

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées Orientales

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Edito...

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It's a funny old thing being a magazine editor. Whilst I admit to being a bit of a chatterbox, with an endless flow of babble for all occasions, (and you can check that out with my husband, friends and family!), as soon as it's time to write the editorial, the same old phrases keep coming back every season....."autumn has been amazing", "there's snow on Canigo", "this winter sun lifts the spirits, and chases away the blues".... And why not repeat it? C'est tout à fait vrai n'est-ce pas?

In this edition, Leigh and Merry walk us up to the Château d'Ultrera, John brings us up to date with our dwindling flight choices, and Henry Shaftoe gives an update on entertainment in Perpignan. On the food and drink front, Louise investigates a little fishy on a little dishy, Linda gives us marmalade with a zing and I go wine tasting – a hard job but someone has to do it – whilst Katja reveals the perfect picnic place to drink your wine once you've purchased it!

For those cold winter nights in front of the telly, Allan Wallis dishes up the bad news on the British TV reception situation .

Me? I flit, I float, I fleetly flee, I fly (Come on, what musical is that from?) to bring you another fascinating edition of P-O Life

As autumn melts gracefully into winter, the whole P-O Life team wish you all good things for 2014!

Kate



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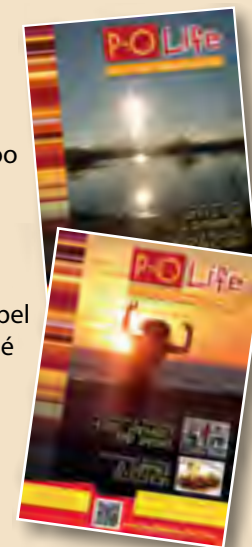
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Walk the region...

with Leigh and Merry Foster

LA VALL TO THE CHÂTEAU D'ULTRERA

Length: approx. 7 km total, Time, approx 3-4 hrs (+/- 400 metres of climb/descent). Yellow marks and well signposted throughout. Some steep climbs and rocky ledges, so a stick and stout boots or shoes are advised. Map reference IGN 25490T 31N 498730E 4708000N.

The Walk: This walk starts and ends on the road to La Vall, between Sorède and Argelès, and after meandering through the lower wooded slopes, climbs steeply up to the ruggedly impressive Château d'Ultrera –the Castle of the Vultures!. Park at a bend on the road, just at the start of the path heading south to the charming little Chapelle de la Pavé which dates from the Xth - XIth century. There was actually a village here at that

time, but over many years the village disappeared leaving only the chapel, now dedicated to St Ferréol. Signposts on the path indicate the walking time to the top, but these are ridiculously optimistic unless you are an Olympic athlete, so take your time, enjoy the fantastic views and take plenty of water and a picnic. After pausing at the Chapel, continue west up the forested path approx. 500 metres to emerge onto a track (498730E 4707620N). Fork left



up onto a rocky ledge (also signposted) and climb another 200m before you reach a tree-shaded well, built into the hillside next to a massive boulder. The water looks very clean, certainly the frogs living in it agreed! Continue west up through the woods. Each time you emerge from the trees you can catch glimpses of the coast to the east or down to the Chapel below. A few hundred metres of fairly steep climb, and you reach the north-south ridge leading up to the Château. From here you can see from Canigou in the west to Port Argelès in the east with the entire plain of Roussillon in between. The higher you go the better the views, Sorède and St Andre appearing as pretty little model villages below. The path snakes south up the ridge with some tricky rock slopes to conquer, adding to the sense of adventure. At the Puig de Sant Miguel at 430 m elevation, pass through an archaeological dig on private land, where for the last 13 years specialists have been searching the ruins which were inhabited from the Vth to the Xth century. To the right as you near the top you can see the Hermitage and just below it the chapel of "Notre Dame du Château". To finally reach the Château d'Ultrera at 498270E 4707010N, pass around the south side of the rocky peak, and climb to the top to enjoy the 360 degree commanding views of the Vallée de la Massane, the plain of Roussillon and the Littoral. There is a very long history here, beginning in Roman times, continuing with the Visigoths in the VIth and VIIth until relatively recently in the XVIIth century, when the castle was destroyed to prevent the Catalans using it against the new French rulers of the Roussillon. Sadly there is not much left standing, but the outlines of some buildings and walls are still perched precariously on the craggy peak. After enjoying a rest and a picnic amongst the fantastic scenery if the winter weather is kind enough, carefully retrace your steps down to your start point, and reward yourself by heading home for a well-earned apero.☀️



Did you know...?

The times, they are a changing..... maybe

A Spanish law review group has suggested that Spain should consider changing time zones by an hour, bringing it in line with the UK and Portugal.

They explain that at present, the Spanish sleep an hour less, affecting productivity, absenteeism, stress, and accidents. They tend to eat, leave work and go to bed later than their European neighbours, as their timetable is determined more by the sun than by the clock.

The present time zone was originally set by Franco in order to follow Hitler's Germany.



Aplecs

An 'aplec', Catalan for a gathering or mass meeting, traditionally used to involve a religious pilgrimage to a chapel or a hermitage, usually on a Saint's day or religious festival when the heavens were likely to be at their most receptive! Today the term is also used for more popular get-togethers such as the meeting of dancers to perform the sardane.

Who nose?

According to Catalan legend, the 'Home dels Nassos (man of noses) has a nose for every day remaining in the year. Children are led to believe that there is a man with 365 noses, but he can only be seen on the streets on December 31, 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!



Pooey traditions

Catalonia could be described as a little poo obsessed when it comes to Christmas traditions. From 'El caganer', the pooper, statue of a Catalan peasant with trousers half down, sitting in 'toilet' position, making his small contribution to the land, to El Caga Tio, the poo log, a hollow wooden log with smiley face painted on one end, wearing traditional Catalan red hat, which is beaten until it poops out its presents... These strange Christmas customs could well shed light on a popular Catalan saying "menja bé, caga fort i no tinguis por a la mort!" (Eat well, poo strong and don't be afraid of death!) Or maybe not!



My Funny Valentine

As Saint Valentine's Day approaches, did you know that there is a little village called Saint Valentin in Indre, in the Val de Loire? It takes full advantage of its romantic name, by marketing itself as 'le village des amoureux'! People travel there from all over France to renew their wedding vows, wander through the 'Jardin des Amoureux'.....

Saint Valentine himself (several early Christian martyrs were named Valentine but we are going for the one who fits best!) performed weddings for soldiers in secret. The Roman Emperor Claudius II believed that married men did not make good soldiers, so marriage was forbidden. According to legend, our Val carried out secret ceremonies to encourage the soldiers to 'remain faithful Christians'.



Muscat De Noel

Did you know that the first sales of Muscat de Rivesaltes in December date back to the XIV century when the Royal Court of Barcelona used to stock up with Muscat wine for the Christmas period. In 1997, producers of Rivesaltes wine decided to renew this tradition. They called the wine 'Muscat de Noël', young and fresh, made for Christmas of the same year. A good Muscat de Noël should be pale golden in colour with a delicate aroma of citrus, white peaches, mango, rose, and even hints of lychee and mint



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Things you might need to know...

On line voting

If you vote in British elections, you will soon be able to register online and avoid the previous hassle of filling in a form and posting it by snail mail. With around five million potential voters overseas, it is very much in the government's interest to encourage expat voting.

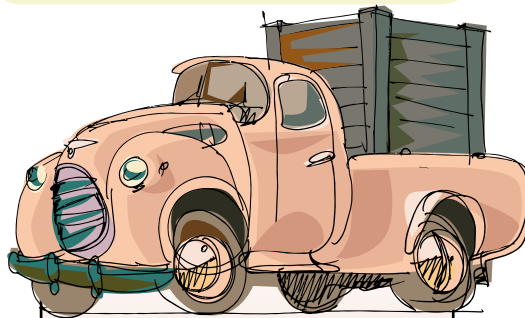
As long as you have been registered to vote in the UK at any time within the past 15 years, you can continue to vote in UK General Elections and European Parliamentary elections, as an overseas voter. (You cannot vote in UK local or mayoral elections, elections to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales or the London Assembly.)

Find out more at www.gov.uk/transformation/register-to-vote

OPÉRATION TRANQUILLITÉ VACANCES

If you're going away over the next few months and leaving the house empty, it's worth visiting www.gendarmerie.interieur.gouv.fr and clicking on the section Operation-tranquillite-vacances. Along with advice on keeping your property safe during your absence, there is a downloadable pdf form (OTV Demande individuelle 2012.pdf) to fill in and take to your local gendarmerie, with contact details of a local key holder or yourself.

They will then carry out regular checks on your property in your absence. In case of the worst, do check your insurance policy – most French companies will not pay out unless you have receipts, photos, keep valuables in a safe... even though there may often be no indication of this on your policy.



KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

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



Just a little prick.

Yes, it's that time of year again! It's easy to protect yourself against the most common strains of flu predicted by the WHO (the World Health Organisation, not the band!) as this year's winter flu viruses.

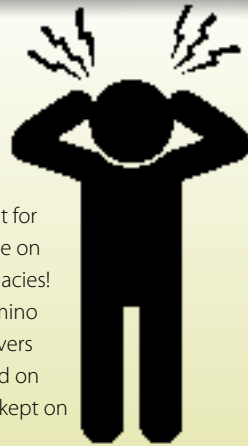
Buy your own vaccine at the chemist for around 7 euros (the usual percentage is still reimbursed by the state), and make an appointment with a local doctor, nurse or vet (joking!) to administer it.

The jab is recommended for over-65s and for those with health problems that could make them more vulnerable to the bug. Those people will probably receive a letter recommending the vaccination, along with a 'prise en charge' voucher for free vaccination. If this is the first time you receive the voucher, see your doctor first, to check that the vaccine is suitable for you.

Animal Accidents

The hunting season causes fearful animals to panic and head away from the guns... and safety of the fields and forests. If you are victim of an accident caused by a wild animal (wild boar, deer, yeti...), it is important to know what steps to take in order to receive compensation for damage caused to the vehicle or injuries to the driver or passenger.

Patch of the Dog



If you enjoy a tippie or two, look out for 'Bytox' hangover patch, expected to be on sale in France soon in bars and pharmacies! A mix of vitamins, antioxidants and amino acids, the patch claims to stop hangovers before they start and should be placed on the skin before the big night out and kept on until well after 'the morning after'.

Its inventor, Dr Leonard Grossman, warns, "It won't however prevent you getting drunk and definitely won't prevent embarrassing and/or regrettable behaviour."

