

spring 2016

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées-Orientales

N° 51
FREE / GRATUIT



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EDITO:-)

What a winter this has been! Mild and bright, with temperatures soaring into the high 20s at times... and now, as we slip painlessly into a potentially superlative spring, an inevitable whiff of Tramontane-to-come or a raindrop or two hardly seems daunting.

There's a fresh and fruity flavour in the air. Wild thyme and rosemary mingle with marjoram, sage and lavender, tantalizing our senses.

Welcome to springtime in the P-O.

In this edition, Tim and Chris walk us through 'stunning views and lots of history' whilst Leigh and Merry prove that they were born to be wild! Linda Razzell enchants us with another side of Barcelona, the Warblers continue their fascinating series on wildlife and nature in the P-O and Katja takes us for a picnic by the sea.

Golfers will enjoy the account of our golf guru Simon when he visits Falgos, whilst John once again takes on the thankless task of scouring the airlines for the best ways to get in and out of the P-O.



**POP IN
& SAY HELLO**

The new website is now up and running. **Sign up for our free weekly newsletter bringing the P-O directly into your inbox, join Sue for a chat on our friendly FB group (PO Life), follow us on Twitter @magazine_po, visit our forum, or register on the website and leave your comments on days out, restaurant reviews, events....**

Impression: ROTIMPRES (Girona): 9000 ex

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Cover: Marian Porter

ARLES-SUR-TECH CENTRE Near the Abbaye, traditional stone house with terrace, renovated in 1973. Four bedrooms, 2 Living rooms, fitted kitchen, garage, possibility of lift. Solid Construction with views. Historic building



REF: 4492 – mandat 2253
PRICE : 145 000 € - Dpe N/A

SAINT JEAN PLA DE CORTS Villa made into 2 appartements. FIRST FLOOR: four roomed apt with balcony, terrace, conservatory, garage and shed. GROUND FLOOR: 3 roomed apt with terrace and garden. Monthly rental income of 1400€. Both in perfect condition. A RARE OPPORTUNITY



REF: 4384 – mandat 2186
PRICE : 224 000 € - Dpe D

CERET CENTRE Close to all amenities. Semi with lovely living room/kitchen overlooking the garden, utility room, bathroom/wc, 3 bedrooms with views over the mountains, covered terrace and garage. WORTH A VISIT



REF: 4423 – mandat 2189
PRICE : 215 000 € - Dpe D

CERET Quiet and pleasant south facing house, close to all amenities. Beautiful views. GROUND FLOOR: Large garage, FIRST FLOOR: Living/Dining room with balcony, kitchen, 3 bedrooms, shower room, WC.



REF: 4398 – mandat 2218
PRICE : 264 000 € - Dpe D

ARLES-SUR-TCH CENTRE Close to all amenities. Second floor appartement. Pleasant aspect. Separate kitchen and lounge. Parking nearby



REF: 4418 – mandat 2209
PRICE : 38 500 € - Dpe N/A

LE BOULOU Architect designed villa with entrance hall in round tower, large and lovely living room and kitchen. Garage. Four bedrooms, 2 en suite, large bedroom/playroom, and solarium. Large covered terrace with pool. Not overlooked. A MUST-SEE



REF: 4454 - mandat : 2251
PRICE: 520 000€ - dpe C

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Some possible covers

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For editorial queries & comment email: info@anglophone-direct.com - 06 79 61 96 46 (editorial only)



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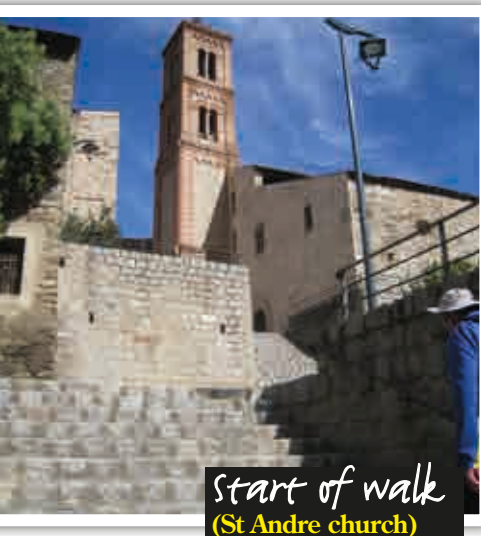
WALK The REGION

with Tim
and Chris Parker

OLETTE CIRCULAR: a walk through history - olette, evol, oreilla

A gem of a walk! Good walking surfaces, stunning views, lots of history. This circular walk of 3 1/4 hrs includes time to enjoy the scenery and visit the Château d'Evol. It is suitable for all walkers with a reasonable level of fitness. Walking boots recommended. 7 kms with a 460 metre climb. Yellow and white waymarking.

ACCESS map IGN 1:25000 Font Romeu Capcir 2249ET.



Start of walk
(St Andre church)



Signs along path
to Evol

START: From Perpignan take the N116 via Prades and Villefranche de Conflent to Olette. Park at la Place (on right in centre of town) or at station (Train Jaune) car park (left turn at end of town).

THE WALK: Way-marking starts at the station car park. Climb the steps to St Andre church, cross road to the Place. Take steep street rising from left of the Place – la rue de la Liberation. After 150 metres turn right up another steep street, and after 50 metres, take the left fork under an old bridge.

👉 These signs will be evident during the whole of the walk. The Parcours Botanique is the route to Evol and you will find plants identified with names and drawings.

👉 The bridge was apparently an old aqueduct but the water course is now at a higher level and you will see it to the left and soon pass over it as you climb to turn right into a valley. Great views of the Canigou (left) and other high mountains opposite. In the valley you can see the ruins of La Tour d'Oreilla, with Oreilla itself perched in the distance on the opposite side.

👉 Contour above valley to D4a; turn right and enter Evol – classed among the most beautiful French villages. (1 hour to this point)



Old aqueduct
(leaving Olette)



Arrival at Evol

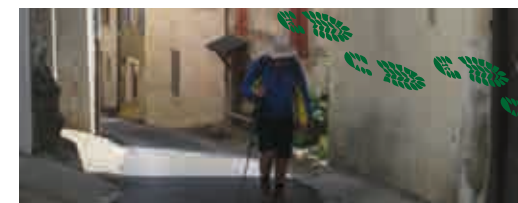


Carrer del Reganer
(Evol)

👉 After the old Lavoir turn right up the cobbled Carrer del Reganer. Turn left where indicated and cross la Place del Guiner into le Carrer del Barbeblanc. Next to the tiny Mairie is the Musée Ludovic Massé. He was a famous Catalan writer and was born in the village.

👉 Continue 100 metres to church of St Andre, open every day from June to September, but just 2-6pm at weekends from October to May. The church dates from the 11th century and was extended in the 18th century. It has a number of very old Retables (Reredos or altar pieces) including the oldest Retable de Rosaire in Roussillon dating from 1578-80, a Gothic one from 15th century and 2 from the 18th century.

👉 Drop back to the entrance and follow the cemetery wall back onto the D4a. Follow the road 80 yards to where it bends left. Just over the bridge take footpath on right to Chapelle St Etienne and le Château d'Evol. (15 mins each way)



WALK The REGION

with Tim and Chris Parker



Le Canigou from Oreilla



👉 The 13th century chapel was constructed at the same time as the Chateau in 1260 and is named after St Etienne, protector of the Viscounts of Evol. The Chateau kept a military presence, while the Viscounts lived in the Olette valley, to gather taxes on goods being carried along the main valley route!

👉 The chateau is being renovated by dedicated local volunteers. They work here every Thursday, weather permitting, and are happy to tell you about the history of the castle and area. Apparently Evol was very self sufficient and farmed arable crops on the terraces (visible on the opposite side of the valley) and also quarried slate. This slate was used at the Palace of Versailles as well as on the roof of the church of St Andre locally. Follow your route back down to D4a, near bridge.

👉 Continue along the road round a bend and after 70 metres, arrive at sign for Thuir Evol, turn left and cross a bridge. (To visit the village, walk straight on. Cross the river via another bridge, turn left to arrive at the bridge mentioned above. This adds approx. 1km to the route).



En route for Evol

👉 Turn left after bridge and find 2 renovated Gites de France on your left. Opposite the second gite take path signed "Oreilla" to right of a fence. The path climbs then contours along the valley side offering great views of the route so far and across to the Massif de Canigou.

👉 After approx 40 mins, turn left at a double track and follow it for about 200 metres, then turn right on a grassy way-marked path.

👉 Follow this into Oreilla. Turn right onto main street to a small Placette. Turn left down steps (W.C available!) to find the Roman church of St Marie

👉 Follow path to right of church to continue through woodland to Olette – a sign says 15 mins by horse and 45 mins on foot!

