

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales

Out for the Day

PRETTY
PERFECT
P-O PICNICS

Walk the Region

LE BOULOU
BATTLEFIELD
CIRCUIT

SPRING 2013
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Next to "Le Clos des Lys" restaurant and the car dealerships

Edito...

Edito

Ooops, I seem to have gone a little heavy on the Vallespir in this edition, and rather neglected other parts of the region, so I promise that the autumn P-O Life will redress that balance.

For now, there are no butts about it..... Louise has fallen in love with goats in Reynes, Katja is enamoured with donkeys in Oms,and I have become rather fond of a Brit brewed beer in Prats-de-Mollo! No, sorry, I meant beer!

As usual, PO Life brings you walks, restaurant reviews, recipes, French and English language exercises, silly jokes, day's out..... Please continue to support our advertisers wherever possible as we depend solely on this revenue to cover production and printing

After a winter which has mostly been 'très doux', the snow will soon be melting from the Canigou. Mimosa and almond blossom are already splashing pale pinks and fluffy yellows in every direction, and spring is in the air! Hope it's a fabulous one.

Joyeux Printemps!

Kate

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All main tourist offices and Palais des Congrès

Argelès: Carrefour, Café Noisette, George & Dragon Pub
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welcome to the Pyrénées-Orientales!
www.cdt-66.com

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HISTORIC BATTLE GROUND CIRCUIT LE BOULOU



with Kate and Olivier

Conversation téléphonique
«Allô? C'est pour dire que le petit
Lucien ne pourra pas venir à
l'école aujourd'hui»
« D'accord, c'est noté. Et c'est qui à
l'appareil?»
« C'est ma maman! »
(à l'appareil – on the phone)

This is one of my favourite walks in the Le Boulou area, when I don't want a long drive from the main road before the start. A one and a half hour circuit in the footsteps of the French and Spanish soldiers who fought in the bloody battle of Le Boulou, it is a historical eye opener. Stunning views over the Albères, Roussillon plain as far as the Med and across to Mount Canigo, are a stark contrast to the bloody tableau of wounded and dying, which once stained this peaceful landscape.

Conservationists and historians are busy restoring this circular walk. A fascinating panoramic viewpoint map looking out over the battle ground, situates the French and Spanish troops below, giving battalion numbers and positions. Signs and explanations throughout the walk describe the manoeuvres of the troops during the battle, although many of these await renovation.

Getting there : Drive out of Le Boulou on the main road towards Perpignan. Look out for a small, rather awkward left turn after the pottery and level crossing, signed to Domaine Els Barbats, delightful, organic vineyard and degustation cave, which you will soon pass on the right. Pop in for a taster, or continue along



this pretty road for around 3km, until a left turn indicates the site of the battle. Follow the signs, and the distant French flag, (not always hoisted) to arrive at the panoramic site and free car park. This is the Pla del Rey, small plateau surrounded by vines and perched on the hill, from where the generals directed the troops below..

The Walk :

From the car park, with the orientation table on your left, take the sandy track and arrive at a T junction. Turn right onto the main, wide path,

which will wind, climb and descend for around 20 minutes, until you arrive at a tarmac road. You may wish to turn sharp left here for a 10 min detour to the pretty Chapelle Saint-Luc, with shady picnic tables on a sunny day, but will need

to retrace your steps back to the tarmac road to continue the circuit.

Back at the road, turn left, and continue until you arrive at a crossroads. Turn left here, following signs for Mas des Pins and Mas d'en Bosch, and continue down this road until you arrive at the bottom, where the road bends round to the right, signposted Le Boulou. Take the left hand track, signed Pla del Rey.

This rough and deeply rutted path quickly becomes steep and is the only part of the walk that might require some real effort, but you will be well rewarded when you reach the top and find yourself once again surrounded by those magnificent panoramic views!

Continue up this track, stopping every now and then to admire the views behind you (and get your breath back!) until you arrive at a T junction. Turn left, then right and you will find yourself back at the car park.

For a shorter circuit of around 45 mins, follow the original instructions as far as the Chapelle Saint-Luc, and take the path below the chapel down a short, steep hill, bringing you back onto the original path. Turn right and retrace your steps until the track forks off to the right. Follow this until it joins a junction and a quick left and right again will bring you back to your car.



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Did you know...?



Over the Border

Tarlà of the Ramblas

The legendary Tarlà hangs from a pole on the Ramblas throughout springtime in Girona. Originally made out of sawdust, with a wooden head, today dressed as a jester, the tradition of this puppet dates back to the middle ages. When the Black Death swept through the unsanitary, narrow streets, the authorities quarantined the rue de l'Argenteria to prevent further spreading of the plague. Bored, unhappy residents, stuck for weeks or months in their homes, were entertained by a young acrobat known as 'Tarlà' with displays of acrobatics on poles erected between the narrow buildings. Five hundred years later, the puppet is hung every year at either end of the street, symbolising festivity and solidarity.

Looks can be deceptive!

Beware the Oleander shrub, popular in the P-O for its evergreen qualities and delicate flowers and planted in quantity to jazz up roadsides, and gardens. This deceptively pretty, low-maintenance plant is poisonous to many animals, including dogs, cats, and horses, as well as humans. The level of poisoning depends on the particular plant, part of the plant, and amount consumed.

Symptoms appear within a few hours after ingestion and may include severe diarrhoea, abdominal pain, drooling, sweating and weakness. Cardiac irregularities and increased heart rate also are common. Successful treatment depends on the amount ingested and the toxin can be fatal.



Keeping it in the family

Did you know that the first cinema performance in the Pyrénées-Orientales was the screening of the Folies Bergères in the narrow streets of the promenade des platanes in Perpignan, in 1896? It caught on, and in 1911, the first indoor cinema in Perpignan, the Appolo-Cinéma Théâtre, later to become the Castillet, was opened by Joan Font.

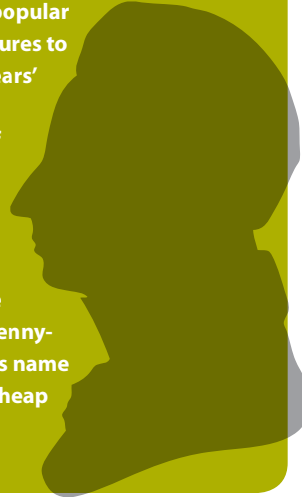
Passed from father to son to grandson, the cinema is still owned by the Font family, who also own the Castillet cinema complex on the outskirts of Perpignan.



A SHADOW OF A MAN

Did you know the origin of the word 'silhouette'? Étienne de Silhouette was minister of finance under Louis XIV in 1759 and particularly unpopular for his austere measures to finance the Seven Years' War.

The cheapest way of recording a person's appearance was by cutting out profiles from black card, and as de Silhouette was known for his penny-pinching policies, his name was given to these cheap portraits.



Why everybody but the Brits drives on the right!

Before there was a specific law, people tended to walk or drive on the left, to oblige strangers to pass them on the right so they could go for their swords more easily if attacked, Travelling on the left was actually made official in 1300 AD, when Pope Boniface VIII decreed that pilgrims to Rome should keep left. It wasn't until the late 1700s, when goods wagons pulled by teams of horses had no driver's seat, that this was to change. The driver would sit on the left rear horse, and whip the horses on with his right arm, therefore driving on the right in order to see and avoid the wheels of oncoming vehicles. Later Napoleon enforced the keep-right rule in all countries occupied by his armies.



It's cherry season in the P-O.

Did you know that the English word 'cherry' is believed to come from the old French word 'cherise' (later to evolve to 'cérise') but was mistakenly assumed to be a plural by the Brits and stripped of its -s?



DIY PRATS

The ramparts of the walled town of Prats de Mollo were destroyed by an earthquake in 1428, and rebuilt.... only to be destroyed again by Louis XIV, in reprisal for the rebellion of 'Les Angelets de la Terra', the peasant revolt against the hated salt tax. Finally, in 1683, they were rebuilt by the villagers themselves, supervised by Vauban's engineers.



Events festival traditions....

FUN EN FAMILLE

Some vocab to help out

spectacle - show	royaume - kingdom	sauter - jump
fainéant - lazy	eut - had	escalader - climb
remplacer - replace	atelier - workshop	bolides - racing cars
Il y a très longtemps - long ago	Les Bon Plans - good ideas	piste - track

Un peu de culture

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1 - 3 mars

La Princesse et la Grenouille

Un clown fainéant apprend que le directeur du cirque veut le remplacer... A partir de 4 ans

10 - 11 mai

Farfelu et le Clown

Il y a très longtemps, dans un royaume lointain, vivait un tsar qui eut 3 fils à marier.... A partir de 3 ans



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What's on Around the Region

OUR PICK OF EVENTS

MARCH

Sat 9th - Sun 10th

Ille-sur-Tet L'Art des Jardins

Colourful flower & plant show based around the iris & saffron. Aromatic, medicinal, tropical & ornamental plants, fruit trees, cacti, orchids, iris, mini l&scapes...04 68 84 02 62

Fri 15th - Sun 24th

Perpignan Sacred Music Festival
04 68 66 33 18

Sun 24th

Arles-sur-Tech Foire aux chevreaux Produce fair with arts, crafts, local products, & cute baby goats 04 68 39 11 99

Thurs 21st

Palais des Congrès, Perpignan The Rabeats Beatle Tribute Band 04 68 34 07 48

Fri 29th

Perpignan Procession de la Sanch 15h: Hooded & robed figures march slowly through the streets of Perps to the solemn beat of black veiled tambourines. Impressive.