Television Licence

You will automatically be charged for your TV licence (formerly called 'redevance audiovisuelle' but now referred to as 'audiovisuel public') unless you use the tick boxes on your 'Taxe d'Habitation' form to state that you do not have a TV. You are expected to pay this tax even if you only receive English television or only use your set for DVD, video etc.

Visit the French Federation of Insurance Companies at www.ffsa.fr where a detailed FAQ is set out to explain your rights.

A POX ON YOU!

Complaints have been made about the speed trap on the A9 crossing over from Spain into France, located just after crossing the rather aptly named Viaduc des Pox. The speed limit was actually lowered to 110km/hr instead of 130km when the speed camera was installed, and it now holds the dubious title of most successful flasher in the region! Hold on to your points!



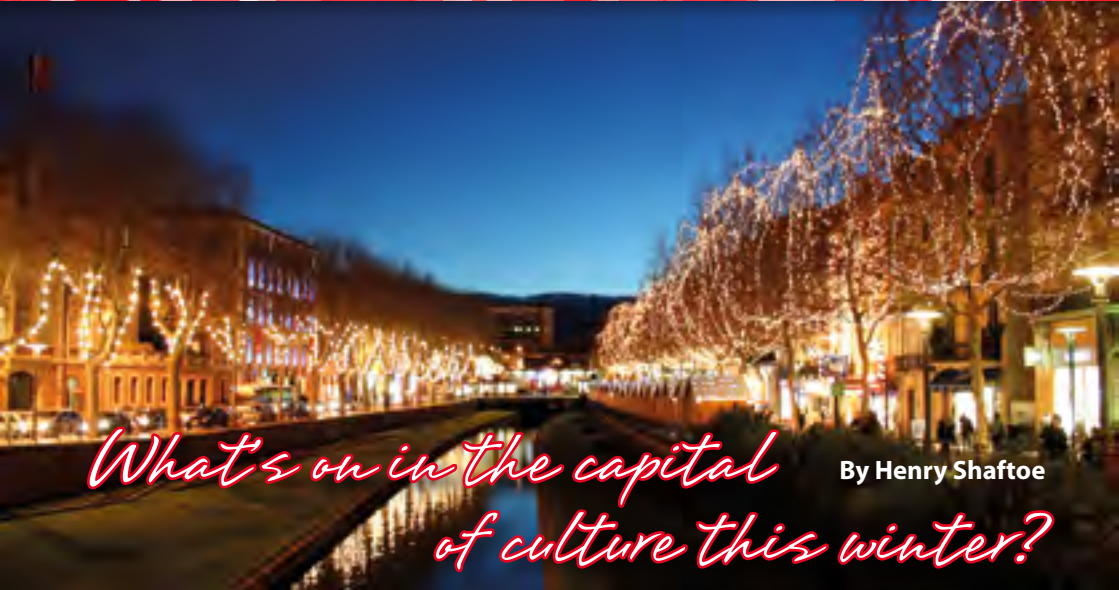
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What's on in the capital of culture this winter?

By Henry Shaftoe

Once more, Perpignan proves that it can punch well above its weight culturally, with a winter feast of shows.

First up, the oddly-named "Boitaclous" (box of nails?) season of entertainment, runs the gamut from the **Imperial Chinese Circus** on Ice (14 December) to **Elvis tribute concerts** (28 March) and a show entitled "**les Françaises**", (17 April) with loads more in-between.

Slightly more low-brow (but not lower quality) than the performance season at the Theatre de l'Archipel (mentioned in the last edition of P.O.Life), "Boitaclous" shows are mostly, but not exclusively, at the well appointed Palais des Congrès in Perpignan. (www.boitaclous.com) or pick up a brochure at Tourist Information offices)

Although the marvellous "Jazzebre" festival finished its main run in October, a number of one-off concerts continue throughout the winter, including a live jazz-with-dancer event at Perpignan's wonderful

Casa Musicale on 14 December (www.jazzebre.com).

And don't forget that the more youthfully orientated **Elmediator** venue on Avenue General Leclerc insists that "we are all party animals" by promoting a series of DJ and rap events throughout the winter.

If you prefer your entertainment projected rather than "live", Perpignan has two fine cinema venues where you can watch films in "versions originales" (ie: not dubbed into French). So, if the film is British or American you will be able to hear English spoken at the same time as brushing up your French by reading the subtitles. The venues where you can do this are:

Cinema Castillet on Boulevard Wilson -

www.cine-movida.com (not to be confused with the

out-of-town Mega Castillet) and the lesser known **Institut Jean Vigo**, within the arts complex known as Arsenal, near the Palais des Rois De Majorque www.inst-jeanvigo.eu. This latter venue is a real gem: a boutique cinema run by enthusiasts, showing classic films from all over the world.

So, just because it's winter, there is no need to be a couch potato, with culturally vibrant Perpignan offering a rich variety of treats.

Christmas Pessebres

December 22nd, 25th, 26th, 28th, 29th, and January 1st 2014 starting at 7pm. **Bascara near Figueres**

Living nativity scenes became popular after the French Revolution of 1789 when churches were closed and Nativity scenes were banned. People started to "bring religion home" by setting up crèches in their own homes, a tradition previously reserved for the rich. "El Pessebre de Bascara" replicates the scenes that were once made with clay figures, but with real life people, animals and materials.

Set up in the town's old quarter and also on the right bank of the Fluvia river, the series of living tableaux depicting the birth of Christ and the Christmas story is well worth the short journey to Bascara, a pretty and interesting town on the N11 just south of Figueres.

Even for the non-religious these live 'pessebres' are a fascinating cultural event that both believers and non believers will enjoy.

More information: [00 34 972 56 00 07](tel:0034972560007)
www.elpessebre.com



Saturday 21st & Sunday 22nd
Nearer to home, in the Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Perpignan,

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Restaurant Reviews

with
Louise Sayers



Boniface

Something Fishy



Boniface Coquillages is something of a P-O institution when it comes to all things fishy. A family business, it was established in 1973 by Christian Boniface, who started off with an oyster farm in Sète before moving to Leucate, where it still operates today at the Centre Ostréicole - a superb setting, incidentally, for sampling fresh-from-the-sea oysters in summer with a glass of local wine.

Christian's son, Olivier, has expanded the business to almost empirical status with four shops in Cabestany, Leucate, Perpignan and Saint- Estève – as well as the restaurant La 7ème Vague which opened in 2010.

The restaurant is located in Agrosud on the outskirts of Perpignan (between the Mega Castillet and Decathlon). The establishments grouped together here make for a pretty exclusive foodie club including La Pata Negra, purveyor of fine Ibérico ham, and renowned local pâtissier, Olivier Bajard.

Perhaps because I possess that peculiarly British trait

of wishing to drink more than I should with a meal, the concept of getting in a car specifically to drive to a restaurant stuck out on an industrial estate is alien to me, but I guess it is testament to the quality and reputation of the establishments at Agrosud that many people do just that. And parking is plentiful.

There is no doubt that the raising, preparing and eating of oysters and other shellfish is taken very seriously in the Boniface world. Restaurant

manager, Pierre Saby, gave me a tour of the 80 cover restaurant and the adjoining fishmonger, where you can buy a whole host of fish, home-made delicacies such as lobster foie gras and monkfish

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

Deux pêcheurs, assis sur un poisson, se disputent :
L'un dit à l'autre
'Ne me parles pas sur ce thon!'
(thon – tuna ton – tone.....gerrit ??)

La 7ème Vague
Perpignan Agrosud
327 rue du Docteur Parsé
66000 Perpignan
Tel: 04 68 81 81 00
boniface-coquillages.com



liver confit or salmon smoked on the premises.

Over the festive season, up to 250 seafood platters per day will wing their way from this fish counter to tables across the region. They are beautifully presented and surprisingly affordable too, from just 24 Euros for lobster, oysters, mussels, prawns, whelks, crab, assorted clams... a fishy feast to share at home with friends!

A large room houses a series of pumps, filters and maturation tanks where oysters and other shellfish are kept in optimum conditions until they are ready to be turned into someone's dinner.

This is called affinage. As well as oysters, mussels and scallops, I came face to face with the largest crab I have ever seen and lobsters who could chop your hand clean off given half a chance, such was the size of their claws.

Back to the restaurant, clean lines and floor to ceiling windows, with several nods to the sea such as the porthole-like windows in the shop - but tacky themed it is not.

Of course, if fish is not your bag, this is not the restaurant for you, but if you like fish and seafood in all

its myriad disguises, La 7ème Vague is paradise.

After much deliberation, Kate and I shunned the menu in favour of the à la carte option while Kate's husband, Olivier, went for the 26 euro dinner menu.

When the starters arrived I was envious of Kate's flavoursome fish soup, which consisted of great hunks of fish floating in a thick red sea of deliciousness. The accompanying rouille was excellent too, and this dish trumped my fish tartare (salmon and sea bass) which was pleasant, certainly super fresh, but lacked a bit of 'oomph' for my taste. Olivier took refuge from the girly chat in a very tasty and substantial shellfish broth of mussels and clams.

Kate, a self-confessed traditionalist when it comes to food, had moules-frites for her main. I loved the presentation, the chunky chips were magnificent, and you couldn't fault the

portion size. I was just as happy with my choice of a scallop skewer - a generous portion of tender white discs (I was forewarned that there would be no corals) served simply with rice. Olivier demolished





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 appetit!



to see more resto reviews visit
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his lovely John Dory fillet with a gorgeous butter flavoured piment d'espelette. Simple but effective.

As usual, two generous courses didn't leave much room for dessert, all of which are 'fait maison' but we managed to squeeze in a café gourmand between us. What a great concept, this sampling of several desserts coupled with an espresso. Squidgy-to-perfection chocolate fondant, a little mousse tartlet of undetermined fruit, and a creamy white mousse. A pleasant end to the meal, without being particularly memorable.

Dinner came to around 120 Euros for three including wine – but the lunchtime menu is particularly good value with 2 courses at 16 Euros, including wine and coffee, or 3 courses at 23 Euros. The lunchtime menu, which demonstrates much creative flair on the part of English speaking chef, Blaise, changes daily, depending on the season. Check out their menu of the week at

www.boniface-coquillages.com

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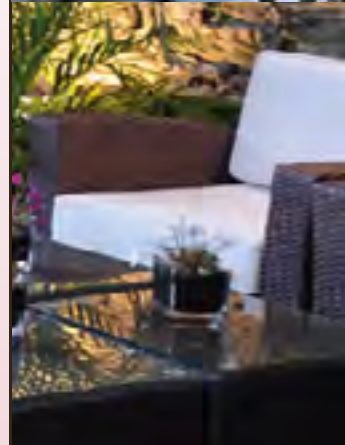



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Select your cut of fish or meat, the size you want – then decide how you would like it cooked – grilled, baked, salt crusted or flambé

Why not try our traditional “Cargolades” – delicious barbecued snails or spit roasted suckling pig

Join our wine club and have your own private «cave» allowing you to store you own collection and enjoy each time you visit the restaurant.