👉 Path eventually crosses a road to continue opposite in a series of zig zags. Just before you reach the D4 a path goes off to right. 100 metres to ruins of the tour d'Oreilla.

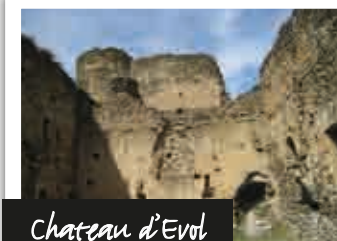
👉 At D4 turn right and after 450m, turn left onto the N116. The station car park entrance is on your right, next to the old Fine petro station.



Church of St Andre (Evol)



Chapelle St Etienne, (Evol)



Chateau d'Evol



Restored tower at chateau d'evol

OPTIONAL ENDING

If you need refreshments, continue along the N116 to a little cafe opposite the Place with seating indoors and out. 2 large cafes au lait cost us just 3.40 euros!

From the cafe it is just a few yards to the steps beside the church to return to the station car park.

To complete your day out you may wish to call in at Villefranche de Conflent before leaving the area. Even if not, you will have had a day soaked in history and with scenery you will not forget if you have chosen a clear day for your walk.

P-OLife

Things You Might Need to Know



Bonne Santé!

From January 2016, ALL permanent residents, who have lived in France for 3 months or more, may apply for a Carte Vitale. This includes both EU and non-EU citizens.

A new system, the 'protection universelle maladie' simplifies health insurance for foreigners in France. Whether you are unemployed, retired or pre retired, the PUM guarantees your right to reimbursement of around 70% of all your medical costs. The other 30% will be covered by most good top-up or complementary insurance.



It's in the Bag

From April 2016, France will follow the UK by banning single-use plastic bags, or charging for them in all French shops, to reduce litter and encourage people to reuse bags.



Motorbike and scooter riders, as well as their pillion passengers, are now required by law to carry a fluorescent hi viz vest or jacket, with a possible fine of up to €135 for non compliance. They should also have spare bulbs, breathalysers, reflective stickers on the front, back and each side of the helmet, and must wear gloves.



Cheque out

From 1st February, cheques will no longer be accepted in Lidl.

It's your Duty

From 1 April, 2016 you'll have to fork out an extra 3% in Stamp Duty in the UK if you are buying a second home, a holiday home or buy-to-let property. This is IN ADDITION to the regular Stamp Duty. The bill will add £7,500 on to the price of a £250,000 property.

This will affect UK expats with property in the UK, which they were hoping to sell before returning home. They would have to return, live in the property for at least 90 days of the year (this can be split between husband and wife) and then sell claiming exemption because it was their main home.

Vides greniers



An excellent way to combat the 'crise' is to liberate a few extra euros by selling your unwanted items at a vide grenier (literally empty attic). If you wish to display / sell at a vide-grenier, you will normally need to register in advance and show some proof of identity when registering.

More information on how to do this from the town hall or tourist office in the commune where the vide-grenier is taking place.

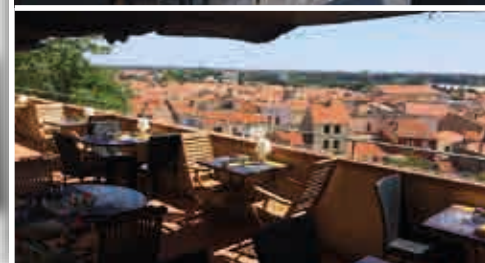
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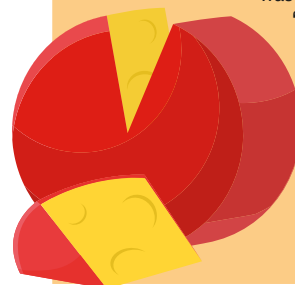


DID YOU KNOW

A Nation of Cheese Eaters!

Support your local cheese makers on Sunday 27th March for the 'journée mondiale du fromage' as Artisan cheese makers fight back against 'plastic' cheeses flooding in from foreign markets. Consumption of the ever-so-French famous stinky cheeses is up against growing competition from fetas and mozzarellas as fast food pizza and panini threaten the leisurely lunches of yesteryear. French President Charles de Gaulle was famously quoted as saying

"Comment voulez-vous gouverner un pays qui a deux cent quarante-six variétés de fromage?" ("How can you govern a country which has two hundred and forty-six varieties of cheese?").

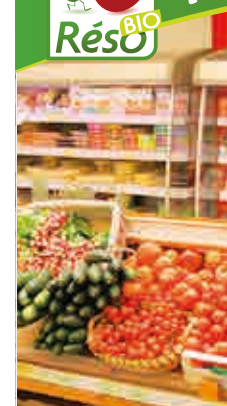


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CERET: 29, rue Saint-Ferréol
04 68 87 18 72

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PLENTY MORE FISH IN THE SEA

The Port Vendres Fish Market, with its panoramic sea food bar overlooking the bay, is a must-visit for all fish lovers

Les Poissonneries de la Côte Catalane (La Crie) is one of the largest fish markets in the western Mediterranean.

On the first floor, the chic wine and oyster bar is a delight. **Why not pop in for tapas or 'l'Happy Oyster' on the 1st Sunday of every month, from 11h – 12h?** Described as 'un Happy Hour, mais avec des Oysters', **buy 6 oysters and a glass of wine and get the same free for a second person** – or for yourself if you fancy seconds! And with different types of Oyster on the menu, selon arrivage of course (as per daily catch), you'll be spoilt for choice.

Downstairs, the market itself is a bright and fishy explosion of colour and sound – a working fishing depot with fishing fleet based on the nearby quay.

Shelves of seafood delicacies, condiments and wines, counters of fresh fish, seafood, soups, and prepared dishes, live lobsters and langoustines, magnificent seafood platters, cooked paella and bouillabaisse to take away make the fish market **THE 'adresse bistrannique' for fish and seafood in the Pyrénées-Orientales.**

Some fish

Aigrefin/Eglefin - Haddock
Bar - Sea Bass
Cabillaud/Morue - Cod/salted cod
Carrelet - Plaice
Colin/Merlu - hake
Daurade/Dorade - Bream
Espadon - Swordfish
Lotte - Monkfish
Loup - Sea Perch
Rascasse - Scorpion Fish
Requin - Shark
Rouget - Red Mullet
Saint Pierre - John Dory
Seiche - Cuttlefish

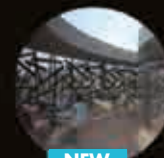
Some shellfish

huîtres - oysters
moules - mussels
crevettes - prawns
tortaux - large crabs
langoustines - langoustines (scampi)
langoustes - spiny lobsters
homards - lobsters
bigorneaux - winkles
bulots - whelks
coques - cockles

Some general fishy vocab

vider - to gut (lit. to empty).
(court) bouillon - stock or broth
(sans) arête - (without) bones.
en papillote - cooked in foil.
darne - fish steak/slice
décortiqué - shelled or peeled
écailler - to scale fish

LES POISSONNERIES DE LA CÔTE CATALANE (ALIAS LA CRIEE)



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+ 6 oysters

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OUT for THE DAY

with Leigh
and Merry Foster

On Your Bike Prieuré de Serrabona

Sometimes, when we're not walking, we have a lovely day out on the motorbike in this spectacular region. It's a fantastic way to see the countryside, and get "up close and personal" with the smells and sounds of nature. This is a short circuit we did in November and combined it with a visit to a fascinating old Priory hidden in the hills.

ACCESS: The start point can be anywhere really, ours was the D615 from Thuir towards Ille-sur-Têt. We zipped along past the neat vineyards, fruit orchards (which will be gorgeous with blossom in spring) and villages, turning left onto the D16 in the direction of Bouleternère just after Corbère, until after another 1 km we came to a turn on the left up the D2 to St Michel des Llotès and Casefabre. Here, we left the main road and started up into the hills. Map Michelin 344 1:150000

THE ROUTE:

Keep following the D2 with the little dry stream on the left, until you reach St Michel des Llotès after about 1.6km. There is a little museum of Catalan Agriculture here. We didn't stop but it looks interesting.



>> Turn right onto the D72 and continue winding up into the hills following the signs to Casefabre. The zigzag warning signs and narrowness of the road tell you you're now heading off into the wild, and very soon you can look back down the valley over the village laid out behind and below you.

The road twists and turns upwards past isolated farms and houses, in and out of the sunshine and over the Col Sainte Marguerite, until you descend into the tiny hamlet of Casefabre with its 11th century church.

>> In the blink of an eye you're through it and continue wiggling downwards into the valley of the El Bolès river, making its way towards the Têt.

>> After crossing the river, turn right on the D618 and immediately turn left on the D84, following the hairpins up the other side of the valley towards the Prieuré de Serrabona.