Sunday 31st

Ille-sur-Tet Reginas de Coll et Colomer Unique in the P-O, this religious celebration of the Procession of the resurrection & "Régina" songs (140 strong choir & 40 musicians) announces life, the beginnings of spring, a rebirth & re-awakening of nature

Sat 30th - Sun 31st

Villefranche de Conflent Fête des Géants & Goigs Minstrels play Catalan musical instruments, giants parade through the streets. 04 68 53 77 02

Sun 31st - Mon 1st

Argelès Fête Américaine Yee ha! Demos of country & western, exhibition of American cars & motor bikes, red Indian village, mechanical bucking bronco, stage coach rides.....

APRIL

April - June

Aspres Festival le Printemps de l'Aspre Colourful, varied & entertaining festival of jazz concerts, which take place in local wine domains & small village churches, a great way of exploring the Aspres & sampling delicious wines produced by local producers. 04 68 53 10 00

Sat 13th

Théâtre Jean Piat, Canet Gospel Blues Style Denise King sings gospel, blues & traditional jazz. 04 68 86 72 60

Sat 13th & Sun 14th

Perpignan La Nuit des Longs Capots 1950s Vintage car rally remi.boada@wanadoo.fr

Sun 14th

Maury Festival of wine & chocolate Chocolate workshops with world champion desert makers & patissiers, a glass of Maury in one h& & a chocolate creation in the other - life can be so hard!! 04 68 50 08 54

Sat 20th

Argelès Les Musicales d'Argelès Violin & accordion duo with Julien et Dimitri Bouclier 04 68 81 75 23

Sun 21st

Sorède Olive oil festival & all things olive.

MAY

Wed 1st

National Offer a little bouquet of Lily-of-the-Valley (Muguet) to wish springtime happiness & good luck.

Sat 4th - Sun 5th

Amelie les Bains. Fantasy & Sci-fi convention Two days of fantasy, literature, music, products, collections, collectors, and strange people wandering around in fancy

dress. Chat with actors from Star Wars, R2D2, Lady Vador..... www.asfa@free.fr

Wed 8th

Canet Fête de la Victoire 1945 Re-creation of a 40s style US army camp, procession of military vehicles, live music playing Glenn Miller

Thurs 9th - Sat 11th

Banyuls-sur-Mer Ascension Flamenca Banyuls goes Flamenco as the beach (& the salle Bartissol in case of rain) echoes with concerts, vocals, flamenco dancing & guitar www.ascensionflamenca.com

Sat 11th & Sun 12th

Vernet-les-Bains Fête de la Belle Epoque Costume, dramas, music, exhibitions, processions of vintage cars, period costume.....

Saturday 18th

Around the region La Nuit des Musées Free evening at regional museums with special events for the occasion NB Not all museums participate www.nuitdesmusees.culture.fr

Sat 18th - 19th May

Céret La fete de la Cerise Cherry festival & Festival des Bandas 04 68 87 00 53

Sunday 19th May

Perpignan Perpignan Marathon All profits from this semi marathon (21,100 km) & ten kilometre race go to charity. Not running? Why not go along & support? www.marathonperpignan.com 06 99 27 20 00 / 06 19 40 79 02

Don't forget to turn your clocks forward Sunday 25th March 2012



BANK HOLIDAYS

Don't count on getting much work done in May as the many bank holidays mean that school children (and teachers!) rejoice and tradespeople groan!

1st April	Lundi de Pâques (Easter Monday)
1st May	Fête du Travail - May Day
8th May	Fête de la Victoire
9th May	Ascension
20th May	Pentecôte

School holidays for our region

Easter Holidays - 20th April to 6th May

Vide Greniers

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

Carnivals

A section of carnivals in the region, with processions through the streets, floats, fancy dress, and live music, dancing.....

Argelès	3rd & 9th March
Elne	10th March
Céret	9th & 17th March
Torreilles	17th March
P. Barcarès	20th & 21st April



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Photo: Jérôme BLUM



'MERCİ' WITH A DIFFERENCE...

By Katja Willemsen

What do wooden crutches, miniature boats and faint words scrawled on an altar have in common? Each one is a thank you to God or a saint for divine intervention. Called *ex-votos*, they are gifts left in churches across different ages, cultures and continents, and evoke images of mums praying over sickly babies, fisherwomen fretting over husbands out at sea, and soldiers begging to outlive their injuries.

The expression has its roots in Latin - *ex voto suscepto* - "from the vow made". Back then, these offerings took weeks or months to create by hand. Today, they are more likely to be electronic transfers to a favourite charity!

Here are two venues with very different *ex-votos* on display



Hermitage de Consolation, Collioure.

For centuries, Collioure's fisherwomen made daily pilgrimages to the hermitage after a backbreaking day mending nets or gutting anchovies. They would trudge along the dirt track parallel to the Douy River (now chemin de Consolation) then climb the steep path to the tiny chapel at the hermitage to pray for the safe return of their menfolk.

Sadly, many of the thank-you gifts left for Notre Dame de Consolation, patron saint of fishermen, are now locked out of sight, but a few poignant examples still clutter the walls and floor of the first alcove on the left.

St Ferréol Hermitage

This impressive hermitage crests a hilltop overlooking Céret and the surrounding plains. Inside its 13th century chapel, wooden crutches huddle behind a prayer bench like the fragile bodies they once supported. Some are over a hundred years old, with threadbare padding and worn through rubber stoppers.

While the rich etched their gratitude on costly marble, the poor scratched their *merci* directly onto the altar: These humble reminders of faith over suffering combined with the glorious settings of the hermitages make them well worth a day trip!

Directions

Hermitage de Consolation

- From Collioure centre, take Avenue Miradou which leads up Route du Pla de las Fourques
- At roundabout, take 2nd exit into Route de Consolation
- At roundabout near the freeway, take 3rd exit onto N114
- Go under bridge and follow sign to Notre Dame de Consolation/ Le Rimbau
- After about five minutes on this road, turn off to the Hermitage on your left

Hermitage St Ferréol

- From Céret centre, cross the Tech River on Avenue des Aspres then soon after the bridge, turn left into D615 to Oms and Llauro.
- After about ten minutes on this winding road, follow signs to Hermitage St Ferréol, perched on the hill on your right.



Restaurant Lou Barral

VINGRAU

As frequent visitors to our little piece of France in Amélie Les Bains, we have literally visited hundreds of restaurants over the years, some disappointing but many superb. Last September we found another absolute gem on the P-O/Aude border.

Along the D9 towards Tauchan, we drove into Vingrau. Out of holiday season, AND a Monday, it was a little like entering a 'dead zone' but we parked, undeterred, hoping that a quick stroll would reveal something open. And there it was – a small outside restaurant, with the most delicious smells emanating from within.

The menu boards revealed a very different carte from the norm – as a fish lover married to Paul who is allergic to fish I tend to 'fill my boots' when in France so I was fascinated by 'Salmon black & white' on the menu. What was it?

On entering a small courtyard on 2 levels, there were about 8 tables, most of which were positioned so you could watch the very precise chef, Florian, at work. It was enchanting to watch him cooking with such finesse, he was clearly an artist, illustrated by the wok cooked gambas, a true work of art,

Restaurant Review

with
Paul and
Julie Singleton



presented to the Canadians on the next table!

The maître d' was very attentive, explaining that we would have a little wait as everything was cooked fresh to order – no problem as the wine was delicious.

We watched the chef, entranced by his enthusiasm. Then our meals landed on the table – wow!

The maître d' explained that the salmon was cooked with white chocolate inside and across the middle, and the noodles were cooked in squid ink, hence the black and white. The delightfully coloured vegetables were cooked in dye from fresh flowers picked by the chef every morning, as were the coloured sauces around the plate.

Paul's Filet Mignon glacé aux agrumes didn't disappoint either, a beautiful fillet of pork, accompanied by a delicious pot of glazed

vegetables in a very fine sauce. It looked great and tasted even better. Other options were 'tuna croquant au wasabi glacé', or 'cote de boeuf glacé foie gras et reduction balsamique truffe pain d'epice'. Portions were large and we both quickly realised that even though we hadn't ordered a starter, we weren't going to manage a dessert either!

However, from looking around at the starters and desserts of other diners, every dish that appeared was clearly created with the same passion and flair and looked delicious.

This was an excellent meal and we will certainly go back. When we do, we would like to try the discovery menu and some of the enticing works of art they call desserts!

Prices were very reasonable, and although it is not a large menu, there is a wide enough choice to suit most people. As well as special Sunday lunch menu, there are BBQs every Wednesday evening, bearing in mind that they are only open from mid April at the earliest to the end of October at the very latest, as everything is outdoors so dependent upon the weather.

We would highly recommend a visit. Vingrau may be a little out of the way, but combine it with a drive or walk through magnificent scenery, the

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village surrounded by a huge semi circle of grey limestone cliffs, popular with climbers world wide, and nestling amidst garrigue and vines, and you will have all the ingredients for a fabulous day out.



Where guest reviewers kindly introduce us to their favourite restaurants, please bear in mind that reviews are based on the subjective opinion of the reviewer. Times, dates and prices are correct at the time of writing but you are advised to ring ahead and check
Bon apétit



to see more resto reviews visit
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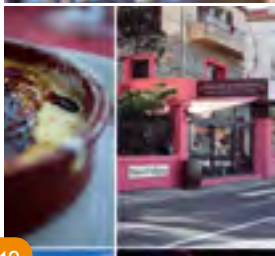
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The Easter Omelette, or 'Omelette Pascale' is more than just a recipe in Catalonia – it's a whole tradition!

According to legend, Napoleon Bonaparte was travelling across southern France with his army, when he first tasted an omelette prepared for him at an inn near Bessières. He was so impressed that he had a giant omelette made for his troops the very next day. What a nice man!

Fact or fiction, the omelette de Pâques became a tradition to feed the poor at Easter. Choirs would roam the streets in traditional Catalan costume, singing solemn Easter songs, ancient hymns signaling a return to life after the sadness of winter.



