether they be bottom related or not, this is one French treatment that still makes the Brits go 'oh là là'!

Useful Vocab

Do you have anything for a cold/flu?
Avez-vous quelque chose contre un rhume/la grippe?

Is there a 'cheaper alternative'?
Est-ce qu'il y a un générique?

Should I see a doctor?
Est-ce que je devrais voir un médecin?

I've got a bunged up nose
J'ai le nez bouché.

I am allergic to... - J'ai une allergie contre...

I feel dizzy. - La tête me tourne

I feel sick - J'ai mal au cœur

I have been sick. - Je viens de vomir

I'm not sleeping well - Je ne dors pas bien

I have stomach/headache.

J'ai mal au ventre/à la tête.

Can you give me something for the pain?
Pouvez-vous me donner un analgésique?

I have sunburn. - J'ai pris un coup de soleil

Can you recommend an insect repellent?
Pouvez-vous me conseiller une crème anti-insecte?

I've been stung by a bee/wasp.

J'ai été piqué(e) par une abeille/guêpe.



CHER PAPA NOËL...



Un petit garçon écrit au Père Noël

"Cher papa Noël,

Je voudrais une PS3 qui coute 400 euros mais mon papa est au chômage, ma maman est malade et nous habitons un appartement dans un grand immeuble ou il n'y a pas de cheminée pour toi.

Peux-tu m'envoyer les sous, cher papa Noël ? Merci d'avance"

Il met simplement "PERE NOEL" sur l'enveloppe, qui arrive au bureau de poste ou une jeune postière l'ouvre et lit la lettre. Emue, elle fait une collecte parmi ses collègues de la poste, tous très généreux, et arrive à récolter 300 euros, qu'elle envoie au petit garçon de la part du Père Noël. Le petit garçon répond au Père Noël:

"Cher papa Noël,

Je te remercie beaucoup pour l'argent que tu m'as envoyé mais je dois te dire qu'il manquait 100 euros. Je parie que c'était encore ces vilains postiers!"

V O C A B

au chômage – unemployed
 grand immeuble – block of flats
 cheminée – chimney
 les sous – money (familiar)
 postière – postwoman
 émue – moved
 une collecte – a collection
 parmi – amongst
 arrive à – manages to
 récolter – to collect
 de la part de – on behalf of
 Je te remercie – thank you
 je dois te dire – I must tell you
 il manquait 100 euros – 100€ was missing
 je parie – I bet
 postier – postal worker (général)
 (facteur – delivery postman)

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Le Plaisir d'offrir

Say it with... what?????

There are so many preconceptions (préjugés) about etiquette in France, and it can actually be quite stressful (and usually left to the ladies) worrying and wondering if we are 'doing the right thing' in a foreign county.

So what should we take if we are invited 'chez nos amis français' for drinks, lunch or dinner?

We don't want to be seen as mean by taking too little, to offend by taking the wrong thing, or upset by going OTT

'En famille' or with close friends, many French agree in advance on taking dessert.

Champagne is always welcome anywhere – but pul-eeze – it must be the real thing! Personally, I always take a bottle of wine, but it was recently pointed out to me that this could imply (only to the paranoid, I suspect) that my host doesn't know his wines or hasn't planned ahead by picking out the right ones. Quelle insulte! "And of course" my informant added "If you are going to take wine, it must be exceptional quality, and

thoughtfully chosen"

Well, that's me out – I choose wine by its colour!

So what about flowers? Surely there can be nothing offensive about offering a colourful bouquet of flowers to a kind hostess?

Well, flowers are a delightful gift but of course, you must never take chrysanthemums, as they are for the dead,or carnations, which the French believe bring bad luck.... or red roses which you should only give to lovers..... or yellow roses which have something to do with adultery and jealousy.....

Fortunately most of our French friends are no more aware of French etiquette than we are, and are happy to see us, whether we come bearing appropriate gifts or not.

Here's what the French have to say.

Annie, Le Boulou

"Je trouve normale d'emmener quelque chose. C'est un geste de remerciement et de savoir vivre. Si c'est quelqu'un que je ne connais pas bien, j'emmène des fleurs. C'est le geste qui compte mais j'aime emmener un cadeau de qualité quand même."