The road winds its way up 4km and ends at the Prieuré, which was founded around 1069 AD.

It fell into disrepair in the 16th century, was designated a historical monument in 1834, and restoration began in the 20th century. It is now open to visitors from 10 am to 6pm.

Despite its imposing location at 590 m elevation, it looks unimpressive from the outside with its stark grey stone walls, but the inside reveals some astonishing carvings and stonework.

Just outside is an immaculate little herb garden with beautifully tended neat hedges, definitely a place to calm the mind.



After paying the €1.50 entrance fee, you enter a cloister with a series of marble columns supporting carved capital stones with fantastic animals and mythical figures. The arched cloister overlooks a quiet garden and due south over the steep and densely wooded valley.

There is a staircase leading from the cloister to the roof of the priory, where the views are even more impressive. Inside the church is the biggest surprise, a strange indoor row of cloistered arches (or 'Tribune') beautifully carved out of pink marble, which seems vaguely misplaced and inappropriate for a church, with its rather pagan carvings. In places on the church walls some brightly coloured traces of ancient frescoes can still be seen.



OUT for THE DAY

with Leigh
and Merry Foster

On Your Bike



>> After leaving the Prieuré, the only option is to retrace your route down the hill to the D618. From here you can either turn left towards Ille-sur-Têt or right towards Céret, which is prettier but longer.

>> The road gently winds up the valley with the El Bolès on your left. *It's a quiet road but there can still be some surprises. On rounding a bend we suddenly came across an untended flock of Mouflons. They weren't particularly bothered by us, so we stopped and admired their glossy chestnut coats as they slowly moved out of the way of the strange two-headed smoke-puffing monster.*

>> The road continues to meander towards the tiny village of Boule D'Amont, where a bridge crosses the El Bolès, and suddenly you are in even tinier Lo Serrat.

>> Follow the D618 up the valley, each turn revealing more glorious hillsides until you get to the Col du Fourtou, a crossroads where the road turns right. Continue on the D618 through the charming villages of Prunet-et-Belpuig and La Trinité, perhaps stopping to take in the awesome views down to the sea, then onwards through Saint Marsal, and Taulis to finally reach Palalda, which feels like you're almost back in the real world again, having seen a genuine piece of the wild PO.

FESTIVALS & TRADITIONS

BANK HOLIDAYS

The many spring bank holidays are a joy to schoolchildren...but less so to parents, and trades people! Often extended into a long weekend if the holiday falls on a Tuesday or a Thursday, many businesses will 'faire le pont' and take Monday or Friday off as well. (Major chains unlikely to do this)

• 28th March -

Easter Monday
(Lundi de Pâques).

• 1st May -

May Day (La Fête du Travail)

• 8th May - WW2 Victory Day
(La Fête de la Victoire 1945)

• 16th May Whit Monday
(Lundi de Pentecôte)

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

• 16th April - 2nd May

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

• May 29th
MOTHER'S DAY



GIANTS AND GOIGS

in Villefranche de Conflent
Saturday 26 - Sunday 27th
March

This fairy tale weekend starts on Saturday with the Goig dels ous de xocolat, when minstrels play Catalan musical instruments (gralles, flaviol and tambourin), and baskets of eggs on ropes are lowered out of first floor windows in thanks for the music.

It continues on Sunday morning with the musical parade of the giants through the streets of Villefranche, followed in the afternoon by the presentation of all the giants - and each couple's special dance.

On Monday, un peu de sérieux for the traditional pilgrimage to the chapelle de Notre Dame de Vie and mass.

Great fun for all the family.

More info:

04.68.53.77.02 or

06.33.24.50.26

Email: gerrit@infonie.fr





PROCESSION DE LA SANCH

*Friday 25th
March*

Sinister black hooded and robed figures march slowly through the silent streets of Perpignan. At their head, robed in red, walks 'le regidor', intermittently ringing an iron bell to warn of their approach. Some walk bare-foot, others are on their knees as they move slowly forward to the solemn beat of black veiled tambourines. They carry 'misteris', full-size representations of the different scenes of the Passion, and crosses, crucifixes and religious statues weighing up to fifty kilos. Under these burdens, their suffering is not feigned.

Visit us at www.anglophone-direct.com to find out more about these black hooded penitents who helped sinners to prepare for judgment and punishment, by accompanying the condemned to their execution.

Night processions also take place at Bouleternère, (Thurs) Canet, Collioure and Arles-sur-Tech (Friday).



LES REGINAS

*Sunday
27th March*

Whilst Perpignan, Collioure and Arles are parading death, a dawn drum roll in Ille sur Têt announces life - the Resurrection and the beginnings of spring - in this age old Illois custom.

As the 'statue de la Vierge' arrives upon the shoulders of the 'porteurs', the first Régina, the Régina de Coll, blasts out, a 130 strong choir, accompanied by 40 musicians. Follow the procession to the Jardins de la Rodona, where the second Régina, the Régina de Colomer is performed. Coll and Colomer were two talented composers who wrote these 'Réginas', religious music for Easter.

Believers and non-believers alike find this unique ceremony moving and memorable.



SANT JORDI

April 23rd

This day is a double whammy for culture lovers.

Not only is it the International Day of the Book, (on the anniversary of the death of writers, Cervantes, and Shakespeare), but it is also the festival of Saint Jordi, Patron Saint of Catalonia. This Roman soldier was martyred around 303AD for refusing to renounce Christianity, but the legend of St George and the dragon is much prettier. The King's daughter had drawn the short straw, and was about to be handed over to the dragon. Our hero St Jordi rescued the damsel, and slew the dragon. The King and his subjects converted to Christianity in gratitude, roses grew from the ground where the dragon's blood had been shed, and everybody lived happily ever after.

Offer your lady a rose, buy your man a book (or the other way round) as towns and villages throughout the region have book stalls, signings, wine tastings – and the blessing of the roses in Perpignan.



LA FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE

Tuesday 21st June

This annual festival celebrates music in all forms and is open to anyone, professional and amateur, and all music genres. If you are in France on this day it will be hard to avoid the vibrant sounds of salsa, string quartets and steel bands playing on street corners, jazz, rock, roll, and blues, garage folk, heavy metal, accordionists wandering among the crowds.....

LES FEUX DE LA SAINT JEAN

Friday 24th June

Els Focs de la Sant Jean or The Fires of St John is an important annual event in the Catalan calendar, and the longest day of the year.

This date is linked with ancient practices and white magic, such as the curative powers of local herbs, rosemary, thyme and verben, which are supposed to be 100 times stronger on the eve of Saint Jean, and carlina (a type of thistle shaped like the sun) which apparently acts as an aphrodisiac, and protects evil spirits and 'mauvaises fées' (bad fairies) entering the house.

Animals were washed on this night to protect them from harm for the rest of the year, dew was gathered at dawn to cure illness, fires were lit to burn broken and worn out household items and to signal from village to village. Celebrations took place everywhere. North Catalonia is set alight on the evening, as relay runners bring burning torches down from the Canigou to light fires that have been prepared in towns and villages all over the region.

Visit us at www.anglophone-direct.com to find out more about the Trobada and the Feux de la Saint Jean.



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Restaurant REVIEWS



The following reviews are not adverts, they are just restaurants that I have enjoyed, or that friends have recommended. They are based on that person's opinion, on that day, usually taking into account the whole package. You might not always necessarily agree!

Bon appétit!

1

LES GLYCINES

ARLES-SUR-TECH

with Fiona

Hôtel-bar-restaurant with spacious, wisteria-covered terrace in the heart of Arles-sur-Tech, Les Glicines is a family affair, run by newcomers Thierry Genot, his charming wife, Patricia & their son.

Lunchtime offers a great value-for-money set menu (Mon-Fri only) at just 13,50€ for 2 courses or 15,00€ for three.

I started with a fresh and copious Taboulé followed by a delicious Merlu au beurre (which tasted just like sole) and came with a pot of split peas & lentils and tiny jacket potatoes - my favourite. The lemon meringue pie that followed is to die for!

Their à la carte menu includes a handful of cold starters, fish & meat dishes, tapas and desserts, plus very copious Grandes Salades, including a particularly tempting chicken curry one!

A platter of cold meat & cheese and another with anchovies & peppers, as well as a selection of tapas are served all day long, if you stop by outside of lunchtime and fancy a bite, or just a cold beer, a coffee or an ice-cream.

You just might like to try Guignolet - an old apéritif that you rarely see on the menu these days I am told. Cherry-based and served on the rocks, surprisingly unsweet - it's quite delicious!



LES GLYCINES

7 rue du Jeu de Paume
ARLES-SUR-TECH_04 68 39 10 09

2

LA SALAMANDRE

SORÈDE

with Merry

Last year we were more than a little worried when our favourite restaurant, la Salamandre in Sorède, changed hands. However, a couple of superb meals there since the changeover have convinced us that it is as wonderful as ever, under the talented new owners Dim and Hélène.