Families would stand in their doorways and listen in fervent silence to the religious 'goigs dels ous' (joy of the eggs) before placing, in thanks for the music, gifts of eggs, black pudding, charcuterie, wine into the 'cistella', a basket for carrying home the spoils. The singers would end up with everything they needed to cook up a delicious Easter omelette the next day, preferably over a roaring fire out in the open air, often as part of a picnic or get together to symbolise friendship and fraternity.









Simon Newman brings us his own version

In celebration of The Resurrection, an omelette is traditionally prepared for serving on Easter Sunday. Some think it's a symbolic egg/re-birth thing but maybe it had more practical roots. A handy snack to sustain those about to embark on a journey heavenward perhaps.




Whatever the myth (or mythtake) I've resurrected an old recipe given to me by a Spanish friend that delivers top results every time - as long as you follow it to the letter. And the first letter is R, for Rioja. Yes, crack open bottle of a Navarra's finest, waft it under your nose then take a generous draft. The blood of the Conquistadors is now surging through your veins. You can do anything. Right, here we go.

-  Whisk 8 eggs with half a cup of milk and a good pinch of salt.
-  Finely chop 2 medium sized onions, a clove of garlic and a green or red pepper.

-  Peel and slice 4 medium sized non-floury potatoes, e.g. russets.
-  Using 3 cups of vegetable oil in a non-stick frying pan (yes, that much) gently cook the potatoes, onions, garlic and pepper, on a low heat, lid on, for 15 mins or until the vegetables soften, stirring every 3 mins.
-  Then drain all the oil. Stir the egg mixture into the cooked vegetables already in the frying pan, return to a low heat (no lid.)
-  Draw a wooden spatula across the base of the pan a half a dozen times over the next 2 minutes.
-  Replace the lid and continue to cook on gentle heat for a further 5 to 7 minutes (or until the omelette is set) during which time you should gently agitate the pan every minute to encourage the bottom of the omelette to break any connection with the base.
-  Now ease a plastic slice under the omelette all the way round until it's entirely free. Turn the

of the Easter omelette

heat up to medium for 2 mins. And now the moment of truth. This is turning point. A quick snifter of the Rioja and brace yourself.

-  Take a large plate and place it over the omelette pressing gently but firmly down with one hand. Take the pan handle in the other hand and turn the whole caboodle upside down. Hold your nerve.
-  Now slide the omelette carefully back into the pan to cook the other side (low heat, lid on) for another 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and gently edge the omelette out on to a serving dish. Phew.
-  Take a deep, well-earned glug and congratulate yourself. You made it. Didn't you? Oh right. I see. You dropped the lot, slipped on the mess and fractured your tibia. Tant pis. You can't make an omelette without breaking legs.



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Best use the free-range variety and not Cadbury's Creme Eggs. as shown on U Tube in 'How to make a Creme Egg omelette'

I kid you not. It's worth watching, but you'll need a strong stomach.





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Come Fly with Me by Michelle

I've never felt the desire to throw myself out of a plane. However, an intriguing invitation from Windoor Realfly to try out their simulator, and the fact that everybody else on the P-O Life team was 'busy' (code for too scared) that day, tempted me to give it a try.

Windoor Realfly have chosen Empuria Brava, just over the border in Spain, as the home of Europe's largest Sky Diving Simulator. The 'Tunnel' attracts sky divers from around the globe, with the current world champions using it as their training base.

The simulator is a 5m high clear glass tube that works on the same principal as a wind tunnel. The wind within the tube 'blows' at around 160 km per hour depending on the weight and ability of the diver. The force of the wind allows you to be lifted from the ground and fly, un-aided within the tube.

First comes the safety briefing, available in French, English, Spanish and German. Hand signals are explained (and promptly forgotten in my case, the

moment I entered the tunnel). The perfect body position is then demonstrated and practised – all very straight forward when fully supported on a table!

When you feel confident in your new found ability to gracefully soar like an eagle, it's off to be suited and booted. Helmets, Michelin Man Style suits and earplugs are provided. Be sure to wear lace up, tight fitting footwear.

The need for earplugs becomes apparent the moment you enter the waiting 'zone' - the noise from the wind tunnel is deafening – I began to wish I could remember those hand signals! Then it is your turn and you gingerly step/flop into the Tunnel where the extremely patient instructor is on hand to get you into position and stop you dropping to the floor – graceful eagle I am not.

The sensation can only be described as bizarre – akin to your first ever swim lesson. Body position is crucial – look down (the natural temptation) and you

find yourself whizzing to the top of the Tunnel. Look up with your back arched too much and you flop to the gridded floor like a bird with it's wings clipped. Get it right, even for just a few seconds and you immediately realise what all the fuss is about – you can fly!

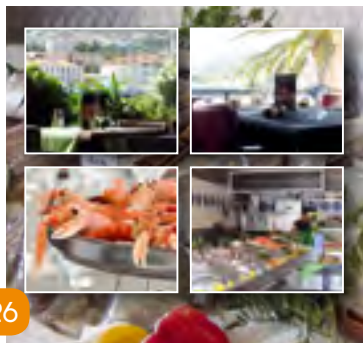
The real thrill comes when the instructor flies with you – he spins you round at the bottom of the tube quickly gaining speed until you are spiralling to the top of the tunnel and back down again – fantastic.

You can fly from the age of 5 up to 120kg, though with the benefit of hindsight we wouldn't recommend it to anyone with spinal problems! At 50 Euros a go, it may seem a bit pricey, but it really is a small price to pay for an experience that will last a lifetime. A video of your flight is given to you on a USB stick – proof that you did it!

A viewing bar and restaurant surround the glass tunnel and general entry is free of charge, so if you are still undecided or simply fancy seeing how the professionals do it, why not pop in for a drink next time you head over the border.



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BEARS, BEERS AND BREWERIES.... PRATS DE MOLLO LA PRESTE

The road from Le Boulou takes us through Amélie-les-Bains and Arles-sur-Tech, separate days out in their own right, before passing through the tiny village of Le Tech, with its recently renovated million euro 'mairie', and on to the end of the Tech Valley.

On either side of the winding road, signposts suggest Corsavy, Montferrer, Saint Laurent de Cerdans and Coustouges, pretty villages well worth a visit another time. Today however, we are heading towards the end of the line, the unspoilt fortified medieval town of Prats de Mollo, dominated by Fort Lagarde, designed by Vauban in 1680.

With Canigou at its back and the River Tech in front, the views all around are stunning. But it was not merely built for the view. When, after the 1659 Treaty of the Pyrenees, Louis XIV enforced the outrageous salt tax, the locals revolted and feeling remote enough to act with impunity, set to

murdering King Louis' tax collectors. They were subdued eventually and the Spanish were kept at bay by the garrison of Fort Lagarde. On summer afternoons the rebellion is re-enacted in a typically French 'Spectacle' featuring much costume, cavalry, fencing and jousting. Check the times with the Tourist Office. 04 68 39 70 83.

The Vauban walls of the town, built on 14th Century foundations, are pierced by four arched gateways: La France, L'Espagne de a Cavalerie, la Fabrique and le Verger. Enter any of them and follow the narrow cobbled streets of the old town to the beautiful 13th century church. You will pass a curious cross "Croix des Outrages," adorned with all the tools of the Crucifixion. Typical of this region, this one is a fine example, as is the door of the church itself. The curls and swirls of the local iron never rust, the lock is a serpent and, next



The word 'Prat' is Catalan for prairie or meadow. Prats de Mollo is so called after Mollo, a village just over the border in Spain, on whose land Prats de Mollo was built, hence the prairies of Mollo.

to it, planted in the wall is a 2 metre whale bone. The little chapel of Saintes Juste and Ruffine is also worth a visit.

Walking, canyoning and exploring is superb. A fairly strenuous walk will take you to the imposing XIII century Tour du Mir, ancient signal tower, with wonderful views all down the Tech Valley to the sea. For more views, drive up to the Col d'Ares overlooking the Tours de Cabrens, Notre Dame de Corral and over into Spain or head off to the Pic de Costabonne. Maps and/or a guide available from the tourist Office.

La Preste, at the very end of the valley has been a source of Thermal Cures since the 14th century. Originally of leprosy but now for urinary infections as well as general health, massage, mud and thermal treatments. The natural beauty of the surroundings, the tumbling waters, the peaceful streams all combine with the grand old hotel buildings to create an atmosphere of calm and healing.

The town comes out of hibernation every year for the 'Fête de l'Ours' celebrating the legend of the bear who kidnapped a local damsel. Luckily, she was rescued by shepherds, the bear dragged into town, shaved in the main square and transformed into a man. Every February, 'bears' and 'hunters' gather in the fort courtyard, swig down copious quantities of liquid courage, black up with a mix of oil and soot, and dress in sheepskins. After a hilarious chase through the narrow streets of Prats de Mollo, 'barbers', with faces covered in white flour paste, attempt to catch the 'bears' and in a storm of flour and soot, they are shaved, become men, and the party begins.

It may be too late for the bear of Prats de Mollo in this spring edition of P-O Life, but it is certainly



Out for the day...

not too late for the beer!

I met dynamic northern lass, Cathy Grainger at the newly created brewery on the outskirts of Prats.

Cathy and Kevin Grainger moved to Prats de Mollo with their young daughters in 2003. They loved everything about their new life - apart from the lack of a decent pint in the village - and so was born the idea of a micro-brewery.

First came the name, La Bière de l'Ours, named after the famous bear of Prats de Mollo, then came the logo based on the paw print of a wolf hound and dreamt up and designed by their 13 year old daughter.

Next followed a thorough training course with a fully qualified brewer from the UK. Despite some experience and knowledge of home brewing, the Graingers wished to produce a professional beer to the highest possible standard.

Finally came the courageous step of setting up as a business in France, not a mission for the fainthearted, and at the beginning of 2013 La Brasserie de l'Ours opened its doors in Prats de Mollo.