Group bookings, weddings and parties catered for.
Reservations recommended - 04 68 95 12 52
Located between the Cave Coopérative, Le Dominicain Cave and the Musée de Collioure

4 Route de Port Vendres 66190 Collioure
www.lejardindecollioure.com

Open 7 days a week, all year round
Ample free, private parking





SWEET ORANGE MARMALADE WITH CHILLIES

By Linda Razzell

Orange trees, like all citrus, thrive around the Mediterranean and particularly here in the PO. They are one of the most trouble-free fruits to grow. Our extended droughts don't bother them, in fact, even with a young tree, the advice given is 'wait until you think they need water, then wait some more!' A prolonged hard frost is the only serious threat, necessitating a rapid harvest, which you can juice and freeze, before the damaged fruits hit the ground, thaw out, and turn into mush. The fruit ripens in the winter months, and on a summer evening, the pretty white blossom has an unmistakable and exotic perfume, faintly reminiscent of marzipan, and Italian weddings.

Interesting to note that oranges, when grown in the tropics and places like South East Asia, where they originated, are not in fact orange but green.

Only cool weather disperses the chlorophyll, turning them orange. They are a hybrid, thought to be a cross between a mandarin, citrus reticulata, and a pomelo, c.maxima. There are no wild oranges; all the trees we know were cultivated from grafts.

Most commercial marmalade is made from the bitter, or Seville variety. However, the sweet orange makes a very good alternative, although some people feel it should correctly be called confiture d'oranges.

'Marmalade' is derived from marmelada, a Portuguese word for a preserve made from quinces, but in European languages other than English, it has come to mean jam made from any fruit. However, EU regulations state that only citrus-based products may be sold as 'marmalade'. Confused?

One unlikely but appealing account of the origins of the word **marmalade** is that it entered the English language via Mary Queen of Scots who became seasick on the boat over to France. As she was fed a mix of bitter oranges, she kept hearing the phrase '**Ma'am est malade**', and so was born the name!

The addition of some dried chillies in this recipe balances out the sweetness without adding too much heat. If you want it to taste like Christmas, add some cloves instead.

Ingredients

- 6 sweet oranges
- 3 lemons
- 6 small dried chillies
- 2.5 litres water
- 1.8 kg sugar

Method

- 1] Squeeze fruit and keep the pips
 - 2] Slice the skin thinly, and the pulp, removing the pith and putting it with the pips in a piece of muslin to make a bag (half a J cloth will do)
 - 3] Cover the skin, pulp, chillies and the bag with the juice and water and leave for 24 hours
 - 4] Boil for 2 hours, or until the peel is soft
 - 5] Add the warmed sugar, stir until dissolved, and boil until setting point is reached (about 15 minutes)
 - 6] Skim, and pot into warm jars
- For those not afraid of chillies, leave one in each jar. Just be careful not to eat it!



Simply the Best!



There's no lack of cake shops in the P-O! In fact, they're on every corner, the good, the bad, and the ugly.... However, in the words of Tina Turner, ESPI (Le Boulou and Argelès) is **SIMPLY THE BEST!** OK, it's not the cheapest. Owner Pascale has **VERY** high standards, her eagle eye is constantly on the lookout for any faux pas in customer service etiquette, or hygiene, but more important is her absolute determination to only deal with the very highest quality. As winter digs in its heels, how about a delicious hot chocolate (tell-tale dab of cream on end of nose obligatory) to chase away the winter blues?

Or over the festive season, the Espi 'buche de Noel' is a must on your Christmas dinner table, a cut above the rest.

As for the huge range of cakes, chocolates, regional and seasonal specialities (panellets torrons, montecados, multi coloured and flavoured macaroons.....), well, don't take my word for it; go and see for yourself!

Behind the Intermarché in Le Boulou and next to the Cap d'Ona brewery in Argelès

Le Bounty
Restaurant

Overlooking the Port

Try our tempting range of fresh fish, meat & Catalan specialities

3-course menu 16,00 €

1 quai Arthur Rimbaud, 66750 ST CYPRIEN PLAGE
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Restaurant
Le Portofino
mediterranean cuisine

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plus home-made desserts

Dine over the Port

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09 51 58 89 55 www.leportofino-restaurant.fr

f Le Portofino English Spoken



A Star still Shining

Michelin stars are awarded to “restaurants offering the finest cooking, regardless of cuisine style” so why did Pascal Borrell, talented former chef of the much talked of Maison du terroir in Maury, voluntarily give up the hard-earned star awarded to the restaurant?

Pascal explains that, economically, a Michelin-starred restaurant could simply not survive in the little village of Maury. The need to drive cut out long liquid lunches, the acceptably higher prices for gourmet grub ruled out families, few local companies within a wide radius meant no group business lunches or dinners...so with great sadness, Pascal jumped before he was pushed and surrendered his star. However, whilst a restaurant can lose, or voluntarily surrender its star, a Michelin-starred chef remains a Michelin star holder for life.

Pascal's star continues to shine as brightly as ever in Le Fanal in Banyuls-sur-Mer.

Fresh and creative vegetables, foie gras 'maison', fish and seafood straight out of the sea onto your plate, delicious and inventively prepared meat dishes such as lamb 'en croute', grilled rabbit with snails, desserts to make you go “Oooooooh” ... And of course, all the wines on the wine list are exclusively local!



pascal
borrell
Restaurant
Le Fanal



A bottle of Collioure red wine free when you dine* - with this coupon

* Excessive alcohol consumption can be dangerous for your health - drink only in moderation

Dine in timeless elegance overlooking the Port of Banyuls.

Pascal Borrell, Michelin-starred chef many times over, invites you to sample his mouth-watering creations.

Locally inspired and all colourfully created in tune with the seasons.

2-course menu from 19,00 euros per person.

Open all year for lunch and dinner.

Private hire & catering service available.

Prepare to be amazed.

17 avenue du Fontaulé, 66650 BANYULS-SUR-MER
Bookings recommended: 04 68 98 65 88 www.pascal-borrell.com

BIO.....LOGICALLY!

The word bio is a bit of a 'faux ami' and actually means organic in English. Created in 1983, Biocoop is a chain of 320 food stores across France, the leading independent supplier of organic food in Languedoc-Roussillon, This co-operative of autonomous owners includes James, who runs Biocoop in Canet.

Their mission? Products which are 100% organic, local wherever possible and in season. Approximately 30% of the fruit and vegetables found in James' store come from local producers, along with an excellent range of groceries, a cosmetic section (including Weleda & Dr Hauschka) and freshly baked bread.

Look out for the products marked 'BIO je peux!', part of an initiative to make organic products, traditionally more expensive, available to everyone.

Can't find what you're looking for? Just ask. James and his team pride themselves on their high standard of customer service and friendly approach. If they don't have it, and it's humanly possible, they'll get it for you!

At the McDonald's roundabout, take direction Hypercasino supermarket. At roundabout, follow signs and go straight on, up the hill. Biocoop is at the top on the left-hand side before the roundabout, adjacent to the Bobo Durandchemist. Parking is available outside the store.



 **biocoop**
à canet

- Llegums del Rossello
- Carn de Cerdanya
- Pa amb tomate
- Oli d'oliva
- Formatge de cabra
- Mel i mato
- Cirera de Ceret

When it's that good,
no translation
necessary!

 **biocoop**

Alimentation Biologique
organic food store
Fruit & veg, Groceries
Fresh produce,
Cosmetic Items
Fresh bread daily ...

1, rue Paule Emile Victor
04 68 08 53 11
www.biocoop-canet.fr

A Bar of Chocolate!

Three years ago, Axel Daous, Catalan chocolate-maker *par excellence* and his mother, Michèle came up with the clever idea of combining their exquisite, home-made chocolates for sale with a novel 'Chocolate Bar' by the sea.

Based on the lines of a 'new look' tearoom, it is a perfect spot to purchase all your chocolate gifts from a mouth-watering display made on the premises. And whilst you're there, why not take time out for a warming cup of *chocolat chaud*? Ideal on a chilly winter's day, you can choose from numerous, delicious varieties on offer. Tea, coffee and soft drinks are available as well and all can be accompanied by a tasty cake (or two) *fait maison*. In the summer, a tempting array of home-made ice-creams also vie for your attention.

There is a cosy lounge-cum-library area too with books, playing cards and draughts where you can



while away a pleasant hour on a wet or windy day but, whatever the weather, you can be assured of a warm welcome from Michèle and Axel in French - and maybe even in English!

- 70th Chocolate Park is situated on the seafront, midway between the mini-golf and the casino.
- Private hire & catering service available.
- Park in the large car park opposite - free from 15/09 to 15/06.

70th Chocolate Park

Chocolate-Makers Supreme Michèle & Axel Daous

- Scrumptious, home-made chocolates, cakes & biscuits
- A warm welcome, whatever the weather!
- Chocolate Bar / Tea Room with a view
- Cosy lounge-cum-library

*Come and relax anytime from 10.00am to 7.00pm, Tuesdays to Sundays.
For a moment of pure (chocolate) pleasure!*

70 av de la Côte Vermeille, 66140 CANET PLAGE (free parking opposite)
04 34 29 42 38 Visit us on Facebook: 70th-Chocolate-Park

LE TRÉMAIL - Collioure

Un vrai bijou au coeur de Collioure

Using only the very best freshly caught fish and seafood our specialities include:

- Mariscade
- Parillade
- Bouillabaisse
- Zarzuela,
- Fish "à la plancha"



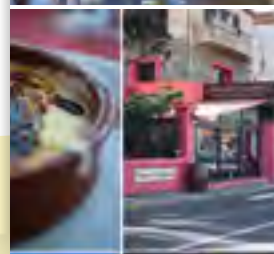
Open for lunch and dinner
7 days a week, all year round

1 rue Arago, Collioure

20m from the sea front, the road running parallel to the seafront, just up from the Tourist Office.



04 68 82 16 10



Le Jardin de ST SÉBASTIEN - B A N Y U L S -

Restaurant and Wine Cave

Facing the marina our restaurant is located next door to our own wine domaine.

Dine inside or outside in the garden under the shade of olive trees.

Specialities include tapas, grilled meats and freshly caught fish & seafood

All of the wines on our menu come from our own domaine.