The decor has been updated in a tasteful modern style, and they have made it their own with beautifully presented, delicious dishes and an extended local wine list. The cuisine has modern "Masterchef" touches without being overly fussy.

After lovely amuses bouche of fois gras, we went for fishy starters, trying the scallops with leeks and a tasty lightly seared salmon slice. We followed this with a perfectly cooked beef fillet in a mouthwatering jus, and the catch of the day, Dorade from Argelès.

This came with pearls of Banyuls vinegar which burst in your mouth in an explosion of flavour. Both dishes came with multi coloured carrots and the welcome green of broccoli, so often missing from main courses.

Delicious desserts were tiramisu with a twist of salted caramel, and a chocolate mille feuille. Great value at €30 for 3 excellent courses, (supplements for some dishes) from a talented chef.



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ma belle = **gorgeous**
ma biche = **my doe, pet**
mon canard = **me duck**
ma chérie/mon chéri = **darling**
mon chou = **my cream puff, sweetie-pie**
mon coeur = **sweetheart**
mon lapin = **my little rabbit**
ma moitié = **my other half**
mon poussin = **my chick**
ma puce = **my (little) flea**

3

LE JARDIN DES SIMPLES

ST. ANDRE

with stéphane

Very unusual - one dines quite literally in the leafy garden of a house tucked away in St André, near the Cave Coopérative.

Home to husband & wife team and their children, Patricia does the cooking whilst Christophe provides a friendly service.

The menu changes every month and produce is fresh, local and definitely 'fait maison', with emphasis on mediterranean cuisine, using aromatic & medicinal herbs or 'Simples' which would have been grown back in the middle ages in the 'Jardin des Simples'.

There's a selection of 3 starters, 3 main courses and 4 desserts on the blackboard - absolutely no menus, but real cloth serviettes!

We chose the 'Tartare de Poisson' - tuna in a peach sauce which was superb, and an aubergine, fig & goat's cheese 'Millefeuille' which had an equally refreshing taste to it. Our mains consisted of fish and roast lamb, both very good, but the lamb might be rather pink for many British palettes so good idea to check the 'cuisson' first. Desserts included fresh goat's cheese with honey for the savoury tooth and a very light 'Fondant au chocolat' (but more like a soufflé) in a delicious raspberry sauce - a must for chocoholics everywhere.

Tasty 'Sangria maison' and wines from 'Vins d'Auteurs' in Collioure with a cork to take the remainder home!

Expect to spend around 40€ per head for 3 courses, not including wine.

Bookings are essential.



LE JARDIN DES SIMPLES

29 rue des Mimosas - ST ANDRE

04 68 89 14 69

www.lejardindessimples.fr

4

AL REC

TRESSERRE

with sue

Welcome to this old-fashioned mixture of a small restaurant/café and grocery where you can also purchase local produce and meet the natives!

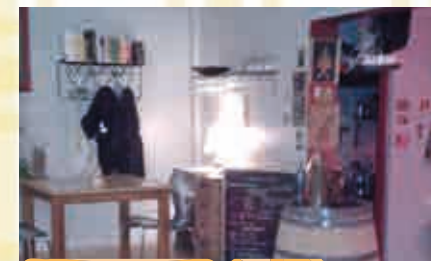
Run by Yvon, who delights in speaking English as well as Catalan, you can find AL REC tucked away beside the church in the tiny commune of TRESSERRE - not far from Tordères and Fourques.

The focal point of the village for the locals - particularly at the weekends and also on themed evenings throughout the year, you can eat in or out and enjoy good, plain seasonal fresh food including a number of Catalan specialties.

The 3-course set menu costs just **13,90€** and changes regularly. For example serrano ham salad, followed by beef kebab with home-made chips and a tasty, home-made escalivade (marinated tomatoes, onions & aubergines), rounded

off with a refreshing cherry sorbet and chunks of galia melon.

Staples include omelettes (using 3 x farm-fresh eggs) with green side salad, a selection of baguette-style sandwiches and the unforgettable 'Burger AL REC' with those real home-made chips again just like grandma used to make ... there are also details of other dishes dotted around on tiny blackboards (no menus here!) according to the season.



AL REC

2 rue des Placettes-TRESSERRE

04 68 08 72 52 - AL REC

DID YOU KNOW

Count the Cherries!

There are about 7,000 cherries on an average cherry tree, with each tree capable of producing more than 100 pounds of fruit in a season. (Well! Go on then! *Count them and prove me wrong!!*)

Word origins

Did you know that the word 'vinegar' comes from the French 'vin aigre', meaning bitter or sour wine, so named when it was accidentally discovered that wine, left undisturbed, turns into vinegar (and goes down a treat on your chips!)?

OUT for THE DAY



Restaurant
REVIEWS

with
Andrew Webber

A DRIVE, A VIEW, A LUNCH!

Can Mach, Tapis

Tapis is a tiny hamlet of perhaps 12 houses, and one enormous restaurant, just over the border in Spain high in the mountains north of Girona.

Frankly you're not going to stumble on this place by chance but if you fancy a day out driving in the mountains, this is a wonderful place to stop for lunch.



Coustouges

Head up the Vallespir from Céret towards Prats de Mollo (D115), taking the left turn after Can Partère signposted Figueres (D3). The road winds and winds higher and higher, passing through Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans, home of the famous Toiles du Soleil traditional Catalan fabric factory, shop and museum, and finally reaches the peak at the sleepy village of Coustouges. (Explore the maze of narrow streets and find the tiny church with huge thick doors where the villagers found sanctuary from marauders, and the tower with enormous views.)

About an hour's drive from Céret, the views are beautiful. In bad weather it's a long slog and just not worth it.

Just past Coustouges, start the descent into Spain with a good wide road and a huge open vista over the mountains towards Girona and Barcelona. Breathtaking views.



5

CANMACH

TAPIS

After five minutes you arrive at Tapis. You can hardly miss the restaurant as it takes up 50% of the place – a large new building with huge windows to make the most of the scenery. Most of the dining is indoors but there are tables outside on the terrace.

The restaurant is huge – over 100 covers – and it's packed, mostly with diners coming up from the Spanish side. You'd better book because it's a very long way to go to find there's no room.

The traditional Catalan food is simple, tasty, filling and rustic. Basically they serve only one thing – MEAT! Roasted or grilled, with chips. Vegetarians stay away.

The meal also comes with a dish of what they call aioli but looks more like crushed garlic with a little oil added – wonderfully hot and peppery flavour but no kissing for 5 days after!

There's a selection of starters but the portions are large so you might consider sharing. There's *Pa amb tomaquet* with anchovies or Serrano ham, assorted salads, various omelettes, rice dishes, snails, melon & ham, amongst others.

For mains there's lamb and pork chops, entrecôte steak, shoulder of lamb, chicken, rabbit and wild boar. The lamb chops were plentiful and very tasty, the steak was an inch thick and covered half the plate, the wild boar (casseroled) was a generous portion and full of flavour.

There are numerous fairly typical deserts both

home-made and bought in. Our party of six had 3 courses, plenty of drinks including cava, and a few coffees and the bill came to **26 € per head**.

As an extra treat there's a small supermarket under the restaurant which sells a wide variety of Spanish produce, wines and spirits, wines from the cask etc etc. There's also accommodation if you wanted to stay over – see website for details.

After lunch you can return the same way or press on into Spain down to Figueres and join the motorway home.



www.canmach.com

Open 7 days, food served from 12-4 and 7-10.
Carretera Tapis, 26, Maçanet de Cabrenys,
Girona, Spain

T: 0034 972 54 42 21 /0034 972 54 33 11

Views on road

FOOD & DRINK

P-O RECIPES

Asparagus Soup with Helen Ferrieux

INGREDIENTS FOR 2 PEOPLE

- Jar of asparagus (small dark green ones are tastiest - keep a couple of tops for decoration)
- 1/2 chicken stock cube
- 50 g butter
- 75 g flour
- 3/4 litre hot water seasoning.

METHOD

Make a roux, add liquid from jar of asparagus, add sufficient hot water for 2 hungry people. Simmer 5 mins. Chop up asparagus keeping a spot for deco. If possible pulverise them. Add to simmering water & bring to almost boiling point, stirring. Adding a little light cream (12% or 18%) makes it absolutely sublime! Decorate with remaining bits of asparagus. My son's Ma-in-law drops in bits of cooked chicken but I don't think it's necessary. Tell your guests you picked the wild asparagus in the fields.

Nettle Risotto

P-O RECIPES

We have all fallen into a patch of stinging nettles, haven't we?