Malt and wheat is imported from the UK because of the high quality and reputation of British cereals... but the rest is pure Prats de Mollo.

The original intention was to sell around the bars and restaurants of Prats, but at a recent introductory tasting, guests were so agreeably surprised by the taste and quality that orders have already started coming in from elsewhere. "At last a French Real Ale that is as good as English Real Ale" was one of the delighted comments at the tasting.

The Graingers are experimenting, learning, improving and innovating all the time. The different



types of ale with distinctive bear label are available in a smart presentation pack or by the bottle, only in bars and restaurants around the town for the time being. What a great excuse for a day out in Prats de Mollo!

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230 PRATS DE MOLLO



BAINS LLO

Whether it's to make the most of the late snowfall and perfect sunshine skiing, or to simply enjoy the stunning mountain scenery and the arrival of the spring flowers, a trip to the mountains is always a great way to brush away those winter cobwebs and warm the soul.

Les Bains Llo are offering a range of offers and promotions to tempt you up the mountainside. How about joining their early morning Aquagym classes, free of charge when you have paid your entry fee. Designed to regenerate and tone your muscles without causing any strain on your body, this gentle exercise in hot sulphurous water surrounded by stunning scenery certainly doesn't feel like a trip to the gym, yet it does the trick!

After your Aquagym workout it's time for a spot of indulgence. Chose from a hydro massage, spa, jacuzzi, sauna... Or for the more hardy visitors, Bains Llo have invented their very own "chemin d'eau froide" enabling you to plunge from cold

to hot water, believed to be very good for the circulation.

Aquagym classes start at 10.15am so if you don't fancy such an early start why not make a 'mountain mini break' of it and rent one of their spacious modern apartments, with excellent out of season rates available for weekends and midweek?

To further tempt you, Bains Llo are offering 1€ off the adult entry price upon presentation of PO Life, so don't forget to take your copy along with you! (limited to 2 adults per family)



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Donkey Day

With Katja Willemsen



What do you give someone who has everything for their 50th birthday? A day out with donkeys of course. There is no age limit to falling in love with a donkey!

We all know how stubborn donkeys are, but did you know how kittenish they could be? From the moment we started our hike, Baby Canco nuzzled us for tickles and cuddles. Scratch between her down-soft ears and you could almost hear her purr! We were smitten from the moment we groomed her with firm brush strokes and quiet whispers.

The donkeys at Mas Fontane are raised as part of the family so it's no wonder they love human company. Within seconds of arriving for our play date with Mama Donkey, Manta, and her young daughter, Canco, seven donkeys bounded towards us, jostling each other out of the way



for attention!

Cathy and Alain Fontaine raise Catalan donkeys on their sprawling farm on the slopes of a sunny valley close to Céret. From the patio of their old mas, you can see the Albères mountains crinkle into the Mediterranean, and the only sounds you'll hear are birdsong and exuberant hee-haws.

Donkeys are intelligent, strong and courageous, and they are excellent with children. A donkey learns fast and never forgets. He is independent rather than stubborn, and if you ask nicely, he'll be only too happy to do whatever you ask.

With our picnic goodies stored in the grass baskets strapped onto Manta's sturdy back, we set off up the dusty lane leading out of Mas Fontane. Filigree shadows danced through the cork oak trees, a welcome relief from the burning sun. Oblivious to the heat, Baby

Canco gambolled beside us like an excited toddler. Adult donkeys can carry up to 40 kg and walk a steady 3 to 4 km per hour. Just don't rush them if they're not in the mood!

Take the donkeys out on your own or let Cathy be your guide through the fragrant scrubland of the Aspres. The more adventurous can join her on longer trails across more challenging terrain. Donkeys will carry an afternoon's lunch of wine and baguette as easily as sleeping bags and food for a trek up Mount Canigou.

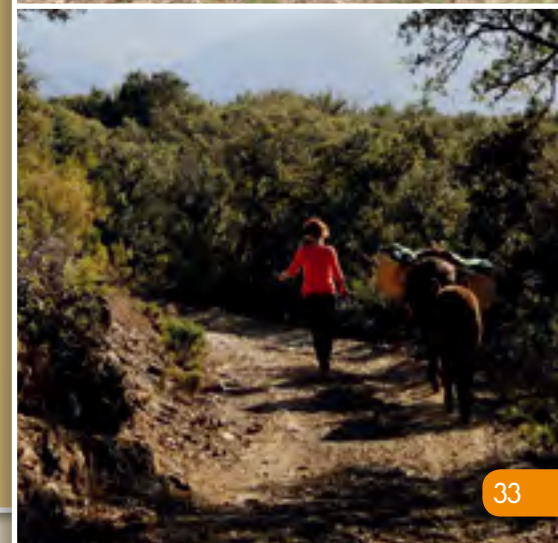
Just remember to say please and thank-you to your donkey companion, or she may decide that snacking on grass is more appealing than carrying your picnic!

About Mas Fontane

- Situated about 10 kilometres from Céret, close to the hamlet of Oms.
- Old Catalan mas converted into spacious gite/ B&B with pool. Ideal for both long holidays or shorter overnight stays.
- Cathy and Alain speak English and offer a wide range of donkey activities from half-day outings to week long mountain adventures.
- Phone 04 68 85 34 86 or email las.fontanes@orange.fr. Don't forget to say you read about it in P.O Life!
- For more info: www.gite-rural-66.com.

How To Get There

- Head for Le Boulou, via the D618 if coming from Argelès, or the D900 if coming from Perpignan.
- These roads feed into the D115 towards Céret.
- Pass Céret on the left, stay on D115 to Prats de Mollo/ Amélie-les-Bains.
- Two kilometres later, turn right over the beautiful pont de Reynes bridge (D15 to Taillet).
- At the small roundabout, take second turn-off, direction Taillet/ Le Villa (D15)
- Less than 200 metres later, take tiny road to right, Route du Riuros marked with Mas Fontanes sign.
- Wind along this narrow little road for 6.8 kms until you come across a startling scene of colourful soft toys dangling from trees and fences.... turn right and follow signs to Mas Fontane!



Pretty Perfect P-O Picnics

With Katja Willemsen



No-entry signs should always be listened to, even if the forbidden fruit is a tempting track beckoning you onwards!

The "Route Militaire/ Accès Interdit" warning was intimidating but we snuck past it anyway, heads lowered. What a relief then to see a second sign a few minutes further on, and to realise the restriction referred to the tar road leading up to the fort and not the little sand lane veering seawards!

Forty minutes later, far away from the no-go zone, we discovered a heart-etched table perched on the edge of the Cap Béar cliffs. Perfect for a spring feast of sun, sea and sandwiches!

Both the Tramontane and the Marin winds lambaste the Cap Béar headland, so make sure you pick a still day for your picnic. Or turn lunch into sundowners and witness the full glory of the Côte Vermeille, or 'Vermillion coast', so named for the way sunset drenches the sea and hills in reds and golds.

Head south along the D914 coastal road (see box inset for detailed directions). On passing an enormous green wine bottle on the side of the road shortly after Port Vendres, warn cars behind you that you're about to turn. Minutes later, near the

crest of the hill, slide left into an unmarked slipway. Park on the right just before the first no-entry sign. Walk a hundred metres or so along the road and before the second no-entry sign forbidding access to the fort, turn right into a sand lane.

Built in 1883 to protect the French border, Fort Béar sprawls across the top of the headland, looking more like a tourist destination than an active military installation. It played a key role protecting the Paulilles ammunitions factory during WWII and still belongs to the military today. Occasionally the public is allowed inside on the Journée du Patrimoine heritage days.

Enjoy an easy stroll through a spring wonderland of cistus, wild lavender, gorse, and vineyards bristling with bright green shoots and leaves.

You'll also see abandoned terraces stuttering down the hillside, without a vine in sight. No doubt victims of "grubbing up": regionally financed digging up of vines to combat the wine glut.

After a 25 minute meander, the path nears the cliffs. Watch out for three rusty metal poles leaning together like an empty wigwam, and no longer attached to the ramshackle wire fence drooping

downhill. Turn left towards the sea. The bay of Paulilles glistens in front of you, and on the other side, vineyards cover the slopes like a patchwork quilt. In the distance is Spain and the long slender finger of the Cap Creus peninsula reaching far into the Mediterranean.

A five minute steep but stable walk downhill brings you to a cliff of jagged schist rockface that drops dizzily into the water. If you're not planning to jump, turn left again and follow the path running parallel to the edge. Your table awaits just ahead!

We sat on the weatherworn bench, opened a bottle of white wine and raised a glass to whoever dragged railway sleepers uphill to create this idyllic picnic spot. The hearts, names and dates carved into the wood each tell a story... perhaps our intrepid carpenter left his initials somewhere on the weathered surface?

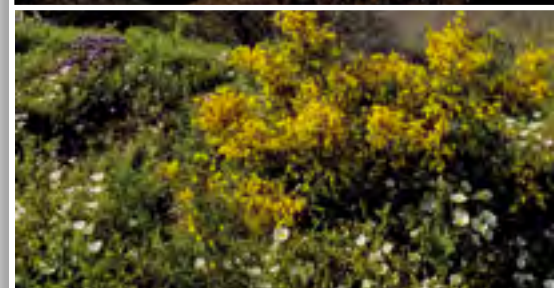
Unpack your lunch, and find a corner on which to carve your heart! Bon appétit!