Menus starting from 16,50€

For further information or reservations:

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+33 (0)4 68 55 22 64 www.restaurant-saint-sebastien.com
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www.VandB.fr

22 rue Michel Carré 66330 Mas Guerido, Cabestany
Open Non-Stop throughout December 10am - 8pm - Open Sunday 8th, 15th & 22nd Dec
L'abus d'alcool est dangereux pour la santé, à consommer avec modération



Un chameau rencontre
un dromadaire.

Ca va ?

Oui, je bosse et toi ?

Ca va, je bosse,
je bosse...

(bosser - to work une
bosse - a hump)

Restaurant La Marine
Overlooking the Port

Closed
Mon &
Tues

Try our delicious, locally
caught fresh fish & seafood

04 68 39 06 21

Quai Arthur Rimbaud,
66750 ST CYPRIEN PLAGE

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A selection of beers using the
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water of the Pyrenees.

See our website for nearest stockists

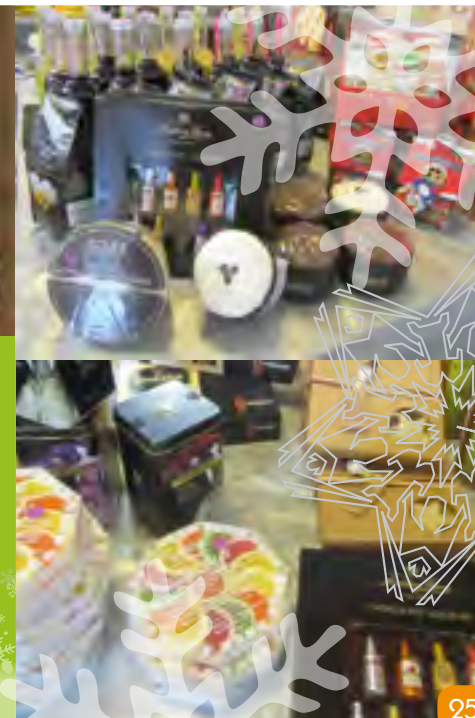
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P-O Life... Open All Hours

Summer may be over but the winter sun is still shining, the sky is blue - it's a perfect day for a stroll along the prom prom prom (tiddely-om-pom-pom) followed by lunch or dinner watching the tide roll in....or a wander around the market, visit to the museum or theatre, and a cosy meal in an inviting town bistro. But wait! Everything's closed!

'Fermeture annuelle', or 'congé d'hiver' in two out of three of the eateries in the P-O, leave us to shuffle home with heavy heart and empty tum .

Mais ne vous inquiétez pas. P-O Life to the rescue with a list of some of the restaurants open throughout the winter.

Overlooking the Port...



Tasty tapas, meat & shellfish platters.
Open Fri eve, Sat & Sun all day & eve

Place de Marbre, 66750 St Cyprien Plage
07 70 57 01 10 FB: lanerouge66750

Curry House & Take-away



Superb range of curries & tandoori dishes
Set menu 16,00 €
On corner of pont Joffre - car park opposite

2 av du Palais des Expositions, PERPIGNAN
04 68 50 94 22 www.lepunjab.fr

ITALIAN TRATTORIA



Exquisite pasta, risotto and home-made desserts

1 rue des Variétés, 66000 PERPIGNAN
04 68 61 11 47 FB: SpaghetteriAldo
www.restaurant-spaghetteriAldo-perpignan.fr

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Mediterranean cuisine

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www.leportofino-restaurant.fr

Le Bounty
Restaurant
Overlooking the Port



Tempting fresh fish, meat & Catalan specialties
3-course menu 16,00 €

1 quai Arthur Rimbaud, 66750
ST CYPRIEN PLAGE 04 68 37 19 64

Restaurant
La Rascasse



Tasty local fish, meat & Scorpion
Fish Bouillabaisse

3-course menu 25,00 €

38 bd Tixador, 66140 CANET PLAGE
04 68 80 20 79 f La-Rascasse Canet

Restaurant
L'Opéra Bouffe
On the seafront



Delicious cold-starter buffet, grilled meats & fish
3-course menu 14,00 €

93 promenade de la Côte Vermeille, 66140
CANET PLAGE (near Port) 04 68 52 10 69

La Grenouille Rouge



Tasty Frogs' Legs, Fish and Meat dishes
3-course menu 10,50 €

14 bd Maillol, 66750 St Cyprien Plage
04 68 81 65 95

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Restaurant & Tapas Bar



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Platters - To eat in or take away

78 avenue Maréchal Joffre
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Menus starting from 16,50€

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Overlooking the Port



Closed Mon & Tues

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Le Jardin de COLLIOURE



An unforgettable dining experience in the heart of Collioure
Open 7 days a week

4 Route de Port Vendres 66190 Collioure
www.lejardindecollioure.com

LE TREMAIL



• Mariscade • Parillade • Bouillabaisse • Zarzuela • Fish "à la plancha"

1 rue Arago, Collioure
20m from the sea front, the road running parallel to the seafront, just up from the Tourist Office.

(Extra) Virgin on the ridiculous! or at least the unusual

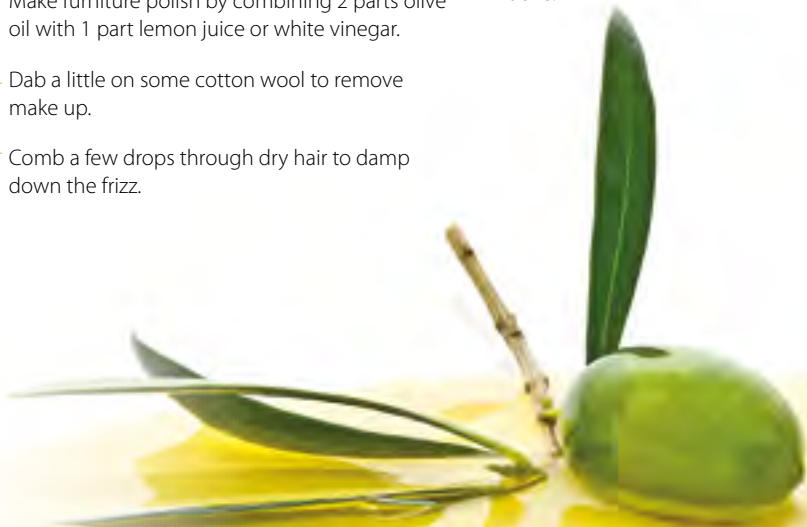
According to one of the many legends, the olive was the result of a quarrel between gods Athena and Poseidon over the rights to protect a newly created town. Zeus suggested that each make a gift to humanity, and the most useful gift would be the winner

Poseidon brought out of a rock a magnificent horse, capable of carrying riders and weapons. Athena created a tree that could feed, heal wounds and colds, and live forever, reputedly the first olive tree in the Mediterranean. No contest. As the winner, she was given the protection of the town, which still bears her name today, Athens.

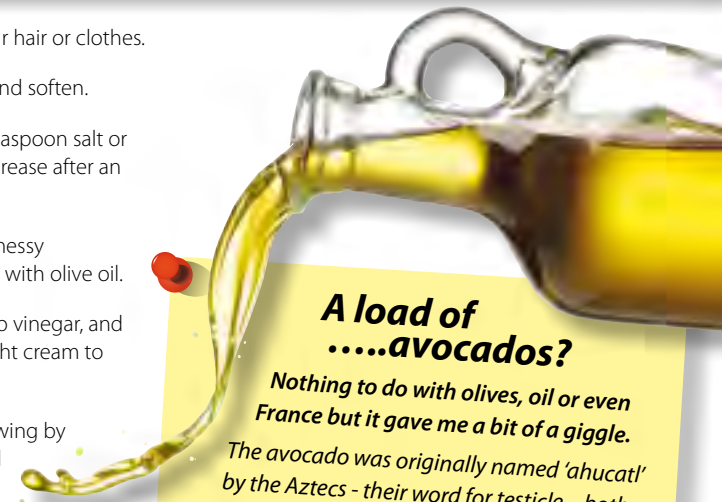
Whatever its origin, olives and olive oil sing out sunshine, wine and all that is Mediterranean. We eat the olives, we cook with the oil or dress our salads.....but did you know that there are many other, unusual uses for this versatile oil?

- Shave with it! It provides a safe and natural lubricant for a close shave.
- Make furniture polish by combining 2 parts olive oil with 1 part lemon juice or white vinegar.
- Dab a little on some cotton wool to remove make up.
- Comb a few drops through dry hair to damp down the frizz.

- Fly stuck? Pour a couple of drops on the teeth of the zip and ease gently up – or down, depending on what you're doing!
- Cat care. A teaspoon of olive oil per day keeps the hairballs away....and gives a shiny fur coat.
- Dab onto those annoying stickers that wont come off new crockery.
- Exfoliate! Rub your skin with olive oil, and scrub with sugar, salt (or sand if you're at the beach), before rinsing.
- Add a few tablespoons to your bath
- Pour a few warmed drops into the ear to help to cure earaches and loosen excess wax.
- Buff up stainless steel and brass to a brilliant shine with a little oil on a clean, soft cloth.
- Take a sip of olive oil to stop a throat tickle or dry cough.
- Surprisingly, a paste of 4 tablespoons salt with 3 tablespoons olive oil is a great treatment for acne.



- Remove chewing gum from your hair or clothes.
- Rub into worn leather to clean and soften.
- Mix 1 teaspoon olive oil and 1 teaspoon salt or sugar in your palms to remove grease after an oily engine repair.
- Remove paint from hair after a messy decorating session by rubbing it with olive oil.
- Mix half cup olive oil, quarter cup vinegar, and quarter cup water to make a night cream to leave you skin glowing.
- Prevent your pasta from overflowing by pouring a tablespoon of olive oil into the water before boiling.
- Make a lamp during a P-O power cut by pouring olive oil into a glass jar, poking a hole in the lid and inserting an oil lamp wick.



A load ofavocados?

Nothing to do with olives, oil or even France but it gave me a bit of a giggle.

The avocado was originally named 'ahucatl' by the Aztecs - their word for testicle – both because of its appearance and the fact that it is supposed to be an aphrodisiac. To the Spaniards 'ahucatl' sounded like avocado, and so the fruit came to Europe, via Spain, under that name.

Food for thought next time you bite into a ripe avocado!!



DOVE ANDIAMO A CENA STASERA?

WHERE ARE WE GOING TO EAT TONIGHT?

For a true taste of Italy, come and sample your favourite pasta dishes in our typical Italian Trattoria - lovingly prepared by our resident chef of 21 years.

Don't miss his famous Mushroom *risotto*, nor his exquisite *Tiramisu*!

OPEN ALL YEAR FOR LUNCH AND DINNER.