Les ortilles. They are local, they are fresh, they are free - and they are particularly rich in vitamin C and iron. In medieval times, they were used to treat pain in joints, and as a diuretic.

And you have probably got more than you want growing near you! Fortunately, cooking removes the sting so you won't be wandering round with tongue rash - just wear gloves when picking them fresh *et tout va bien qui finit bien*.

Pick them in early spring when they are fresh and young, taking just the first few leaves on each spear.

If you don't fancy eating the leaves themselves,

make a tonic by bringing the leaves to the boil in a saucepan of water. Simmer for 15 minutes and add sugar or honey to taste. Drink hot or refrigerate and drink later with ice on a warm day.

Use the leaves in the same way that you would cook spinach: wilted and buttered as a simple side dish, or added to soups or Indian saag paneer for example.



INGREDIENTS FOR 2 PEOPLE

- 1/4 pound young nettles
- 11 oz risotto rice
- 2 leeks or 1 onion, cleaned and chopped small
- 2 Tablespoons butter or olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 6 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 1 oz grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Heat stock in large saucepan and blanch nettle leaves for 2 minutes in boiling salted water, drain and chop very finely. Cook leeks/onions in a separate pan in half the butter until tender. Add blanched nettles and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring. Add rice and cook over a slightly higher heat for 2 minutes while stirring. Pour in the wine. Cook, uncovered, until all the wine has evaporated, then add 1 cup hot stock. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally and adding 1/2 cup boiling stock at intervals as the liquid is absorbed into the rice. After about 14 - 15 minutes, take off heat and stir in the remaining butter. Sprinkle with the freshly grated Parmesan cheese. Add salt and pepper to taste, stirring gently.

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DID YOU KNOW



Easter. "Goigs dels ous"

Dating back to the Middle Ages, the "goigs dels ous" (or joie des oeufs) are traditional Easter songs, ancient hymns sung by choirs in traditional Catalan costume, signaling a return to life after the sadness of winter. Solemn choirs would wander

the streets at night, and whole families would stand in their doorways and listen in fervent silence to the religious 'goigs'. **The eggs of the title were a symbol of the rebirth, the resurrection.**

Traditionally, the bachelor of the choir would carry a "cistella" a basket for contributions of eggs, black pudding, charcuterie, wine.....

ensuring that the singers would end up with everything they needed to cook up an Easter omelette the next day. Villagers would give these gifts in thanks for the music.





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arbequina awarded Le Bib Gourmand

In 1900 the Michelin tyre company launched its first guidebook to encourage road travel around France. Today, the Michelin Star is a hallmark of fine dining, and status.

But great food doesn't always come at affordable prices, so the Michelin Bib Gourmand was launched. The award highlights restaurants offering exceptional food at moderate prices... and was recently awarded to the Arbequina in Thuir.



Més que un restaurant

Young chef Guillaume has trained with some of the top Perpignan chefs, and it shows! Fresh, light and sunny cuisine, predominantly Mediterranean, inspired by olive oil - thoughtful, imaginative but uncomplicated, with plenty of colourful vegetables.

One to watch!



21, rue de la République, 66300 Thuir
04 68 34 46 64//arbequina@hotmail.fr



OUT for THE DAY

at La Ferme du Bonheur, Argelès

please help!

"When I worked as voluntary investigator for a public animal shelter, I saw so much suffering, so many terrible things, that I simply HAD to take action."

Marc Lorenzo, founder and President

La Ferme du Bonheur is a sanctuary for old, abandoned, or abused animals. This non-profit organization was founded in 2002. Currently more than a hundred animals live on the premises, among them horses, donkeys, goats, sheep, pigs, rabbits, geese, ducks, dogs, cats, a bull and a wild boar.

Marc Lorenzo and Catherine Canal work non stop, alongside kind volunteers. A holiday or even a weekend off is out of the question. The budget is financed by membership fees, donations, and the proceeds of jumble sales, soirées-chanson and photo exhibitions. It is supported by numerous friends, sponsors and partners, among them La Fondation Brigitte Bardot - but it suffers from financial worries.

Animal food and vet's bills have to be paid. It's a great cause to support but it's also a fun family outing with or without the kids.

Make a day of it by taking a delightful half hour stroll up the road to hermitage Notre Dame de Vie, and ancient chapel Saint-Jérôme, with massive views of the Roussillon plain and the Med.

Visit the statue of St Hélène, offered to the parish in the 19th century when grandmother Rebardi of Mas Larrieu was accidentally shot in the leg, later to be amputated. She vowed to offer a statue to the parish if she survived - which she did - and the terracotta St Hélène was built and placed in Notre Dame del Prats in Argelès in 1910. By the 1970s, our lady statue was no longer wanted in the Argelès church, and was handed back to the original family. After years spent in the corner of a garage, she found a new home in Notre Dame de Vie.



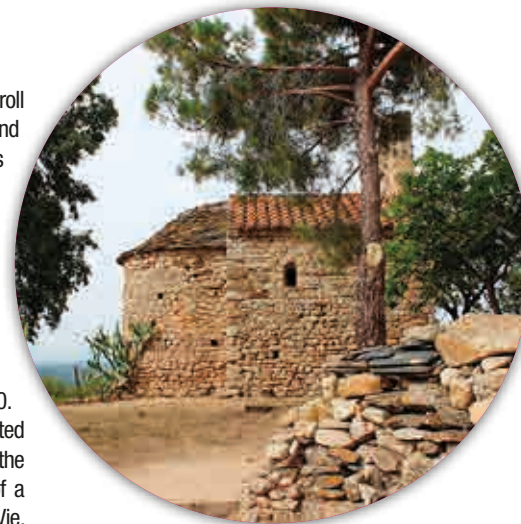
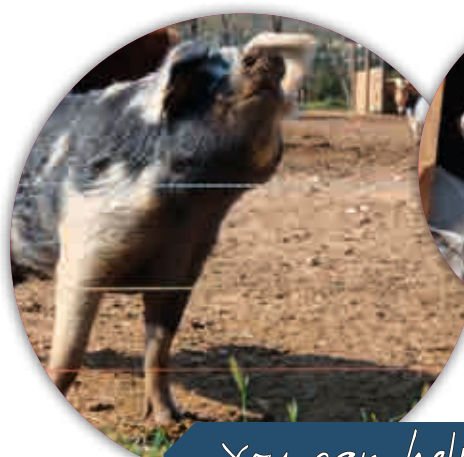
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- Donate regularly by standing order
- Donate supplies (animal food, material for shelters, maintenance, office supplies etc.)
- Sponsor an animal or a habitat (on request)



BARCELONA

BAR
SKY
WAVE

CITY OF SECRETS!

I'm assuming you've already gasped at the **Parc Güell**, gazed at Gaudi, stared at the **Sagrada Família**, and marvelled at Miró. For me the charm of Barcelona is to be found in its more homely treasures, on foot or by its efficient public transport system. The best way to arrive is by train, either the fast line from Perpignan, or, for an authentic frontier crossing experience (think spy novels), take the train round the coast. You can't buy a through ticket, but must spend half an hour in limbo in Cerbère, in the underground ticket hall, or gazing out across endless lines of disused tracks which once made up one of the busiest rail hubs in Europe. On joining the Spanish train, an armed frontier guard will minutely scrutinise your passport, then grin broadly and welcome you to Catalunya.

The train rattles along a scenic coastline of sandy coves and inlets to **Figueres**, where it picks up speed and gets you to **Barcelona** in an hour or so. Get off at **Passeig de Gràcia**, more central and less frantic than Sants. From here the fast and efficient metro will take you anywhere you want, so buy a T-10 travel card, having chosen a hotel in a location like the Raval, or Eixample, away from the noise of the main drags. Arrive on a Friday evening to give you plenty of time to explore, or, since Barcelona's airports may be the only option for flights to the UK at certain times of the year, add it to a holiday.

Get up early on Saturday morning and fortify yourself for sight seeing by a visit to **La Donuteria**, Carrer Parlament (metro: Poble Sec).

This tiny twelve seater hole in the wall café is a real one off. The proprietor, Richard, is a tall American hipster who designs and makes his own artisan donuts, each one an art form

in itself – you'll want to be photographed with them! Not to be missed. Roll on down past the magnificent **Sant Antoni market building**, still in the process of restoration. Temporarily, the stalls stretch down both sides of the street, and the tiny vibrant café won't disappoint. This market is every bit as good as **La Boqueria**, which you will soon pass – if you do



©MariaDias

La donuteria

go inside, please buy something! The market traders say that it has become a backdrop for



Mercat de Sant Antoni

selfies rather than shopping, and its future is in doubt. A little way along Sant Antoni, you will find the tiny **Carrer de la Cera** (candle makers' street. Look in the window of number 7, Granja Puy. A fascinating antique shop? No, it's a private house, but it's worth ringing the bell if you fancy something in the window.