About Cap Béar

- **Cap Béar is a headland between Port Vendres and the bay of Paulilles.**
- **Fort Béar sprawls across the hilltop (constructed late 20th century) and is a commando training centre.**
- **Nearby is Paulilles, a protected ecological reserve with a rehabilitated dynamite factory worth visiting; open daily from 9am. Also three charming little beaches, Bernardi, del Mitg, and Fourat.**

How To Get There

- **Time needed: allow 5-10 minutes from Port Vendres by car then a further 30-40 minutes for an easy stroll to the picnic spot.**
- **Head south along the N114 freeway. At Port Vendres it becomes the D914 coastal road.**
- **Minutes after the bustling port of Port Vendres, you will pass on the left a massive green bottle standing next to a red wine-tasting shop, slow down as at the crest of the hill, you will need to turn left into an unmarked slip-road.**
- **Park on the right, before the "ROUTE MILITAIRE ACCES INTERDIT" sign. (The no-go zone only starts 200 metres further up).**



THE PAT LINE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

by PR

The war is nearing its end. The occupying Germans are expecting the Allied Invasion at any time. The two main escape routes have been closed down through a combination of clever espionage, carelessness on the part of the allies, and traitors. Incredibly some safe houses are betrayed by well meaning but careless escapees writing letters via the Red Cross to thank them for helping out! There are still large numbers of Escapers and Evaders on the run in mainland Europe. London needs to act quickly and decisively to find some way of hiding those stranded behind enemy lines.

Then squadron leader Lucien Broussa, arrived at resistance HQ in Paris with the message "Invasion is not far away, DO NOT evacuate any more airmen. Hide them on the spot"

An exciting announcement, this nevertheless created a major logistical headache for Belgian resistance and escape organiser Jean de Blommaert, known by the Germans as the Fox, and a thorn in their side since the beginning of the occupation. He needed all resistance members ready for action, he certainly didn't want them bogged down hiding allied airmen or escaped POWs. It would also increase the chances of his members being caught through careless errors or spot checks or even betrayed. They decided to form a hideaway or camp where escapers could sit out



the rest of the war and wait to be liberated.

The Fréteval Forest, 299 square miles of woodland 100 miles south of Paris was chosen for its farms, convenient clearings for parachute drops of supplies, and the fact that the normal strong local resistance had been inactive and the Germans had dropped their guard. The nearby presence of ammunition dumps should also keep the locals away.

Organising the arrival of the 'parcels' in Paris were Head of Resistance, Phillipe D'Albert Lake, codenamed Paul, and his American wife Virginia. They questioned everybody and hid them temporarily in Paris with the help of René Melison, who had an apartment just a two minute walk from the Eiffel Tower on Rue de Montessoy. Living at the top of six flights of stairs and after one unsuccessful search of her apartment, the Germans never bothered again.

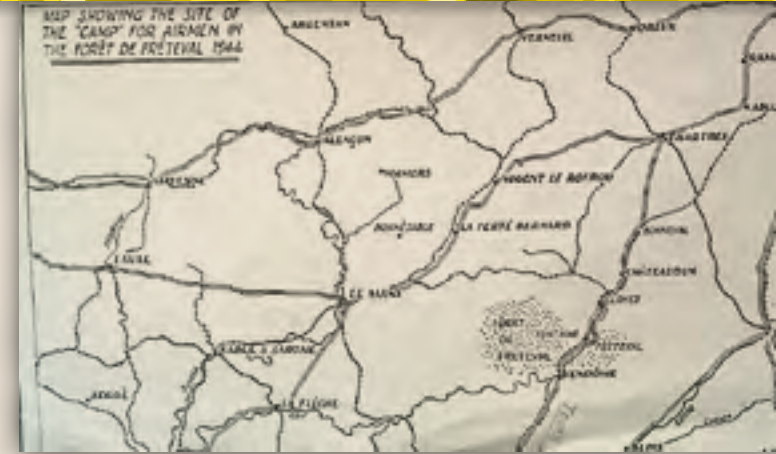
The pure fact that 150 men, British, Americans, Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Belgians and even Russians were safely ferried to the forest is incredible in itself, but how they stayed undetected so close to so many Germans and so near to so many patrols is nothing short of



miraculous.

Camp member William Brayley is quoted from his diary as saying, "It was unbelievable that with all the German patrols scouring the area it was possible for 150 men to gather in the forest, operate a radio to London and spend hours playing golf"

Why this incredible "Tour de Force" has never been made into a film, or is not more widely known is a mystery to me. But how 150 men could live so close to constantly patrolling enemy forces for four months is inexplicable and arguably one of the 2nd world wars most amazing stories.



What became of the main players in this incredible chapter?

Every one of the campers returned to active service again, flying. Thirty-eight of them were to die in operations over Germany.

Colonel Lucien Bousa returned to England to recruit more Belgians to join the RAF. He was promoted to Wing Commander and awarded the Military Cross and a DFC. The French also honoured him with a French Legion of Honour award. He died in 1967 aged 59.

Virgina D'Albert Lake started an antiques business with her husband in Cancaval, Brittany

after the war and was awarded the highest civilian medal in France the Legion D'honneur in 1989. She died age 87 in September 1997 and was buried in the American section of the cemetery in Dinan. Her son, Patrick lives close to where she operated in Paris.

Despite research, I have been unable to find any information on **Phillippe D'Albert Lake** or **Jean Blommaert**. I am sure it is out there so if anyone knows what they did after the war I would be interested to hear via P-O Life.

KIDS' STUFFBILLIES, NANNIES & CHEESE

With Louise Sayers



The giant larder that we live in, otherwise known as the Pyrénées-Orientales, is full of passionate people producing local delicacies from the land and sea which surround us. We think they should be celebrated for keeping old traditions alive in the face of the trend towards the mass production of food and the ever-increasing power of the supermarkets. This new series of articles introduces you to some of them.

Marie-Line and Pascal Guillemard have been running their goat farm and producing cheese for 8 years. And that's after Pascal spent a dedicated and rather impressive 15 years as an apprentice learning his craft. Suffice to say, he knows a bit about goats.

The farm is located in a stunning spot, high up above the village of Reynes in a mini valley, which was drenched in sunshine on the January day I visited. Marie-Line and Pascal live in a modern house with the fromagerie on the ground floor where it is cool. The goats live in the goat shed and adjoining pasture a stone's throw from the house.

We headed here straightaway to meet the herd and I immediately fell in love with the throng of

They were already on their feet and separated from their mothers. This separation is Pascal's least favourite aspect of the job although both mothers and babies seemed pretty content. All the animals are given names and clearly much loved by their surrogate human parents.

There are around 60 nanny goats on the farm, an impressive harem for the two bucks, Ice Tea and Moka, who by all accounts have a field day during breeding time in August. They take it in turns to be let loose in the dark with all the females and no doubt pandemonium, and mass impregnation, ensues. Lucky bucks! Five months later, the kids are born in January and February. The early milk is used

to nourish them so at this time of year milk production, and therefore cheese production, is very low. It ramps up over the course of the year, peaking in

**Un bouc entre dans une parfumerie:
"Avez-vous de l'after-chèvre?"
(bouc - billy goat)**

June/July.

While my head was busy romanticising this pastoral idyll and the romantic life of a goat farmer, Pascal brought me back down to earth by talking me through the reality. Both he and his wife work from 5am to 7pm every day. The workload is heavy and varied: they are not only farmers and cheesemakers but also salespeople. And there is the inevitable mountain of admin to wade through.

The goats are milked twice a day and from February to November cheese is produced every day. One litre of milk produces approximately 100g of cheese and at the height of milk production, 1 goat might produce enough milk for 2/3 cheeses per day. This could be increased but the farm chooses to focus on quality over quantity.

The goats are also « walked » daily for around 3 hours a day from March to September. As most of the goats were recovering from their recent ardours of giving birth, we took just the two bucks and a female called Pinto up the mountain for a little walk. This is Pascal and Marie-Line's favourite part of the day and it was lovely scrambling up the paths in the mountainside and appreciating the views of Reynes village and the fields below. The bucks clearly loved it, locking horns in a play fight and nibbling on the oak leaves. It being winter, the pickings on the hillsides were relatively slim but they are spoilt for choice in spring and summer when the garrigue bursts into life with spring flowers, wild rosemary and thyme.

This grazing on the garrigue is an important part of the cheesemaking process. What the goats are gobbling is key to the flavour of the cheese so spring cheeses have a floral flavour, summer ones are more herbal and later in the year the flavours will have a more earthy autumnal flavour. In addition to grazing, the goats are fed on GM-free cereal and in spring, they are treated to special hay called foin de crau which comes from the Camargue and is the only hay in the world to have an appellation contrôlée! It apparently gives a

...continued next page



About Louise

Louise Sayers provides administrative support and relocation services to homeowners in France and also writes a blog about all things food-related in the region.

www.france-sos.com

www.frenchculinarycapers.com



slightly salty, floral flavour to the cheese.

After our walk, Marie-Line and Pascal showed me the fromagerie where the cheese is produced. A

tray of perfectly formed, rosemary coated cheeses sat there tantalisingly under an open window. Pascal explained that the light breeze was naturally drying out the cheeses. These babies are 100% organic, produced using centuries-old traditions with not a sniff of an artificial additive in sight.

Each day the fresh milk is brought up to the dairy by hand in milk churns and left to stand for two hours. The whey from the previous day's cheese is added to the milk and it is left for 24 hours during which time it solidifies. Next, a small amount of salt is added and the cheese is ladled by hand into individual pots. Holes in the bottom of these allow the liquid whey to drain away leaving the solid curds which become the cheese.

The basic cheese is used as to produce different varieties. Some are aged over different periods, others are rolled in herbs or peppercorns. On Fridays (St Cyprien), Saturdays (Céret) and Sundays (Collioure) Pascal and Marie-Line don their market trader hats to sell the cheeses. They also supply some of the region's best restaurants and delis as well as Perpignan's Bar à Lait. Prices range from 1.50 euros to 5 euros, which seems like a bargain when you consider the quality and the amount of work – and love – which goes into producing them.



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Test your French

1 - R POUR RIEN!