1 rue des Variétés, 66000 PERPIGNAN
(Nearest car parks Clemenceau & Wilson)



Bookings recommended: **04 68 61 11 47**
www.restaurant-spghetterialdo-perpignan.fr

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**3 course mid week lunch
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2 courses from 12.80€

Plat du jour 10.80€

**Evening dinner menu
from 19.50€**

**Enjoy a stress
free Christmas!**

*Booking now for Christmas lunch,
Boxing day and New Years Eve*

The Real Taste of the Mediterranean

We invite you to discover our exciting new menu. All of our dishes are freshly prepared using only the very finest, fresh local produce and artisanal desserts.



For Reservations :

04 68 89 88 38

78 avenue Maréchal Joffre 66740

SAINT GENIS DES FONTAINES

Domaine Boucabeille

"Les rendements sont extrêmement faibles et il semble que cette terre nous donne plus de pierres que de raisins ... mais c'est le prix à payer dans l'élaboration d'un vin de terroir."

Jean Boucabeille

Our autumn edition of P-O Life highlighted Força Réal, situated between Millas, Corneilla-la-Rivière and Montner. This stunning panoramic viewpoint looks out along the coastline from Port-Vendres to Leucate, across the Agly and Têt valleys, over the Albères, Canigo, Carlit... Delightful winter drive, magnificent views, a labyrinth of well signed walks for all levels for the more energetic..... but we saved the best for last - Domaine Boucabeille!

With 69 acres of terraced organic grapevines planted in the stony shale slopes of the Forca Real, the Domaine Boucabeille is surely one of the region's best kept secrets.

Fabulous walks and bike rides start from the domaine, amidst vines, great oaks and olive groves, past ancient stone shepherd huts, or 'orris' in Catalan.

On land long abandoned as too work intensive, the Boucabeille family, father and son, took up the challenge of replanting the terraces with syrah, mourvèdre, Grenache noir and blanc, carignan and roussanne, to produce a high quality range of wines.

This 'vin biologique' is chemical free. Everything is done by hand, the planting, the year round maintenance, the harvesting. The use of machinery is impossible due to the steep slopes and the stony, reluctant land. Patience and passion over 30 years have established the vines, given them the vital elements they need to flourish in a previously unwelcoming terrain.

The 'énergie positive' wine cellar with solar roof and rainwater recovery system is a further testimonial to the domain's total esteem and respect for its environment.

Of international renown, you won't find these wines in the supermarkets. Whilst there is no doubt that the prices reflect the tremendous amount of work and the high quality of the wine, it is well worth ringing or emailing to arrange a free 'dégustation' visit. Then you'll understand what all the fuss is about!

Domaine Boucabeille

RD 614 66550 Corneilla-de-la-Rivière

Tel: 04 68 34 75 71. www.boucabeille.com | domaine@boucabeille.com

Visits by appointment - please contact us in advance.

GPS 42°42'76" N - 2°42'48" E



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SIEMENS

SAMSUNG

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An AGA Company

Pretty Perfect P-O Picnics

With Katja Willemsen



ABBEY OF ST MARTIN DU CANIGOU

It wasn't glory that drove Comte Guifred to build the abbey of St Martin du Canigou. It was murder.

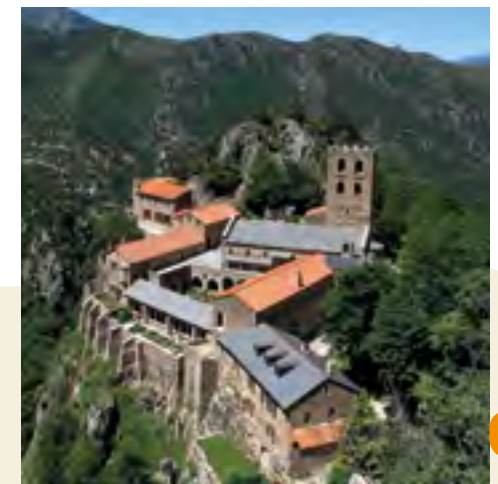
According to legend, Comte Guifred and his army were on the verge of attacking the invading Moors when the count's impatient son headed into battle too soon, alerting the enemy and ensuring their escape. The enraged count galloped to the scene and slaughtered his own son. Building a monastery was his pope-ordered atonement.

The edifice was consecrated ten years later. But in the 11th century, an abbey wasn't an abbey without relics. Undeterred, - spurred on by guilt? - Comte Guifred instigated a smash and grab at Toulouse's St Sernin church, and his men returned, holding high the relics of St Gaudérique.

Despite its brutal start, centuries of monastery life thrived in this peaceful setting. St Martin du Canigou perches like an eagle's nest on a rocky spur overlooking a canyon of precarious cliffs. It

is unassuming and elegant, with God and nature taking centre stage.

By 1783, only five monks remained. Too old to survive in the mountains, they were given permission to leave. Over the decades that followed, Mother Nature and her troops turned the



04 68 83 19 62

magasin.leboulou@expert.fr

Zone commerciale E. Leclerc 66160 **Le Boulou**

Out for the day...



abbey into yet another eerie ruin on a Pyrenean escarpment.

In the early 1900's, the bishop of Perpignan began restoration work, diligently tracking down stolen columns and stones. Today, the Community of Beatitudes welcomes pilgrims from all walks of life, focussing especially on youngsters.

From the centre of Casteil (see inset for detailed directions), it is an hour's steep walk on a concrete track that hairpins skywards to the monastery gates. Don't let the climb put you off. Turn it into a pilgrimage – pack nuts, fruit and water, walk slowly, stop often. Gnarled trees will whisper encouragement and swooping eagles will guide you higher.

Tiredness disappears the

moment you step into the abbey grounds. It is silent here. Not the dramatic silence of the mountains, nor the serene silence of a church, but the powerful silence of people gathered in mindful stillness.

Delightful nuns, passionate about their home, lead tours through the abbey. They only speak French but excellent leaflets in several languages are available.

With your spirit replenished and your stomach rumbling, find the path between the shop and abbey,



and head for the viewpoint (less than five minutes), where you'll be rewarded with spectacular views of the abbey.

Throw down a blanket under nearby trees, or if you have the energy, keep going. The path dips and rises but it's a comfortable hike, and the views are breathtaking. We hiked for another hour and were rewarded with almost limitless horizons.

If you're lucky, you'll hear the echo of the abbey's church bells. Bon appétit!



About the Abbey of St Martin du Canigou

- Perches on a rocky spur above Casteil, near Villefranche-de-Conflent.
- Plan your trip as the walk can take up to an hour and the only way into the abbey is with tours (in French). Excellent leaflets available in several languages. Tour tickets are bought from the little shop next to the abbey.
- Winter schedule: Tues to Sat: 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm. Sundays and holidays: 10 am, 12h30, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm. Closed Mondays and January.

How To Get There

- Take N116 from Prades to Villefranche-de-Conflent.
- Pass Villefranche-de-Conflent and at roundabout, take 2nd exit to N116/ Casteil.
- After 10 minutes of twists and turns, head right at Vernet-les-Bain, staying on N116 for 5 minutes until you reach Casteil. Park near the church.
- Look for St Martin Le Vieux and St Martin du Canigou signs that point to a small walkway which leads to the concrete track to the abbey. Allow 60 minutes to walk up.
- Take lots of water and snacks for the steep ascent, and don't forget your picnic!

Can't find bran muffins in France...?

Bake them for your next picnic!

- Ingredients:**
- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1¼ cup water, | 2 tps baking powder, |
| 125g butter, | ½ tsp salt, |
| 1 cup muscovado brown sugar, | 3 tsp all spice (quatre épices), |
| 1 tsp bicarb, | ½ cup raisins, |
| 2 eggs, | ½ cup roughly chopped dates, |
| ¼ cup milk, | ½ roughly chopped pecan nuts, |
| ½ tsp bitter almond essence, | 3 mashed bananas. |
| 2 cups whole wheat flour (farine de blé, semi-complète), | |
| 2 cups oat bran (son de blé), | |

NB: avoid oat bran that's too fine, it'll make the muffins dry. Try The Bjorg Bio brand.

1. Preheat oven to 190°C
2. Place water in high pot, add water, butter, sugar, raisins, and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for ten minutes.
3. Take off heat, add nuts, chopped up dates, then add bicarb and stir. Only panic when it foams up if your pot is too small. Leave to cool.
4. After about fifteen minutes, beat eggs, add milk, cooled fruit mixture and almond essence.
5. Mix in bananas, then fold in dry ingredients: flour, bran, baking powder, salt, mixed spice. The result should be thick and gooey.
6. Scoop into 12 muffin moulds and bake at 190°C for about 20 minutes

Read Shepherd's Prayer, Katja's fast-paced adventure set in Collioure.



Available on Amazon

Out for the day...



SERRAT D'EN VAQUER: SURPRISE SURPRISE!

Unexpectedly tucked away off the Auchan roundabout, overlooking, and within easy walking distance of the shopping centre, the former Fort of Serrat d'en Vaquer stands on the highest hill of the Roussillon plain, with panoramic views across Perpignan to the sea and to the mountains.

Built in 1885 to protect Perpignan from Spanish invasion, the fort itself is mainly underground and faces two ways, allowing maximum use of artillery, while concealing the troops. Only the chimneys, which rise above the stronghold, betray a military presence. In fact, it was never used to its full potential as a fort, as weaponry was advancing so fast that on site artillery was no longer practical.

Today, the fort and its 4 hectares of land are mainly used for events such as the yearly medieval jousts, or walks and picnics, with well-placed benches looking out over the 360° view.

When the fort was built, more than fifty varieties

of fossilised animals, amongst them wolves, monkeys, and sabre tooth tigers, were unearthed by Dr Albert Donezans of Perpignan. The remains of the 'Testudo Perpiniana', giant exotic tortoise from five million years ago, measuring 1,20 m, is believed to have been the biggest tortoise to exist in the world. Many of these fossils can now be seen in museums in Perpignan, Lyon and Paris.

Despite its name, meaning 'Hill of Cows', dog walkers should beware of the proud shepherd attending his flock, and his protective sheepdogs. All walkers should beware of another type of animal to be found in the bushes, as this historical site, a breath of fresh air situated above a dense commercial backdrop, is also a meeting and pick up point for shifty looking men in search of a different type of exercise!

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Lakeside linger and wine tasting...

Villeneuve-de-la-Raho

Originally created in the 70s as a reservoir to supply local agriculture, the lake at Villeneuve-de-la-Raho quickly became a leisure area for sailing, fishing and sunbathing, attracting growing numbers of locals and tourists alike because of its easy access. Only 15 minutes from Perpignan centre (direction Porte d'Espagne/Barcelona) this lake is used all year round for walkers and joggers, and also provides the water necessary for the 'canadairs' in case of forest fires.