Mercat de Sant Antoni

Passing through Raval, walk down its own modest Rambla, and stop to admire the statue of the cat. There is a lot to see in the Raval, but you have to look carefully. For instance, **on the wall of 17 Carrer de les Ramelleres (metro: Liceu) is a small hole, actually a pivoting window, known as el torn dels orfes (the orphans' hole),** where unwanted babies used to be left in the care of the nuns. It was in use until 1931.

Follow Carrer de Sant Pau and you are in el **Barri Gòtic**, the oldest part of the city. At **Carrer de Marlet in El Call**, the ancient Jewish Quarter, you can go down into the remains of the Main Synagogue, dating from the 1st century. It is tiny, as synagogues were not allowed to exceed 60 square metres. The streets are narrow here and

the buildings almost meet overhead, **but if you look carefully you can see the symbols and names of the ancient medieval guilds on the walls.**

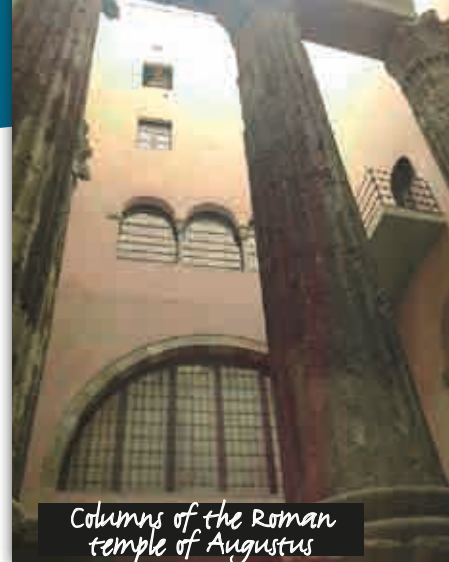
The Plaça Nova (metro: Jaume I) opposite the Cathedral is a good place to begin following the Roman walls of the city on which Barcelona was



Synagogue

built. The remains of the aqueducts are visible and just **one of the sixty six towers is still standing.** But even these well preserved ruins don't prepare you for stumbling on one of the city's best kept secrets. Close by, at the end of the Carrer Paradis is a medieval building: go through its gate into a courtyard and **come face to face with four columns of the Roman temple of Augustus.** They are nine metres tall and date from the first century. They appear to be perfectly integrated with the houses they flank.

Time for lunch! No shortage of small local eating places here, **or head north up the Via Laietana to the Palau de Musica Catalana.** Eat at the café, then take the tour of this art nouveau concert hall with its fabulously decorated auditorium. Make sure you get there in time for some sunlight to be showing the coloured glass windows to maximum advantage **(metro: Urquinaona).**



Columns of the Roman temple of Augustus

You're in Eixample now, and a couple of blocks away in the Carrer d'Arago is **The Spy Shop (metro: Passeig de Gràcia).** You will want your picture taken with the model outside.

Stroll around the streets between here and Avinguda Diagonal, appreciating the facades of buildings like the **Casa Granell**, and finish up in the gardens of **Torre de las Aguas, Carrer de Roger de Lluria (metro: Girona).** Time to head back to the hotel and look for a dinner spot? Small restaurants off the main streets with a handwritten tapas menu outside will give the best value.

The place to be on Sunday is Barceloneta, once a fishing village and now the city's playground. But first take the **funicular up to Montjuïc (Metro: Paral·lel).** Continue on the cable car up to the castle and make a quick turn around it. Gaze out across the Mediterranean over the container terminal, watch a passenger liner sweeping in to the new port, and a plane coming in over the fields of vegetables to land at El Prat. (Note how the cable car continues on, inching dizzily out over the sea, for a future trip). Make your way back down the hill through the gardens, **first stopping for a coffee at the restaurant Martinez**, whose terrace gives one of the best view points in town. Spreading over the slope to your right is an impressive sight – the Necropolis, or city of the dead. Laid out neatly like a miniature housing



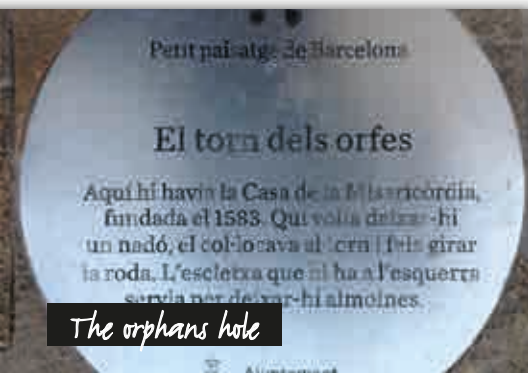
La torre de les Aigües



Cable car



views from restaurant Martinez



The orphans hole

Museu Maritim



estate, the nichos, or burial boxes, are stacked six high in 'streets' of well manicured stones and statuary. The trees are symbolic and have been specially chosen.

At the bottom of the slope, head for the Museu Maritim (Metro: Drassanes). The museum isn't large, but it is magnificent. Most notable of its exhibits is a **full size replica of a 16th century royal galley**, the flagship at the battle of Lepanto. In the garden is a replica of the **first submarine, made out of wood by Narcis Monturiol**, and resembling a barrel, possibly because his father was a barrel maker.

From here, **cross the Rambla and follow the port round to Barceloneta** and the sea front and take in the free entertainment: it could be a sandcastle Taj Mahal, complete with running water and a real fire, slack wire acts strung between two palm trees, a sousa band, jugglers, rope tricks – the world and his wife are here, skate boarding, roller blading, walking their dogs, eating and drinking, and having fun. There are numerous lunch opportunities along the beach walk.

When you reach **the Fish**, a massive piece of sculpture by Frank Gehry, designed for the Olympics in 1992 - you can't miss it - **turn inland and take the tram, up past the zoo to the Parc de la Ciutadella.** Here you will find the elegant



The fish



Ciutadella. Castell de Tres Dragons

Castell de Tres Dragons among the fountains and waterfalls, plus a statue of a giant mammoth, bubble blowers, a boating lake, acrobats practising, balloon sellers, and on the bandstand – unless you are very unlucky – a tap dance troupe rehearsing their act, or something similar.

When you leave the park, walk back west along the **Carrer de la Princesa**, looking in the wonderful shop windows as the lights begin to come on. This is **El Born**, and it will return you to the Plaça de Sant Jaume, where, in a back street behind the cathedral, if you are lucky you may hear Marina, an opera singer, busking. Her voice wouldn't be out of place in any opera house in the world. It's a magical experience, a good way to finish the day before you get the train home.

A WORD ABOUT SAFETY:

Barcelona is no more dangerous than any other big city – but it's no safer either. Because the atmosphere is so relaxed, it's easy to forget that professional thieves operate in groups here as everywhere else. Keep change in your pockets for street performers to avoid getting your wallet out and showing everyone what you've got. Remember, you look like a tourist. And don't take your eyes off your bags on the train. If you remember those rules, you can relax and enjoy this most beautiful and friendliest of cities. I know I did.



LE CHEMIN DE L'EXIL



Retirada

Maureillas to La Vajol

In these uneasy times of increased security and border controls, it's rather nice to go off the beaten track, avoid the crowds, and slip across the French Spanish border amidst magnificent scenery. Don't necessarily assume you won't run into a gendarme or two, but you certainly won't get stuck in long traffic queues - as long as we keep it between ourselves of course!

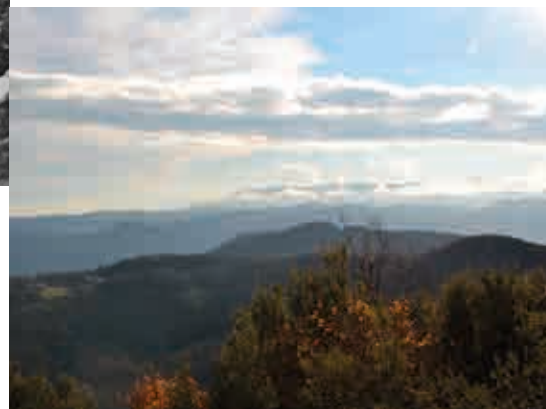
Our day starts in **Maureillas**, pretty Catalan village off the D9 Le Boulou - Le Perthus road. Surrounded by cork oaks, there is an interesting museum, unique in Europe, dedicated to cork, the main village industry in the past. From tree to finished cork, there are videos, ancient machines and tools, mini-sculptures in cork, cork art and furniture. and the biggest cork in the world, 2.4 m high with a diamètre of 1.3 m. Love to meet the bottle of wine that fits the cork!!



From the centre of **Maureillas**, just after the cork museum, take the D13, following signs for Las Illas, as you wind ever upwards amidst stunning scenery.