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|----|---|----------------------------------|
| ride | 1 | a | Drôle |
| rôder | 2 | b | Qui habite le long d'une rue |
| rigolo | 3 | c | Chez les abeilles. |
| ronronner | 4 | d | Petit bruit du chat heureux |
| riverain | 5 | e | Bord de la mer |
| rot | 6 | f | Tissu devant la fenêtre |
| rivage | 7 | g | Graz qui s'échappe par la bouche |
| ronfler | 8 | h | Va et vient sans but précis |
| ruche | 9 | i | Léger sillon sur la peau |
| rideau | 10 | j | Bruit quand on dort |

Vary your language

Don't just say something is 'très bien'

Say it is.....

- génial
- chouette
- merveilleux
- sensationnel
- super
- extra
- exceptionnel
- formidable
- nickel (slang)

Useful phrase

Un fêtard

A party animal

Définition amusante

Voiture : invention ingénieuse, permettant d'avoir 110 chevaux dans le moteur et un âne au volant.

(permettant - allowing âne - donkey volant - steering wheel!)



Tongue twister
(Virelangue)
(Répétez trois fois)

Ces saucisses chaudes
sont chères

3 - The expressions below all involve animals. Can you find their English equivalent?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|---|--|
| Les chiens ne font pas des chats | 1 | a | I'm starving |
| Chat échaudé craint l'eau froide | 2 | b | Once bitten, twice shy |
| Il fait un froid de canard | 3 | c | He's a nasty piece of work |
| Ne réveillez pas le chat qui dort | 4 | d | It's freezing |
| Revenons à nos moutons | 5 | e | Talk of the devil |
| J'ai une faim de loup | 6 | f | Let sleeping dogs lie |
| Faute de grives, on mange des merles | 7 | g | Pigs will fly |
| Quand on parle du loup | 8 | h | The apple doesn't fall far from the tree |
| Quand les poules auront des dents | 9 | i | Let's get back to the point |
| Il a un caractère de cochon | 10 | j | Beggars can't be choosers |

Proverbe marseillais

Si tu as envie de travailler, assieds-toi et attends que ça passe.

(attends que ça passe - wait til it goes away)

Language tip

C'est terrible -> That's brilliant!!

Ce n'est pas terrible -> It's not great!

Language tip

To visitpeople

Aller voir

Je vais voir ma copine

or

rendre visite à....

Je rends visite à mon frère.

To visit... places

Aller

Je suis allé au musée

or

visiter.

J'ai visité le camp Joffre à Rivesaltes

Useful phrase

Mieux vaut tard que jamais
(Better late than never)

Useful expression

Dis donc

By the way, hey....

Blague bête

Deux moutons discutent :

Ca te dit un bonbon à la menthe?

C'est bon pour la laine.

(Ca te dit - do you fancy? laine -

wool l'haleine - breath)



2 - Match up these useful phrases which all involve body parts

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|---|--------------------------------|
| C'est le pied | 1 | a | It's very expensive |
| Ça me prend la tête | 2 | b | It's really annoying |
| Il a un coup dans le nez | 3 | c | He was gobsmacked. |
| Il a le bras long | 4 | d | He's had one too many (drinks) |
| En main propre | 5 | e | That's obvious! |
| Les amuse-bouches | 6 | f | It's great! |
| Il est de mauvais poil | 7 | g | Nibbles, appetizers |
| Ça coute la peau des fesses | 8 | h | He's in a bad mood |
| Cela sauté aux yeux | 9 | i | He has loads of influence |
| Il est resté bouche bée | 10 | j | In person |

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Test your French

4. Some more of those familiar words and expressions, which are not quite rude, but probably best to avoid in polite company to be on the safe side!! - Can you find their meanings in English?

J'hallucine	1	a	I have a cold
Tu me gonfles	2	b	Toilet/bog (v. impolite)
J'ai la crève	3	c	To booze
Je suis nase-broque	4	d	It's rubbish (untrue)
Les chiottes	5	e	I don't believe it
Picoler	6	f	I'm too lazy to do it
C'est du pipeau!	7	g	I did really well.
J'ai cartonné	8	h	I feel rough
J'ai la flemme	9	i	You're boring me now
J'ai la tête dans le cul	10	j	I'm knackered!



Une blague bête Où traversent les serpents ?
Sur le passage python
(passage piéton - zebra crossing)



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5 FIND THE ENGLISH FOR THESE COMMON FRENCH EXPRESSIONS

Fais gaffe	1	a	Good riddance!
A la une	2	b	And so on
Bon débarras	3	c	I'm on my way
Ça vaut le coup	4	d	Whatever!
et patatei et patate	5	e	At first glance
Un coup de fil	6	f	A phone call
J'arrive	7	g	If you don't mind me asking
A priori	8	h	Be careful
N'importe quoi	9	i	Front page news
Si ce n'est pas indiscret	10	j	It's worth it



Language Tip

Chercher - 'to look /search for'

NB the 'for' is inbuilt

Eg Je cherche mon ami -

I am looking FOR my friend

Chercher à - 'to try' or 'to attempt'

Je cherche à comprendre

I'm trying to understand

Some expressions with chercher

aller chercher - to go and get (Je vais chercher mon sac)

chercher midi à 14 heures - to complicate things

chercher la petite bête - to split hairs

Tu l'auras cherché! You've been asking for it!

Say it in French!

Next time you hit your finger with the hammer, enter a delicious smelling restaurant, or sit next to a noisy couple in the library... say it in French!!

Aïe (aye) - Ouch!

Miam miam (muh-yam) - Yum yum!

Youpi (you-pee) - Yahoo!

Chut (shoot) - Shush!

Hop là (op-lah) - Oopsie-daisy!

Beurk (burk) - Yucky!

Chiche (sheesh) - Go on, I dare you!

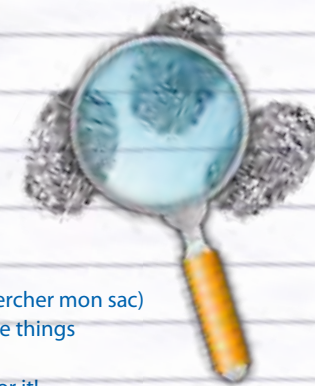
Holà (oh-lah) - Hey! Whoa!

Merde (merd) - Sh-t!

(Not as bad as in English)

Zut (zoot) - Flipping heck!

Ouf (oof) - Phew!



Blague bête

Deux abeilles discutent :

"J'ai pris un abonnement à Internet!"

"Tu me donnes ton e-miel!"

(abeille - bee
abonnement - subscription)



Test your french - answers

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

1 - Trouvez l'équivalent en Français pour ces expressions idiomatiques

Hang on	1	a	Fiche-moi le camp!
It's up to you	2	b	Mon oeil!
Get lost!	3	c	Laisse tomber!
You're kidding me	4	d	Attendez!
I don't mind	5	e	Tu me fais marcher!
Long time, no see!	6	f	Ça m'est égal
My foot!	7	g	Comme vous voulez
You're having me on!	8	h	Tu plaisantes!
Don't bother!	9	i	Bien vu!
Good thinking!	10	j	Ça fait longtemps qu'on ne t'a pas vu!

Language tip

I want you to... + infinitive
(Je veux que tu/vous...)

Eg I want you to leave

Plus poli - I would like you to... + infinitive

Eg I would like you to stay



Interesting expression

Are you taking the mickey?

Tu te moques de moi?

Good Advice

If your dog is fat, you aren't getting enough exercise

Double negative

Do not never no way use no double negative in English

2 - REMPLISSEZ LES BLANCS

Three 1 _____ ladies were discussing the problems of growing older. One said, "Sometimes I stand in front of the 2 _____ with a 3 _____ of milk and can't remember whether I'm 4 _____ it out or 5 _____ it away."

The second lady said, "Yes, sometimes I find myself on the stairs and can't 6 _____ whether I was on my way 7 _____ or down."

The third lady 8 _____, "Well, I'm glad I don't have that problem, touch wood," and 9 _____ on the table, adding "That must be the door, I'll 10 _____ it!"

a getting b up c smiled d fridge e get f putting g elderly h knocked i remember j bottle

3 - Trouvez les contraires

teach	1	a	well
buy	2	b	forbid
push	3	c	fail
throw	4	d	learn
ill	5	e	take off
allow	6	f	shout
pass	7	g	pull
freeze	8	h	melt
whisper	9	i	sell
land	10	j	catch

Bad Joke...

What did the grape do when somebody stepped on it?
It gave a little whine!
(to whine - gémir)

Another silly joke

A man rushed into a busy doctor's office and shouted "Doctor! I think I'm shrinking!!"
"Calm down" the doctor replied. I'll see you soon. You'll just have to be a little patient."
(shrink - rétrécir)

And the worst one yet...

Patient: Doctor! Doctor! Everyone keeps on copying me!
Doctor: Doctor! Doctor! Everyone keeps on copying me!

Besoin de vocabulaire pour raconter les cancanes?

Have you heard about...?
Have you heard the latest gossip?
You'll never guess what I've just heard!
You didn't hear it from me but...
Listen, don't pass this on but...
Don't tell anyone but...
Oooooooooo, you don't say!

Be nice

Everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.