The lake is made up of three main parts: a smaller lake for swimming in summer, a much larger fishing lake and a 'reserve écologique' of 15 hectares. It is a delightful late autumn or early spring walk, with benches and tables around the large lake, perfect for a convivial winter picnic, never too far from the car park if you need to make a run for it!

Villeneuve-de-la-Raho is more of a 'village dortoir', its residents probably attracted by the picturesque lake surrounded

by vines as much as it's easy access to Perpignan and public transport. New housing developments make up much of the village,



whose centre offers a handful of necessary shops, takeaways...in fact everything you need but no more. Other than the lake, Villeneuve's main claim to fame is as the birthplace of Alfred Sauvy, demographer, anthropologist and historian who apparently coined the term 'Third World' ('Tiers Monde').

Not too excited about demography and anthropology? Well, you're in luck. After a lakeside linger, head away from the lake towards Pollestres and Perpignan, and pay a visit to Chateau Cap de Fouste. This wine domaine was founded in the last century by the wealthy Bardou Job family who made their fortune with the invention of ready to roll cigarette papers. The name, Cap de Fouste goes back two hundred years. The domain was actually built on the edge of the large forest surrounding it, and so named, 'Lorée du bois' or in Catalan 'Cap de Fouste'.

Don't be put off by the imposing building and extensive grounds. Drive in through the gates to a warm welcome from a very unassuming winery. With prices from 4,20€ - to 7,50€ for this delightfully drinkable wine,



and 8 – 13 Euros for Muscat and Rivesaltes, the free 'dégustation' in a convivial atmosphere is a great way to test your tastebuds – with no obligation to buy if it's not your cup of tea...or should I say your 'verre de vin'?

English speaking Valérie is happy to advise and chat about the different wines. She revealed her 'coup de coeur' – the Muscat sec which she described as delicious, light and dry. Also worth a taster is their Muscat de Noel, both to be served chilled of course.

Her tip? Buy some grapes, put them in the freezer and pop a couple into each glass. Looks fun and gives it a little fizz.

Amongst the reds, Valérie recommended La Grande Réserve, or Tradition Rouge, a wine which can be quaffed chilled, as it is not matured in oak barrels

The white and rosé bag-in-boxes were also recommended as being a good, well priced equivalent for Chardonnay fans.

Or take along your own bottles, buckets and bowls and fill 'em up at the 'fontaine à vin' from 1,66€ per litre!

A slow stroll or a brisk trot around the lake on a cold clear day, followed by a tasting in the warmth of an ancient winery? Now that's winter in the P-O!

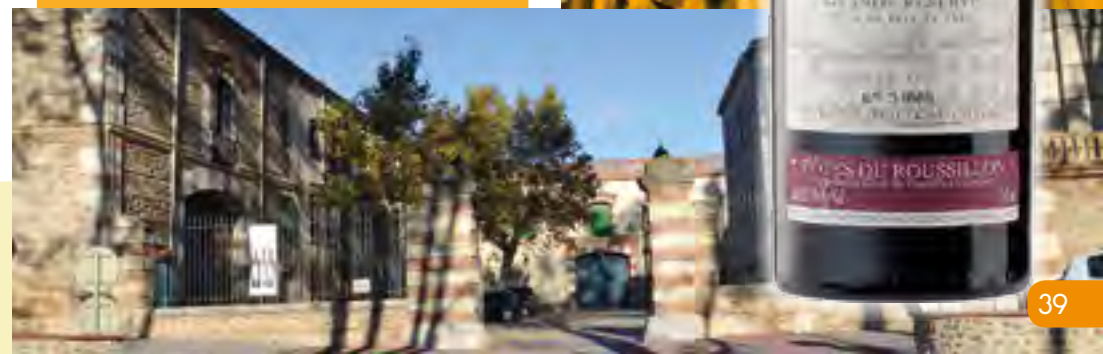
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A DISH BEST SERVED... LARGE

by Allan Wallis

Most people now know that something is happening with the satellites that beam British television down to us. Big changes are afoot so I'll try and explain what they are and what they mean to us - but be warned, none of this is good news.

British TV is mostly broadcast from a cluster of satellites hovering over the equator at 28.2° east, collectively known as Astra 28.2 and operated by a Luxembourg company called SES. Broadcasters such as Sky, BBC and ITV pay SES to re-broadcast their programs.

The satellites that beam British television are being replaced. Unfortunately the new satellites are cleverer than the old ones and can focus their signals much more precisely on a target reception area. For the main UK channels, the target area is the British Isles with very little overspill to the South of France.

The replacement process started last year with the launch of the Astra 2F satellite which carries Channel 5 and its variants, Channel 4 HD and ITV HD for Granada and Yorkshire regions. A new satellite, Astra 2E, was launched in September and is expected to be fully operational by the end of the

year. This will carry BBC and the rest of the ITV and other main UK channels. The current replacement process will complete in 2014 with the launch of Astra 2G.

A lot of people have lost reception of the channels on Astra 2F and can fully expect to lose reception of the rest of the UK channels in the next few months when Astra 2E goes live. Not every channel will transfer at the same time but the old satellite, Astra 1N is wanted elsewhere so the process isn't going to take too long.

The more tightly focussed 'UK Spot Beam' as it is known, benefits consumers in the UK who will get better reception on smaller dishes, broadcasters, as their programs can only be received where they want them to be received, and satellite operators because they need to use less power and can re-use frequencies in other regions.

Unfortunately, it doesn't benefit us. Instead of us being well inside the reception area of the old UK beam, we are now right on the outer fringes of the signal.

Don't think that anyone is working hard to rectify this problem, they are not. All the parties concerned always intended to limit reception to the British Isles, but have only just got the capability.

Nobody knows for sure what Sky will do with their subscription channels. Currently, they are on a Pan-European beam and assuming that they stay that way (and there is no reason to think otherwise) then they will still be available on existing dishes

So what can we do about it?

The signal received by a satellite dish is more or less directly proportional to its surface area. So if the signal is weaker and you wish to continue receiving UK satellite broadcasts, the only solution is a bigger dish.

The big question then, is how much bigger? In the past everyone knew that an 80cm dish worked because that was what everybody else had, but look around, you won't see many big dishes. In a year's time the story may well be very different.

I can however speak from my own experiences. I live 10km due north of Perpignan and in March 2013 I upgraded to a 1.25M dish. This allowed me to receive all the channels on Astra 2F for about 85% of the time. Concluding that 1.25 wasn't big enough I updated to a 1.5M dish which works for most of the time. We do however get the occasional loss of signal but not enough for it to be a nuisance. Unfortunately the signal is usually weaker in the evenings which is normally the prime viewing time.

To explore dish size further, I went for a day out with Stephen Marston of Digi TV solutions. Armed with a 1.25M dish on a ground mount we set up in car parks in Argelès and Port Vendres and tested the signal strength and quality. As you would expect, we found that the further south we went, the weaker the signal got. Our conclusion was that in the Argelès - Port Vendres region a 1.25 M dish would work in times of a decent signal but not in poor weather or when the signal is weaker, so a bigger dish is almost certainly required.

Since the launch of Astra 2F, the signal has fluctuated dramatically, lately it has been very strong but back in the spring it was much weaker. Only time will tell if this is a natural fluctuation or

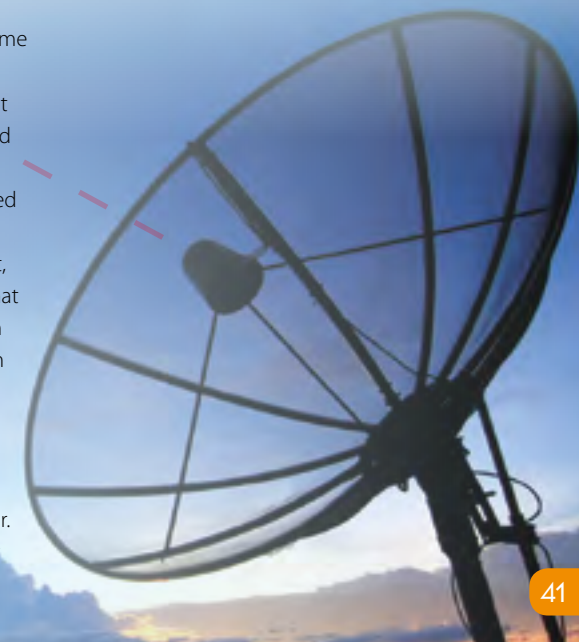
they have cranked it up a notch.

A large dish of course introduces problems of its own. Firstly there is the expense and of course you need to put it somewhere. We live in a windy area so sticking it on a chimney is asking for trouble. The Astra satellites are all south of us and a bit to the east, so if the dish is to be fixed to a wall, by necessity that wall must be more or less south facing. This is our first bit of good news because a south facing wall will always offer protection from the Tramontane, the prevailing strong wind in the area. We still have the Marin wind that blows from the sea but a dish fixed securely to a wall should be able to cope with this, particularly if there are other buildings, hedges or fences that offer some protection.

An alternative is to mount the dish in the ground but be warned, a 1.5M dish requires a big hole and a lot of concrete.

Share a dish

I'm always amazed at the site of an apartment block with a satellite dish on every balcony whereas one dish would serve them all. If you have >>



neighbours with the same problem, think about sharing a dish.

Are there alternatives?

There are still a number of English language channels that are not affected by these changes, and these will still be available on existing equipment. Unfortunately most of the free to air ones cater for minorities and will not perhaps top your list of viewing preferences. News channels will still be available.

Whilst it is probable that Sky's subscription channels will still be available, I don't think that a Sky subscription will get you BBC, ITV etc. There is only one broadcast of these channels and reception is the same on Sky boxes, Freesat or any other receiver.

Sky+ however, has the best catch-up TV service that I have seen and if you have a reasonable internet connection, Sky+ would give you masses of English language television via an existing satellite dish with BBC, ITV etc. available on their catch-up service. Most satellite installers can fix you up with a Sky+ box and I have heard of a lot of people who simply order a Sky Multi-Room box on their own or a relative's UK subscription. This is of course against Sky's terms and conditions but then so too is using a Sky box in France. And nobody seems too bothered by it. You do however need a VPN to use Sky Anytime.

The primary alternative to satellite TV is of course the internet, but like the satellite broadcasts, official services such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, 4OD, Demand 5 and Sky Go are only intended to be received in the UK. They verify this by checking that the internet address of your computer is in the UK. Fortunately you can get around this restriction with a VPN or Smart DNS that fools them into thinking you are in the UK.