Eyes left as you pass La Clapère nudist camp on the right.

Cross a bridge with the option of turning left for the tiny village of **Riunogues** with a minute IX century church and a restaurant reputed for its plentiful plates of hearty Catalan food at very reasonable prices. Maybe on the way back? For now, we continue towards **Las Illas**, a great starting point for some fantastic and panoramic mountain walks, in the tracks of the Trabucaires.



In the 19th century, Don Carlos wanted to take over the throne from regent Marie-Christine. He called for the reintroduction of ancient salic law, excluding women from inheritance to thrones and titles. War broke out between his supporters, the Carlists, and supporters of the Regent, the Christinos.

The Carlist army terrorized the Vallespir, and from this army were born the Trabucaires: smugglers, bandits and highwaymen armed with trabucs (muskets).

Based in and around Las Illas, for its easy-to-hide caves, and mountain tracks, and its great smuggling opportunities, they were finally arrested at Corsavy and executed in Céret and Perpignan in 1846.

Up and up to **Las Illas**, second most southerly village in France after **Lamanère**. *Don't forget to be nice to your driver - he or she will be too busy concentrating on the narrow winding road to enjoy the fabulous views! And if you're in the back.well, hang on to your breakfast. It's not far now!*



memorial monument at las illas

Arriving at the entrance to **Las Illas**, you can take a break - public loos and even a public shower are available next to the bus stop and memorial at the entrance. Have a wander around the sleepy hamlet, or lunch at the aptly named restaurant, **Hostal dels Trabucaires**, historical shelter for Spanish Republicans fleeing Franco's Spain, and Jews and allied airmen escaping the German occupation in France.

You could take a right and head up to **Fontfrède** (to be explored another day) or back down to Céret, but today, we will turn left at the road next to the memorial signed **La Vajol**, our destination.



OUT for THE DAY

Maureillas
to La Vajol



Follow the sign around a hairpin bend to the right, with super Las Illas on your left. Three point turn skills could be required here, followed by another even sharper left hand turn onto a dirt track. Hard work over. Continue up the track - a few lumps and bumps but most vehicles will cope easily.

Suddenly the track comes out into a wide open space, the **Col de Manrell**, with an interesting if rather incongruous pyramid monument, Temple de la Paix, dedicated to Luis Companys, President of Catalonia from 1934.



Temple de la Paix

When Franco came to power, Companys fled to occupied France where he was arrested by the Gestapo and sent back to Spain. On Franco's orders, he was tortured, beaten and executed for treason.

The road widens and improves as you cross into Spain. Wooden viewing platforms allow you to gaze over more breathtaking mountain scenery towards

La Jonquera, although it's not too easy to find an off-road parking place if you just want a quick photo.

Better to park a little further on in the large carpark of the restaurant and **hotel Manrella**. Good, simple and well priced Catalan fayre, a great stop if you're 'en famille', with a pool for an avant lunch dip, and a play area for the kids - *but beware the animal heads nailed to the walls if taxidermy isn't your thing!*



viewing Platform

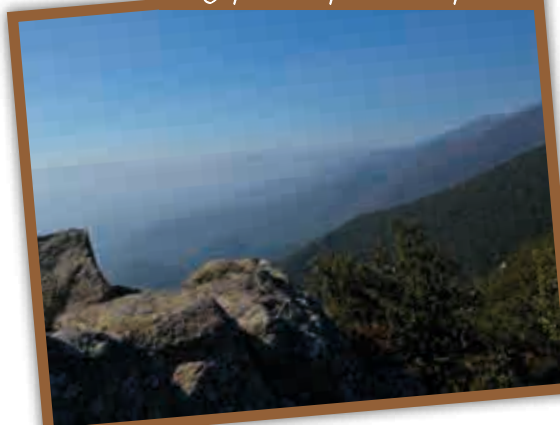
If you're not ready for lunch, retrace your steps 100 yards to follow signs on the left to the **Coll de Li**, the original 'Chemin de l'Exil'. After a gentle 30 minute climb, turn right after the stone Mas and step through a gate and back into France! Here, you find another



monument, this time a rather unexciting stone plaque on land grazed by wide eyed, peaceful cows. These gentle ladies watch over this indelible route, trudged by thousands of exhausted and frozen refugees in the winter of 39, as well as three fleeing presidents; Luis Companys, Manuel Azaña of Spain, and José Aguirre of the Basques.

Returning to the stone Mas, you can turn right and continue up the trail for a further 30 minutes until you arrive at a rocky peak on your left, perfect for a panoramic picnic, or head back to the car for the short drive to **La Vajol**.

Rocky peak for panoramic picnic



Just before the pretty village, park in the carpark on your left and take the track above, leading quickly to an amazing bronze sculpture raised up on rocks, in a strangely scruffy clearing.



Mariano Gracia and his daughter Alicia (1939)

The Gracias family crossed the border with thousands of other refugees, fleeing Franco's forces. Dutch photographer Roger Violet, took a photo of father Mariano Gracia, supporting his 6 year old, one legged daughter Alicia along the gruelling route over into France.

The couple were later immortalised in bronze.

OUT for THE DAY

Maureillas
to La Vajol



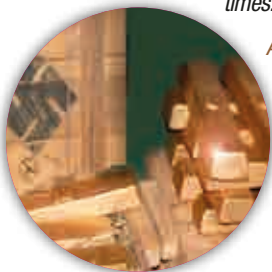
Mines at la Vajol

Back to the car park and left into the village, look out for the interesting mining sculpture on the right. The villagers of **La Vajol** mined talcum powder for many years.

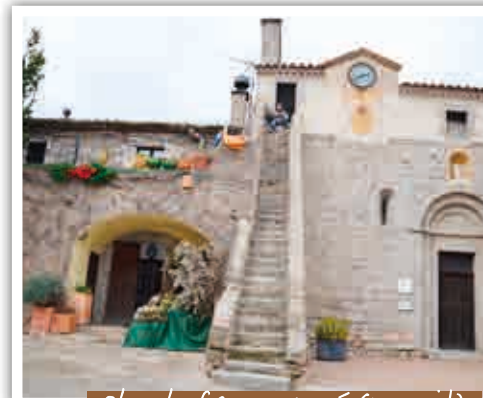
Today the mines are closed but during the Spanish Civil War, they were used to hide and store the treasures of the fallen Spanish Republic, priceless artwork from the Prado museum and around 500 million dollars in gold ingots.

According to legend, in 1939, seven lorries carrying the gold bars left La Vajol, heading for the nearest port. Only six arrived. Eyewitnesses stated seeing the lorry around Argelès where it was suggested that the drivers had buried it in the sand, awaiting better times.

Always take a bucket and spade to the beach!



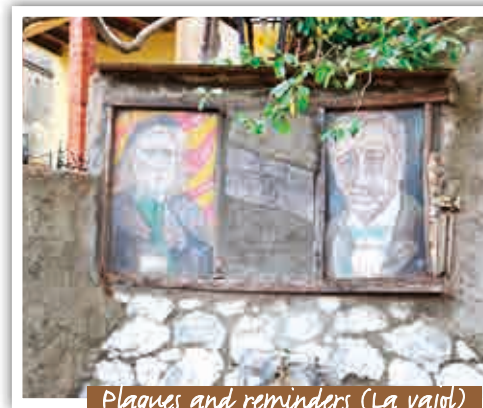
Opposite the mining sculpture, climb the ancient steps towards the plaça. We ate an excellent lunch at the **Casa Comaulis** on the right. Tasty, cheap and clean, friendly service and highly recommended. They also provide basic accommodation.



Church of Sant Martí (La Vajol)



streets (La vajol)



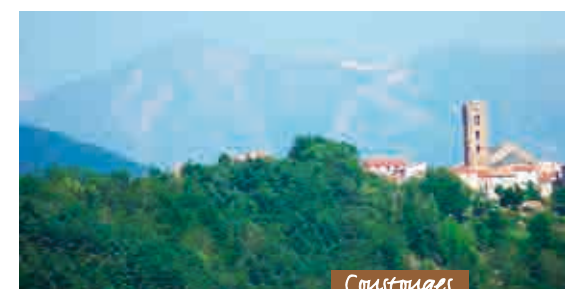
Plaques and reminders (La vajol)

Straight on to the **Romanesque church of Sant Martí de La Vajol** with its steep exterior steps, a fascinating feature, and turning right after the church, arrive back onto the main through road, at the third restaurant, the **Ca la Conxita**, with a little shop selling local produce. *You certainly won't starve in La Vajol!*

Back down the hill to the car park, from where you can continue to explore nearby Spanish villages such as pretty **Maçanet de Cabrenys**, make the long looping journey back into France via **Coustouges**, (see p 24) drive back on the main road via **La Jonquera** and **Le Perthus**, or retrace your steps back to Maureillas.