4 - T - is for Tiger

Trouvez les définitions des mots suivants, qui commencent tous avec la lettre T

tadpole	1	a	shortest finger
thumb	2	b	person who steals
target	3	c	not fierce or wild
tease	4	d	prickly wild plant
temper	5	e	make fun of
torch	6	f	young frog or toad
thief	7	g	very small
thistle	8	h	angry state of mind
tiny	9	i	something you aim for
tame	10	j	small electric light

Virelangue

(Répétez trois fois)

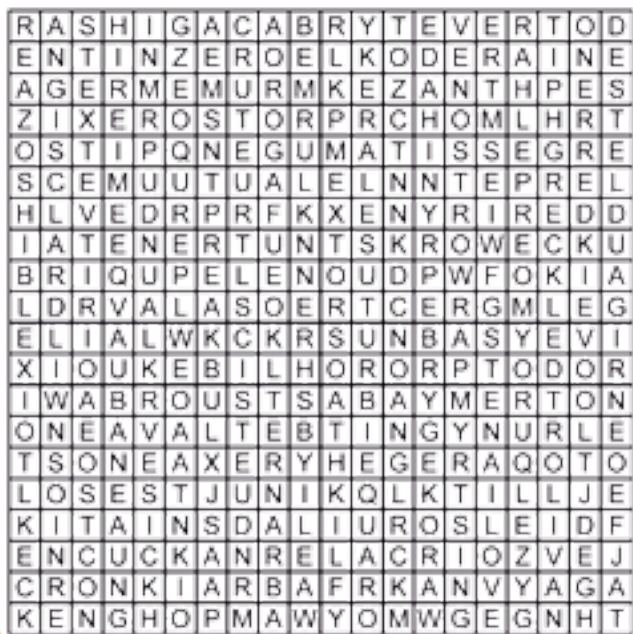
Three fish thoroughly filleted

P-O FAMOUS PEOPLE

Hidden in the word grid are 20 names of well known people, associated with the P-O Department. Can you find them?

Thanks to Derek Jeffries of St. Albans.

1. Famous sculptor, born in Banyuls-sur-Mer in 1861
2. Astronomer, physicist and politician, born in Estagel, a small village near Perpignan.
3. The foremost military engineer of his age who built or redesigned fortifications in Perpignan, Collioure, Port-Vendres and Prats-de-Mollo.
4. Baroque painter, born in Perpignan in 1659, renowned for his portrait paintings of Louis XIV.
5. Co-founder of Fauvism, one of his most well known paintings is Mountains at Collioure.
6. Famous cellist who went into exile in Prades during the Spanish Civil War.
7. He arrived in Collioure 1905 and was a co-founder of Fauvism, and in 1947 produced a book of about one hundred prints based on paper cut-outs
8. Author of La Vigne Sous La Rempart, a book about life in Salses
9. Born in Prades, a well known American Catholic author of the twentieth century, who is greatly known for writing classics like The Seven Storey Mountain
10. His famous bull fighting bowl series can be seen in Céret's Museum of Modern Art.
11. He compiled the first book on the natural history of the Pyrenees-Orientales when over eighty years old.
12. French sculptor, born in 1823 in Saillagouse, noted for his marble busts.
13. He worked on the standardisation of the Catalan language and in 1932 published a dictionary of Catalan
14. He grew up in Perpignan and was winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1985.
15. Spanish surrealist painter who claimed that "The Railway Station at Perpignan is the centre of the world".
16. French rugby union player, born in 1887 in Port-Vendres, who gave his name to the Catalan Dragons' stadium.
17. Designer of the Pont de Cassagne cable suspension bridge on the Cerdagne (Yellow Train) line .
18. Brothers from Thuir who, in 1866, created Byrrh, the wine base apéritif.
19. Singer songwriter, born in Narbonne, but moved to Perpignan in 1922, where he attended school.
20. French swimmer born in Perpignan, who competed at three consecutive Summer Olympics.



answers on page 59

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Some more writers who take their inspiration from life in the P-O.

Night of the Fête

by V S Rose www.vsrose.co.uk

After working in the UK pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry for thirty-five years, Sally Rose moved to the P-O in 2009 and started writing. Having published more than twenty scientific papers during her career, she finds it particularly liberating to be able to write creatively. Her first novel, *Night of the Fête* is an engaging contemporary tale for adults and older teenagers that draws on her scientific experience, sense of humour and love of an intriguing fast-paced story.

The Pevi are an enchanting race of small flying squirrels who live in a parallel world to man. Pevi is an acronym for the French 'Petit Écureuil Volant Invisible' and they were given this name by a monk from the Priory of Serrabone during their migration across Spain and France in the fifteenth century. Pevi communities can now be found in Collioure and Sevenoaks where they live with a sect of fairies in Knole Park. The existence of the Sevenoaks Pevi is in peril because something is causing an alarming decrease in the level of positive ions in their atmosphere and having a life-threatening effect on their metabolism. In desperation, they

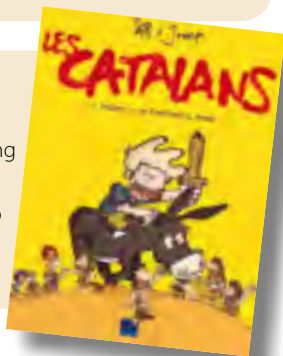


make themselves and the problem known to Rick Johnston, a young biotechnology research scientist, and Kathleen Morgan, his girlfriend's mother, who are determined to help them. But what is causing the atmospheric change and can Rick and Kathleen find a solution to save the Pevi from disaster in time? ...And how will Rick's complex relationship with Kathleen develop?

The action is mostly set in the beautiful Tudor estate of Knole Park, but the story also visits the Pyrénées and Collioure. The sequel is well underway and much more of the action is based in the P-O, especially around Mont Louis, Lac des Bouillouses, Les Albères and Collioure.

Available as ebook or paperback from 1st Feb 2013 from the usual sources.

And now for something completely different, why not look out for fun French BD (bande dessinée) 'Les Catalans', comic book series, written and illustrated by Seb and Josep. Seen through the eyes of Galdric, presented along the same lines as Astérix, this rather unique look at the history and culture of the Catalans is good for your French, may well make you giggle, and claims to better help you to understand the character and soul of the Catalan people.



The Night Rainbow

by Claire King www.claire-king.com

Claire King is originally from South Yorkshire, and has lived in the P.O. for eleven years. She lives in a 'work in progress' shabby stone house near to Prades with her husband and their two young daughters. Like many authors, Claire King has been writing for years and could never answer "Yes" to the question, "Have you written anything I might have heard of?"

She finally got her breakthrough when she was taken on by a literary agent, and in January 2011 her debut novel, *The Night Rainbow* was quickly snapped up by Bloomsbury Publishing (home to authors like J.K. Rowling, Khaled Hosseini and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall). Two years later, her novel has just been released.

The Night Rainbow tells the story of five-year-old Pea and her little sister Margot. During one long, hot summer they play alone in the meadow behind their house, on the edge of a small village in Southern France. The village is based on a mix of several places in this region, from the Conflent valley and down to the coast, and if you know the area you will recognise the sights, sounds and smells in Pea's narration.

Pea's English mother has been struck by tragedy twice in quick succession; she has recently lost a baby and her husband. Burdened by her grief and isolated from the village, she has retreated to a place where Pea cannot reach her - although she tries desperately to do so.

Then Pea meets Claude, a man who seems to



love the meadow as she does and who always has time to play. Pea believes that she and Margot have found a friend, and maybe even a new papa. But why do the villagers view Claude with suspicion? And what secret is he keeping in his strange, empty house?

Claire says, "Although *The Night Rainbow* may seem to hold a lot of sadness, ultimately it is a very hopeful novel. I think there are too many books that insist on the darkness in people, with no satisfactory resolution. Most people are ultimately doing the best they can. I want my books to have that at their heart."

Highly praised by UK Press, and authors Joanne Harris (*Chocolat*) and Maggie O'Farrell (*The Hand that First Held Mine*), *The Night Rainbow* is a novel about innocence and experience, grief and compassion and the dangers of an overactive imagination and an ideal book club read. If your book club would like to have Claire visit, you can contact her via her website and blog

Available at Amazon UK - www.amazon.co.uk (search - Claire King *The Night Rainbow*)



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Things you might need to know...

CHECK YOUR PHONE BILL

Many thanks to members of the forum for this timely warning to check our Internet billing carefully.

"I contacted Orange today who are our internet provider as the last 5 months of bills were 20 euros more than they should have been. They replied that we had accessed a website, which then took it upon itself to charge us 5 euros every week, via Orange. The Help desk is fully aware of the practice!"

The bill came from a company called MONIKU.com who offer ring tones to mobile phone users for. We had unknowingly paid for 5 'free' accesses to their services!"

To prevent this, check that the default setting 'Internet Plus' is not activated. (see below)

"We were unaware that we had this until "extras" kept appearing on our bill. We even think we were charged for browsing the SNCF site, but cannot be sure and Orange wouldn't confirm or deny this!"

To deactivate Internet Plus...

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Click on 'Espace client' (top of page)

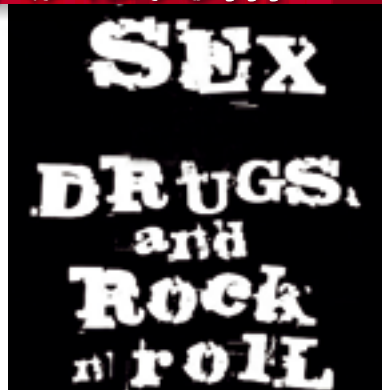
Click on 'Suivi conso'

Next to the picture of a live box is the word 'Internet'. Click on 'désactiver'.



EU Referendum

Can ex pats vote in the proposed referendum on leaving the EU, to be held if Prime Minister David Cameron is re-elected in 2015? Apparently the final decision will be made nearer the time, but ex pats are likely to have the same rights as they have for a general election in the UK. At present, this means that, as long as you have been registered to vote in the UK at any time within the past 15 years, you can continue to vote in UK General Elections and European Parliamentary elections when registered as an overseas voter.



Well, no sex or rock'n roll involved but it got your attention didn't it?

When you take a prescription to the chemist, don't panic if the medicine that you receive does not have the same name as prescribed on your 'ordonnance'. Branded drugs are more expensive than generic or unbranded drugs, so you will often be given a cheaper alternative... but it will still do the same job.

Speed traps

The first 'radar tronçon' or 'radar à vitesse moyenne', mentioned in a previous P-O Life, is now operational on the RD 117 between Maury and Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet.