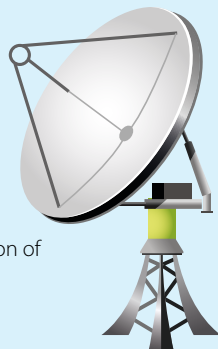
The leading unofficial service is undoubtedly Filmon which broadcasts TV programs from the UK, USA and other countries on the internet. Filmon



doesn't care whether or not you are in the UK and is generally free in standard definition but you have to pay a subscription for HD programs and the ability to record.

Media players based on the Android operating system are very popular as they plug into a TV just like any other set-top box and are usually operated with a remote control. There are Android 'Apps' available for Filmon, Sky News and BBC iPlayer and most can also run a program called XBMC that lets you watch masses of television programs. Unfortunately it is a bit hobbyist but great for the techies and geeks amongst us.

There are also commercial services that will charge you a monthly fee to let you watch programs available freely elsewhere but without any technical know-how on your part. Often they will also provide access to Catch-Up TV.



Thanks to Stephen Marston of www.digitvsolutions.com

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Test your French

1 - S POUR SILLY!

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

siècle 1	a	une chose qui inquiète
surgelé 2	b	une pièce de monnaie
souci 3	c	sous-vêtement qui couvre les fesses
sûreté 4	d	période de cent ans
slip 5	e	sorte de rideau que l'on déroule
sou 6	f	tissu collant qui sert de pansement
soie 7	g	aliment conservé à une température basse
store 8	h	personne qui ressemble exactement à une autre
sosie 9	i	tissu très léger
sparadrap 10	j	à l'abri du danger

Blague Bête

Deux puces sortent du cinema.
L'une dit à l'autre :
"On rentre à pied ou on prend un chien ?"
(puce - flea)



Christmas & New Year greetings

Bonnes et Heureuses Fêtes!
Je te (vous) souhaite un Joyeux Noël et une Bonne Année!
Bonne Année et Bonne Santé
Joyeuses Fêtes et Bonne Année
Paix, joie et amitié
Bonheur, santé et prospérité

Tongue twister (Virelangue)
(Répétez trois fois)

Un chasseur sachant chasser sait chasser sans son chien

2 FAIRE ENOUGH The following idiomatic expressions all use the verb 'faire'. Can you find their English equivalents?

Faire peau neuve 1	a	Make a fuss
Faire demi-tour 2	b	Sulk
Faire de son mieux 3	c	Pretend
Faire son cinéma 4	d	Act like a child
Faire semblant 5	e	Turn over a new leaf
Faire la grasse matinée 6	f	Play truant
Faire la tête 7	g	Do one's best
Faire l'école buissonnière 8	h	Make a long weekend of it
Faire l'enfant 9	i	Have a lie in
Faire le pont 10	j	Turn around

3 - RETURN TO SENDER

Did you know that there are loads of French equivalents for the general English verb to return? In some cases, the differences are very subtle. Can you work out which is which?

renvoyer 1	a	to give something back
retourner 2	b	to come back
revenir 3	c	to bring something back
rendre 4	d	to come or go home
rentrer 5	e	to return money
rappporter 6	f	to send something back
rembourser 7	g	to go back

LANGUAGE Tip

DANS OR EN (with time) - IN

Use dans when describing the point when an action begins

Je finirai le travail dans quinze minutes.

I'll finish the work in 15 minutes.

(ie I will start the action 15 mins from now)

Use en when describing the length of time an action takes.

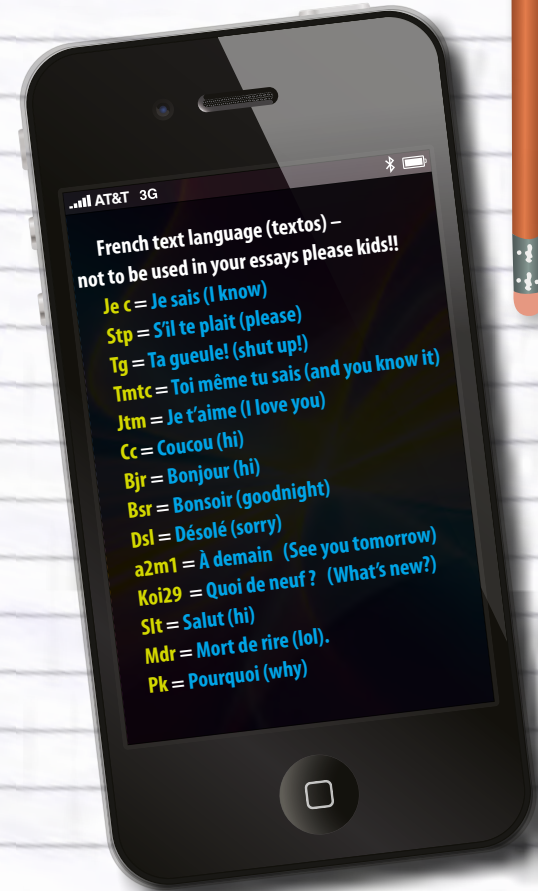
Je finirai le travail en 15 minutes

I'll finish the work in 15 minutes

(ie I don't know when I will start but it will take me 15 mins)

4 - FIND THE OPPOSITES

attirant 1	a	hostile
précis 2	b	malchanceux
chanceux 3	c	généreux
amical 4	d	repoussant
égoïste 5	e	vague



1 - Move it!

Les mots suivants sont tous des verbes de mouvement. Pouvez vous trouver leur équivalent en Français?

crawl	1	a	s'incliner
kick	2	b	marcher sur la pointe des pieds
lean	3	c	s'adosser
slip	4	d	marcher à grandes enjambées
tiptoe	5	e	sautiller
stride	6	f	ramper
stretch	7	g	balancer
bow	8	h	étirer
swing	9	i	glisser
skip	10	j	donner un coup de pied

Virelangue

(Répétez trois fois)

Those tricky tongue
twisters trip off
the tongue!

Une langue vivante, l'Anglais évolue constamment. Voici quelques mots avec leurs définitions, qui sont rentrés récemment dans le dictionnaire

Nonversation	une conversation ridicule
Hoodie	une personne qui porte une veste à capuche
Infomania	vérifier et répondre constamment aux textos
Mocktail	boisson non alcoolisée que ressemble à un cocktail.
Netiquette	comportement correcte sur Internet (mélange de 'network' et 'étiquette')
Newbie	un nouveau membre ou abonné
Noughties	Les années entre 2000 and 2009 qui contiennent un 'nought' (zéro),
Screenager	Un/e jeune qui passé beaucoup de temps devant l'écran de son ordinateur.

2 - OUCH, THAT ENGLISH HUMOUR

REMPLISSEZ LES BLANCS

A 1 _____ standing nude in front of a
2 _____ says to her husband:
'I look horrible, I feel 3 _____ and ugly,
pay me a compliment.'

He 4 _____, 'Your 5 _____ is perfect.'

a mirror b eyesight c woman d replies e fat

Bad Joke

I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day but I couldn't find any.

Worse joke

Doctor, doctor, I have a strawberry growing out of my head.

Sit down and I'll give you some cream to put on it.

Worst Joke

What do you call a fat psychic?

A four chin teller.
(fortune teller - voyant)

A fact of life....

Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right, and the other is a husband.

3 - Trouvez les équivalents de ces expressions qui utilisent toutes le mot THROW (jeter)

Throw a fit	1	a	créer des problèmes
Throw in the towel	2	b	jeter l'éponge
Throw the book at someone	3	c	piquer une crise
Throw your weight about	4	d	se fâcher
Throw a wobbly	5	e	oublier toute prudence
Throw caution to the wind	6	f	punir au maximum
Throw down the gauntlet	7	g	lancer un défi
Throw a spanner in the works	8	h	bousculer les gens

Great British Insults

"Sir, if you were my husband, I would poison your drink."

"Madam, if you were my wife, I would drink it!"

Exchange between Lady Astor and Winston Churchill

Dear Santa,

It's me again, a year older - and I still don't want a Hoover, an iron, a bread maker, or a set of non stick pans for Christmas! Grrrrrrrr. Why do you keep on sending me cleaning and cooking appliances every year? This year I would like a complete makeover, a miracle slimming cure, and as much calorie free milk chocolate as you can put in your sack.



No more milk and biscuits in front of the fireplace until you get it right big guy!

Love Kate

(hoover - aspirateur iron - fer à repasser appliances - appareils ménagers)

4 - A - is for Animal

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

about	1	a	quantity or number
amount	2	b	real and present
abroad	3	c	mother or father's sister
allow	4	d	concerning
ant	5	e	make something known
aunt	6	f	nut of the oak tree
ache	7	g	in another country
actual	8	h	very small insect
advertise	9	i	continuous pain
acorn	10	j	give permission



Good advice

Don't join dangerous cults.
Practice safe sects!

Les Elections Municipales

23rd and 30th March 2014

The next local elections take place on 23rd and 30th March 2014. If you are an EU citizen, resident in France, paying **taxe foncière** and **taxe d'habitation**, (whether you own or rent), and eligible to vote in your own country, you have the right to vote in French municipal elections, and have your say in the running of your town or village.

- If you use your vote as a French resident, you forfeit your vote from your country of origin for that election.
- British expats who have lived outside the country for more than fifteen years have no entitlement to vote in the UK.
- You cannot take part in the French presidential elections

How can I join the voting list?

If you are not already registered, you should go to the Mairie to fill in a form BEFORE DECEMBER 31ST 2013. You will need to take with you proof of identity and proof of residency, such as tax form (**les impôts locaux**) or service bill. You will then receive 'une carte electorale' which you will have to present when voting, along with your ID.

What is 'une liste'?

A 'liste' is the list of all the names of the potential councillors. You may have several lists to choose

from. Some may belong to a political party and others may be apolitical (sans etiquette). On each list you will have a 'tête de liste' who will then, if elected, become Maire. A list can be accompanied by a **circulaire** or **profession de foi** (a sort of mini-manifesto), which should not be bigger than A4 paper. You may receive this in your letterbox before the election, along with the list.

What are the 'Elections Municipales'?

During the local elections, residents elect the members of the council, (**le conseil municipal**). Once elected, these members (**les conseillers municipaux**) choose the Mayor (**le Maire**) and the deputy Mayors (**les Maires adjoints**). The number of counsellors elected depends on the number of inhabitants in each town or village.

Municipal councillors are the 'decision making' body for each commune, and are elected by direct universal suffrage for a renewable six-year term.

The method of voting used in these elections is not the same throughout France. There are different regulations for communes of different sizes, too complicated to explain in any detail here.