Philippe, Saint Cyprien

Moi, j'ai vécu longtemps en Angleterre donc je ne suis pas typiquement français – je suis plutôt 'Franglais', mais que ce soit en Angleterre ou en France, j'aime bien partager une bonne bouteille avec de bons amis. Par contre, si le repas n'est pas bon, je reprends ma bouteille et je rentre chez moi! (Je plaisante!!)



Michèle, Bolquère

J'emmène une bouteille de champagne et des fleurs. C'est une façon de vivre, c'est sympa. Il ne faut pas emmener du pipi de chat, c'est-à-dire, un mauvais pinard.



USEFUL VOCAB

emmener – to take (something)	que ce soit – be it...
geste - gesture	partager – share
remerciement - thanks	Par contre – on the other hand
savoir vivre – good manners	je reprends – I take back
quand même – all the same	je plaisante – I'm joking
j'ai vécu longtemps – I lived for a long time	façon de vivre – way of life
plutôt – more like	pipi de chat – cat pee (tasteless)
	pinard - plonk

Saviez vous que vous avez plus de chances d'être tué par un bouchon de champagne que par une araignée venimeuse ?

bouchon – cork
venimeux – poisonous
araignée – spider

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As flights from local airports become few and far between in comparison to past years, more people are looking at travel alternatives. At 56 Euros per year, the French senior railcard for the over sixties offers 25% to 50% discount on the trains, as well as car hire, hotels etc

Visit www.raileurope.co.uk to book ahead to ensure the cheapest fare on a long distance journey. If your chosen travel date is too far ahead, you can ask for an e-mail to alert you as soon as there is booking availability.

To apply, pick up a leaflet at any French rail station or SNCF ticket office or visit www.senior-sncf.com and click on votre carte de reduction senior->commander une carte->acheter la carte senior.



Top Tip from our forum at www.anglophone-direct.com

"We paid €161 for 2 people (one of us is over 60) from Perpignan to London St Pancras for December. Of course, it takes longer than the plane but you don't have to check in 2 hours before, you get an allocated seat with lots of leg room, in a comfortable environment with clean loos and a buffet car selling decent food at reasonable prices. There are sockets to plug in your laptop or DVD player, for those who want to watch a film to pass the time.

You just have to change platforms at Lille (for the Eurostar) very simple, but if you change at Gare de Lyon in Paris you have one stop on the metro to Gare de Nord to catch the Eurostar. "

Check your pockets for French franc bank notes

Did you know that a few French franc bank notes can still be exchanged for Euros in a 'Banque de France'? Check those old bags and pockets now before you visit the next vide grenier, and exchange the following before Feb 2012

- 20 francs 1980 Debussy worth approx 3€
- 50 francs 1993 St Exupéry worth approx 7€
- 100 francs 1997 Cézanne worth approx 15€
- 200 francs 1995 Eiffel worth approx 30€
- 500 francs 1993 Pierre et Marie Curie worth approx 76€



Stop those unwanted phone calls

From 1st December 2011, you can log on to www.pacitel.fr and list both fixed and mobile numbers on which you do not wish to receive unwanted marketing calls.



Travelling with pets

From 1 January 2012, it will become cheaper and easier to travel abroad with pets.

Tick treatment will no longer be required, and whilst they will still need to be vaccinated against

rabies, pets from the EU and listed non-EU countries such as the USA and Australia will no longer need a blood test and will only have to wait 21 days before they travel. More info: www.defra.gov.uk



SILLY SNAPS
Spotted in a boat yard
in Saint Cyprien
"Ooooooooooh Matron!"

Don't smoke like a chimney!

Fire damage resulting from a chimney fire is one of the most common insurance claims in France. Any chimney that is in use needs to be swept at least once per year. Many insurers will NOT pay out for fire damage without a cleaning certificate ("certificat de ramonage") which your chimney sweep (ramoneur) will leave you when he cleans your chimney. Of course, the most important reason for keeping your chimney clean is the risk of fire and the danger of breathing in carbon monoxide which stays in the house instead of being released through the chimney

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