These new speed traps monitor the average speed between two specific points over several kilometres and are designed to prevent drivers slowing down for fixed cameras before speeding up again.

Look out for a flashing speed reminder and a sign with 'contrôle radar fréquent' 1 or 2 kilometres before the first radar. Many more are expected in the P-O in the future.

Compulsory car breathalyzers postponed indefinitely!

The introduction of compulsory car breathalyzers has now been postponed 'indefinitely' whilst Interior Minister, Manuel Valls, awaits a report from the CNSR (Conseil National de la Sécurité Routière) on the best measures to cut down on drink-driving.

The breath tests have been much criticized for their lack of availability and reliability, and it is claimed that they were introduced by a last stand president (Sarkozy) desperate to show that he was doing something.... anything towards the cutting down on alcohol related death on the roads.



Useful websites....

Health check

If you wish to check out national health facilities and establishments throughout France, visit www.platines.sante.gouv.fr for information on quality, services and equipment. The site compares different health establishments, using a star system and marks out of 100. Another site giving statistics on the personnel, equipment and practices of the various health establishments is www.sae-diffusion.sante.gouv.fr.

Give and take...

If you have a 'Livret A' tax free savings account, you will have been happy to see a recent rise in the ceiling on these accounts to €22,950. Great for savers. However, you will now be very unhappy to hear that this has been countered by a lowering of the interest rate from 2.25% to 1.75% as from 1st February!

A hornet's nest

Watch out for the 'frelon Asiatique' or Asian hornet, (*Vespa velutina*) a rather nasty species of bee-eating hornet, native to China.

Easily recognisable by their orange heads and yellow feet, these 3cm-long insects are spreading around France and into northern Spain, believed to have been accidentally imported in boxes of pottery from China in 2004.

People are warned not to attempt to destroy these football-shaped nests themselves but to call in specialists, as the hornets attack en masse if they feel their nest is

threatened. Whilst they are no more aggressive than the European hornet, they build much larger nests, up to a metre in height, leading to larger colonies and more chance of attack.

If you are stung, and have any kind of allergic reaction, you should ring the emergency services on 15.



AIRPORT NEWS

With JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



SPRING 2013

It's that time of year again when the Airlines publish their schedules for April to October. In recent years, particularly to seasonal destinations like P.O., they have set their general stall out in January, and tinkered with the routes/ days of operation in the spring, when they can see how bookings have been going. I suspect that this year will be no exception.

The four countries that we are directly concerned with (UK, Ireland, France and Spain) are all undergoing severe economic crises, so it's not surprising that the airlines have been rather cautious as regards new routes and enhanced services. There are no new airlines entering the fray, and of course BMI Baby is now defunct.

The outlook at PERPIGNAN continues to be bleak. Still no airline has filled the Manchester gap vacated by BMI Baby, and FlyBe is in some economic turmoil and has cut frequency on several services.

PERPIGNAN to :-

STANSTED	5x pw (Ryanair)
SOUTHAMPTON	1x pw (FlyBe)
BIRMINGHAM	1x pw (FlyBe)
DUBLIN	3x pw (Lingus)
BIRMINGHAM	2x pw (Ryanair)

Whilst Ryanair still have an unchallenged run at CARCASSONNE, they have at least expanded the number of destinations available.

CARCASSONNE to:-

BOURNEMOUTH	2x pw (Ryanair)
LIVERPOOL	2x pw (Ryanair)
STANSTED	7x pw (Ryanair)
GLAS PRESTWICK	2x pw (Ryanair)
NOTT E MIDS	3x pw (Ryanair)
DUBLIN	3x pw (Ryanair)

The tidy little operation at BEZIERS continues its modest growth.

BEZIERS to:-

BRISTOL	4x pw (Ryanair)
LUTON	4x pw (Ryanair)
EDINBURGH	2x pw (Ryanair)
MANCHESTER	2x pw (Ryanair)
SOUTHAMPTON	2x pw (FlyBe)

Just up the road at MONTPELLIER, the choice of routes appears to be holding steady.

MONTPELLIER to:-

LEEDS BRADFORD	2x pw (Ryanair)
BIRMINGHAM	2x pw (Ryanair)
GATWICK	14x pw (EasyJet)
LUTON	4x pw (EasyJet)

Ryanair's on/off relationship with the owners of GIRONA airport seems to be moving towards a positive phase again, with one or two reinstatements of routes announced this year, although the Irish airline's desire to grab a bigger chunk of the Barcelona market means that a number of ex-Girona routes now operate from El Prat.

GIRONA to:-

LUTON	7x pw (Ryanair)
GATWICK	2x pw (Thom)
STANSTED	7x pw (Ryanair)
MANCHESTER	7x pw (Ryanair)
	2x pw (Thomsons)
BIRMINGHAM	2x pw (Ryanair)
	1x pw (Thomsons)
BOURNEMOUTH	5x pw (Ryanair)
BRISTOL	7x pw (Ryanair)
DONCASTER	2x pw (Ryanair)
NEWCASTLE	3x pw (Ryanair)
DUBLIN	4x pw (Ryanair)
CORK	2x pw (Ryanair)
KNOCK	2x pw (Ryanair)

As in previous years, those wanting the widest choice of routes, airlines and timings will have to be prepared to make the trip down to BARCELONA. The popularity of the Catalan capital seems to be bucking the economic trend, with all sorts of new operators beating a path to El Prat's door.

Please be aware that these were all correct at the time of going to press (Feb 2013), and that schedules refer to the high summer period of June, Jul and Aug. For services outside these times please refer to individual airlines' websites.

As per usual I hope to have some (hopefully positive!) amendments to make in the PO Life summer edition, but, in the meantime please let us know if you hear of any new routes/services.

Car share Visit our forum at <http://forum.anglophone-direct.com> to offer or request lift shares to local and regional airports.

BARCELONA to:-

HEATHROW	56x pw (BA/Iberia)
GATWICK	21x pw (BA)
	14x pw (Vueling)
	40x pw (EasyJet)
	7x pw (Monarch)
	6x pw (BA)
LONDON CITY	14x pw (Ryanair)
STANSTED	14x pw (EasyJet)
LUTON	10x pw (EasyJet)
SOUTHEND	3x pw (FlyBe)
SOUTHAMPTON	2x pw (Vueling)
CARDIFF	2x pw (FlyBe)
EXETER	4x pw (Monarch)
BIRMINGHAM	4x pw (Ryanair)
	5x pw (Jet2)
MANCHESTER	6x pw (Monarch)
	7x pw (Ryanair)
NOTT E MIDS	10x pw (EasyJet)
BRISTOL	12x pw (EasyJet)
LIVERPOOL	5x pw (Ryanair)
	3x pw (Ryanair)
LEEDS BRADFORD	5x pw (Jet2)
	2x pw (Monarch)
NEWCASTLE	5x pw (EasyJet)
GLAS PREST	7x pw (Ryanair)
GLAS INTERNATIONAL	3x pw (Jet 2)
EDINBURGH	4x pw (Ryanair)
	3x pw (Vueling)
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DUBLIN	7x pw (Lingus)
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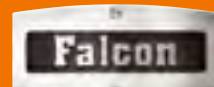
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Should you require any further information
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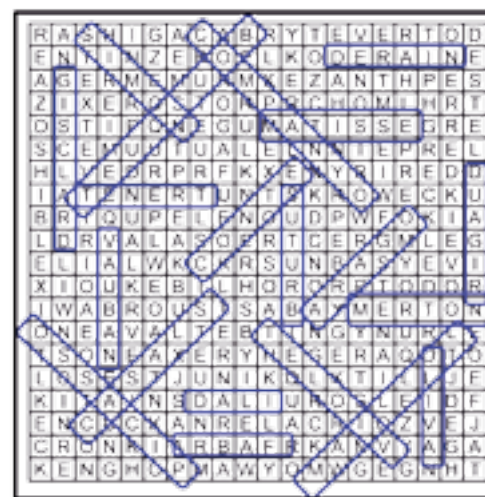
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| 9. MERTON (Thomas) | 20. BOUSQUET (Frédéric) |
| 10. PICASSO (Pablo) | |
| 11. COMPANYYO (Louis) | |



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Police emergency	17
Fire service emergency	18
European emergency line	112
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Penny on 04 68 38 81 28 OR **Maggie** on 04 68 96 55 46

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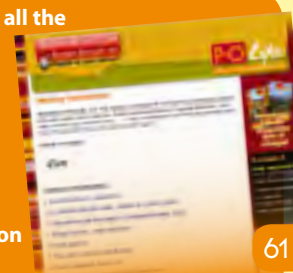
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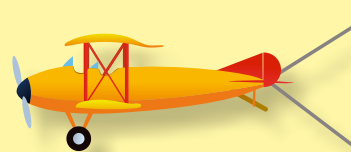
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We look forward to welcoming you.**



Céret: 2 storey semi-detached villa in a quiet residential neighbourhood. Offering 123m² of habitable space, 4 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, lounge, dining room, kitchen & garage with potential to convert. Set on a plot of 400m² this is a charming home. Energy rating: D. Ref 847 **325.000€**

Céret: 2 storey detached character house in the centre of town. Offering 130m² of habitable space: 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen & 2 garages; gas CH and AC. Large (1,369m²) garden Energy rating: C. Ref 826 **490.000€**



Les Hauts de Céret: Detached villa, 241m² of habitable space consisting: 5 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen, gym, terraces and caves. Sitting on a large plot of 5,888m² with a 6x12m pool. Far-reaching panoramic views across the Vallespir Energy rating: C. Ref 834 **650.000€**

If you are looking to buy or sell a property contact:



Real Estates SARL
1 Place de la République
66400 Céret



+33 (0)4.68.56.94.54



www.real-estates.fr



info@real-estates.fr