Votes are counted for individual candidates rather than for lists; to win on the first round a candidate must win over 50% of the votes (ie 50% + 1), and this must represent 25% of the registered voters. If not, a second round is necessary, when a relative majority is sufficient for a candidate to be elected. In the second round, the top-scoring

candidates are elected.

In communes of under 3500 inhabitants, voters can delete or add names or change the order of candidates on a list. This is called **panachage**. However, as lists are, in theory, put together according to experience, expertise, and a common vision within the group, it is usual for lists to ask voters to vote for the whole list, (**la liste entière**) as opposed to individuals, although this is not compulsory.

For communes with 3,500 or more inhabitants, voters must vote for a single list and cannot delete or add names or change the order of candidates.

Only lists which have obtained 10% of the votes cast may go forward to the second round. (There may be no second round if one list obtains the absolute majority in the first round)

Choosing the mayor

The mayor is elected by the other members of the council at its first meeting. This should technically be chaired by the oldest member of the newly elected council, but is often ignored, especially if the outgoing maire has been re-elected. In communes of over 2500 inhabitants, the new maire will be the head of the winning list, but in communes of under 2500 inhabitants, where there is not necessarily a winning list, and where panachage is allowed, the outcome can be unexpected and it may take several rounds of voting to reach a conclusion.

How does the voting take place?

Go to the Mairie on the 23rd March, and present your **carte électorale**. Lists will be on the table for you to pick up. Choose your list and head for the **isoloir** (booth) to make up your list, either putting the whole list unchanged into the voting box, or making changes as desired. You can put more than one list into the ballot box, provided that you have not left more names than seats: any such vote would be disqualified.

Can I run for the local council?

Mais oui. British expat residents can and do stand for election...but of course your French must be good enough to sit through and contribute to council meetings without nodding off too often!

A few people have described my dear old Dad as a 'debonair gentleman' but did you know that it actually comes from the French for 'of good air'. In the middle Ages, people's health was judged partly by their level of 'whiffiness'! A person who was low on the pongometer gave off 'good air' and was assumed to be healthy and refined!



Letsgetphysical...

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Massive dollops of early snow have arrived in the mountains, and with more than 50km of downhill slopes, 36km of cross country pistes, a dedicated snow board park and gigantic ski jumping airbag, you'd think that Les Angles would be feeling pretty smug. But no, after summer in the Costa Del P-O, its time for winter on the newly created Costa Verde Alpine secteur, which, despite its colourful name is anything but green right now!

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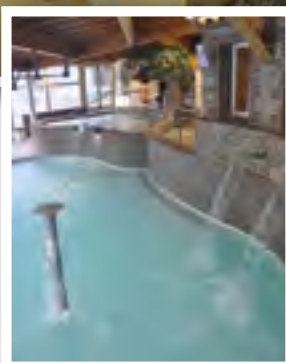
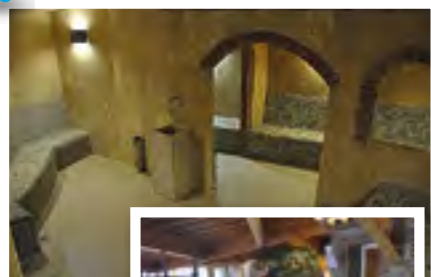
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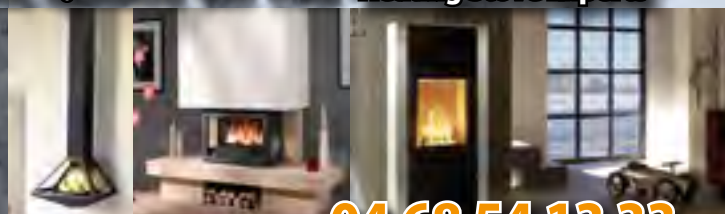
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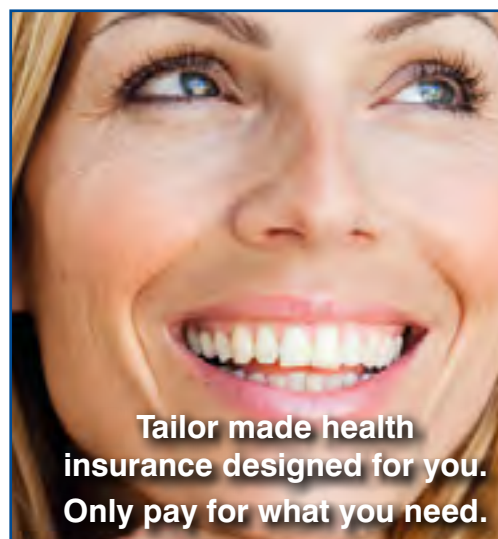
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We speak

Veronique Joguet:

One of the pleasures of a stroll through the old streets of Perpignan is the discovery of inviting inner courtyards, havens of calm but also surprises. Just off the Rue de l'Ange, Galerie Joguet greets you with a burst of exuberant colour. The paintings of Veronique Joguet, a confessed colour junkie since the age of 14 when she discovered Turner's abstract landscapes at the Tate Gallery, emit energy, light and the heat of the Mediterranean.

Since 1981 Veronique has lived in Perpignan where she studied painting at the Beaux Arts. She created Galerie Joguet in 2009 as a permanent exhibition space for her work. Veronique sets a theme - the boats of the Var, the coastline of Paulilles, or the vineyards of Maury - and then explores its pictorial possibilities in a series of 25 to 30 canvases, which tell the same story in different ways.

Veronique works from photographs but varies the colours and composition to suit each canvas. First she outlines the subject with a brush and

Fifty Shades of Anything but Grey

then applies the paint with a palette knife, so the surface of the canvas shimmers with light and shadow. Her recent series of the Manhattan skyline was a challenge she said, because her image of the city was a uniform grey. The resulting paintings are 50 shades of everything but.

This year's exhibition is devoted to Collioure: the Chateau Royal floating on the bay, the Fort Mirador seen through a screen of dancing pines, the Mouret fishermen's houses nestled above the bay and Fort St. Elme rising above a tumble of rock and cactus. Each scene is awash with a bright primary colour: red,

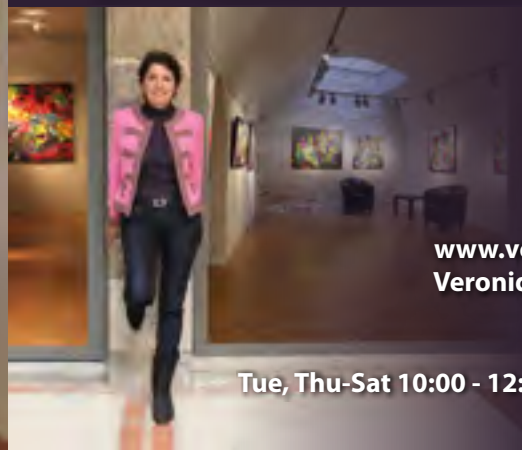
yellow or blue.

If you need something to warm you up during the coming winter months, enter the courtyard at 18 Rue de l'Ange and soak up the radiant colours of Veronique Joguet's Collioure.

For further information:
www.veroniquejoguet.com



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AIRPORT NEWS

With JOHN FAIRCLOUGH



WINTER 2013/14

Are you a 'glass half-full or a glass half-empty' type of person? This question is very pertinent to the way you will see the air services situation this winter season in the immediate area to Pyrenees Orientales.

In short, the list I published in the autumn edition remains unchanged. The 'glass half full' reader will be pleased to hear that there have been no routes axed, which tends to imply that bookings are holding up to an acceptable level. The 'glass half empty' reader may take the more pessimistic view that there have been no additions launched, as in previous years during the Oct/Nov period.

So, with little airport news to report, and as Ryanair are, by some distance the main air operator in this region, I'll take this opportunity to cover the much-publicised charm offensive that the Irish budget airline are evidently embarking on.

I'm sure, like me, regular patrons of Ryanair have been sent a questionnaire, urging you to "Tell Mike", as Mr O'Leary asks us to list what we like and dislike about his company's service, from booking to final bag delivery.

Clearly, whilst past economic performances have been stunning, there is strong evidence that the Ryanair profit levels have begun to tumble recently, and no doubt the people in charge are worried that this might hit investor confidence. Hence the recent interest in keeping the customer satisfied.

As a regular flyer with the airline, I have certainly noticed a more softly softly approach both with

ground staff and cabin crew; for example less of the heavy handed weighing and sizing of hand luggage, and a bit more leeway as regards weight of hold cases, cabin staff less brusque, and more accommodating as to seat placings.

At the end of October, the airline announced a number of changes that will directly enhance the customer experience, ranging from revamping the hopelessly unwieldy booking process, to provision of "quieter flights" in the early morning/late evening, when the level of sales babble will be cut to a minimum. Other changes are allowance of a second, small piece of hand luggage (such as a ladies' handbag), and reduction of some of the more outrageous charges for things such as printing a boarding pass and airport case check in. All these changes should be in place by the time this edition of PO Life is on the streets.

In early November, the airline announced that, as a result of overwhelming public demand they have decided to move to allocated seating on all flights from 1 Feb 2014. The fee for preferred seating will remain in place, but everyone else will be automatically allocated a seat free of charge, keeping group bookings together on the plane where relevant. Hopefully the days of the interminable at gate queueing and free for all on the tarmac will be over.

Further enhancements are promised over the next few months. It's become clear that Mr O'Leary has recognised that the budget flight market is becoming crowded, not only with the usual cut-price operators, but also some of the traditional

carriers such as British Airways, KLM, Iberia and Air France, who are now offering a no frills, low fares type service. He's discovering the age-old rule of business; ie that it's not terribly smart to alienate your customers, and that it's much harder to keep customers loyal than win them in the first place.

Already we are seeing the first mentions of service provision for next summer, and, as usual, I'm hoping to publish a full list of these in the spring edition. As ever, your discoveries and comments are welcomed..

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Wine & Beer

La Brasserie De L'Ours04 30 44 36 31
Artisanal Beers labrasseriedelours.com

Les Caves Maillol, Perpignan04 34 10 36 21
Near Mercure Hotel, under plane trees www.cavesmaillol.fr

V&B - Mas Guerido 04 68 86 36 68
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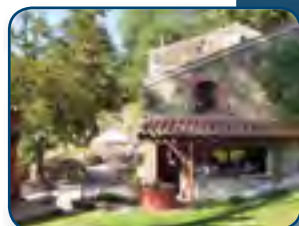


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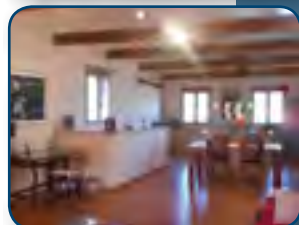
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