Maçanet de Cabrenys



Coustouges

*salut!
i Que tinguis
un bon dia!*

(We won't wish you Adeu. Catalan Republicans would be more likely to use the less religious 'Salut' instead.)

IT'S FUN, IT'S FREE, IT'S SPRING TIME IN Canet

by Canet
en Roussillon

A modern, purpose-built seaside resort, a pretty village with narrow, cobbled streets, ancient château and remnants of ancient walls, built to protect the villagers from marauding pirates.

With the iconic Canigou ever present in the distance, Canet provides the perfect backdrop for a range of thrilling activities for the young, the not so young, and those somewhere in the middle!

Fabulous walking, riding and cycling for every level through the surrounding nature reserve, carefully preserved fishermen's reed huts, aquarium, arboretum, bird-watching, windsurfing, a long and gloriously sandy beach, plenty of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants. ...and a varied spring and summer events programme. Great fun – and it's practically all free!

Take a look at some of the highlights.

For more details on any of the events ...
CANET TOURIST OFFICE
www.ot-canet.fr Tel. +33 (0)4 68 86 72 00

5th May FESTI'MAR

Port (FREE)

Shiver me timbers! Festive fun, films, games and treasure hunt aboard 'Le Galion' – and keep an eye out for those pirates! Ar Jim Lad! For the landlubbers, there'll be sea-related market stalls on terra firma – and a tavern or two.



7th & 8th May FÊTE DE LA VICTOIRE

Théâtre de la Mer (FREE)

Over 100 period military vehicles, a carefully reconstructed military encampment, vehicle parades through the streets, and hundreds of 'extras' dressed in period costume wandering the streets. Period 'bal' (8th) in the afternoon with dancing to the Grand Orchestre Big Band, playing the great Glen Miller classics.

13th - 15th May WAKE AIR CONTEST

Port (FREE)

Two day event with introduction, demos, free trials and competition of wake board, kite surfing and stand up paddle. The best French and international riders come together to compete, and qualified instructors are on site to show you how it's done and get you up on the water.



15th May

BOUTEILLES A LA MER

Air du Mas (See Tourist Office for cost)

A morning stroll around the Canet vineyards, with music and tastings, followed by lunch and wines based on a sea theme, and prepared by 3 great chefs, Toques Blanches du Roussillon. New Orleans style music with 'Tweezers Dixye Stomp'.



28th - 29th May FISE XPERIENCE

Espace Méditerranée (FREE)

International extreme Sports Festival. Thrills and spills in this exciting festival bringing together the best of Europe's BMX and skate board champions, and a chance to try them out yourself

Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough!



7th-8th June INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING MEET

Centre de Natation
Ariette Franco
(See Tourist Office for cost)

More than 500 swimmers from 21 countries, many of them National and World champions, meet up for one of the last contests before the Olympic Games in Rio.



There's More...

19th - 29th April

FESTI'KIDS - Activities for the kids (FREE)

Painting, pottery, craft workshops and circus workshop, sandcastle competition.

19th June

MARCHE DU TERROIR CATALAN - Espace Méditerranée
Support the small local producers. Catalan colour provided by local dancers.

**POP INTO THE TOURIST OFFICE
TO FIND OUT ALL ABOUT THE**

**GREAT WALKS AND GUIDED VISITS
IN AND AROUND CANET**

Letting go of love

By **MJ Keevil**...

*Reviewed by
Claire Gallaway*



'Letting go of love' could be described as an Edwardian love story seen through 20th century eyes. But it is certainly more, much more. It's a compellingly-told tale of love and loss, alongside harrowing factual details of life in the trenches.

The author, who lives in le 66, writes of her own family's history and their lives in England and on the Front in the first World War. As indeed for many of us, life in the Pyrenees-Orientales allows creativity to flourish. Many will already follow Marian's writings about her home in Céret (check these out weekly on our website at www.anglophone-direct.com) and thus will be attracted to this, her first book.

The characters are based on Marian's grandparents and the stories told by her mother. The story is told from different perspectives, through letters, musings, and the views and passing comments of many characters. For Maudie's family, kind and supportive to each other, daily life was harsh, money in short supply, work necessary and relentless. In Sam's family, however, there is political awareness. We learn about union activities and Sam's conscientious objection to the war. The fight of suffragettes is a strand revealed through the activities of his two sisters.

A short review cannot do justice to the richness of this detailed and skilfully-crafted narrative, and neither does the blurb. The author's achievement is considerable in uniting so many strands in this fairly demanding but rewarding read. This reviewer has read it twice, and not too many books are interesting enough for a second read. I loved the way the Edwardian era was captured with many details, some harrowing, always heartfelt. In brief, an excellent book to enthrall and indeed inform. 'Letting go of love' is a readable and moving story where fact and fiction, and personal and political perspectives are beautifully woven together - a highly recommended read.

Available on
Amazon.co.uk and **Amazon.fr**
(English lang only)



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*except Mon lunch-times



What's in those blooming mountains?

By "The Warblers"



Gentian



"The Warblers" are a group of natural history enthusiasts based in the P-O.

For more blogs and photos, or if you'd like to contact them, visit www.mediterraneanpyrenees.com You can follow them on Twitter @66warblers

It's all go! Migrant birds are returning from their winter homes and mammals are getting frisky; reptiles are emerging and bugs are flying. There are territories to be claimed and defended, mates to attract, nests to build, burrows to renovate, young to feed. And the backdrop to this frenetic activity is a landscape transformed into countless shades of green.

Wild flowers are springing up too, but some of the prettiest go unseen because they're too high to reach easily. However, those in one area of foothills to the immediate east of Canigou are accessible without an arduous climb.

You approach the spot via Corsavy (beyond Céret and Arles-sur-Tech) and follow the signs to La Tour de Batère. By the time you reach the car park you're close to the tree-line, at about 1,500m. Well worth taking a picnic and making a day of it.

From here you can walk along the completely flat track to the tower itself, gently climb Puig St Pierre and Puig de L'Estelle, or aim for the much more serious ridges of Canigou.

Grazing by sheep, cattle and ponies keeps the grass down and restricts the regrowth of trees and shrubs, which is good news for wildflowers.



Of course it's impossible to predict how long the snow will last but quite early on we've seen vivid gentians and, in a few damp places, the sunny marsh marigolds.

There are many others to look out for, though – from wild pansies, primulas, orchids and yellow pasqueflowers, to the extraordinary flat thistles (which last almost for ever) and, in the woods below, the lovely lime green hellebores will soon appear.



Marsh marigold



Mouse-ear or type of saxifrage



Hellebore

NATURALLY



Another variety of Gentian

QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST?

Gentian > *Gentiane*
 Hellebore > *Hellébore*
 Marsh marigold > *Pouplage des marais*
 Mouse-ear > *Céraiste commun*
 Orchid > *Orchidée*
 Pansy > *Pensée*
 Saxifrage > *Saxifrage*
 Thistle > *Chardon*
 Marmot > *Marmotte*
 Alpine chough > *Chocard à bec jaune*
 Golden Eagle > *Aigle royal*
 Griffon Vulture > *Vautour fauve*
 Pipit > *Pipit*
 Skylark > *Alouette des champs*
 Wheatear > *Traquet motteux*

The short-turfed slopes leading to the ridge above the watchtower are equally ideal for a creature we always hope to see: the marmot. They hang out in family groups and can usually be spotted in areas where there are obvious holes, as if made by large rabbits. If you approach very slowly and quietly, you can get good views – especially if you're upwind of them.

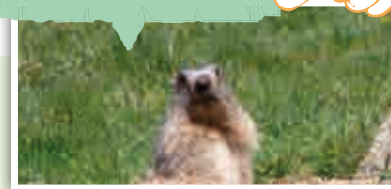


They are surprisingly bulky rodents (apparently regarded as large squirrels!), but quite wary, constantly on the lookout for predators (there are golden eagles about!). Their sharp, almost whistling alarm call can be heard a considerable distance away.



Last spring we watched a very playful couple that even indulged in some gentle boxing before rolling down the hill in a tangle of fur.

DID YOU KNOW



In cold winters older male marmot offspring help keep younger siblings warm. Aw!

You might also glimpse the resident flock of lively, chatty alpine choughs (like crows but with yellow bills), and small birds, such as skylarks, pipits and wheatears* (instantly recognisable by their white rumps when they fly).

DID YOU KNOW

*Wheatear is the PC name Victorians gave this bird. The original derives from Old English: *hwit* = white and *ærs* = bottom. It's a Whitearse!

And once on that ridge, on a clear day your reward is a stunning three-hundred-and-sixty-degree view towards Spain, the Med, the Corbières and Canigou.

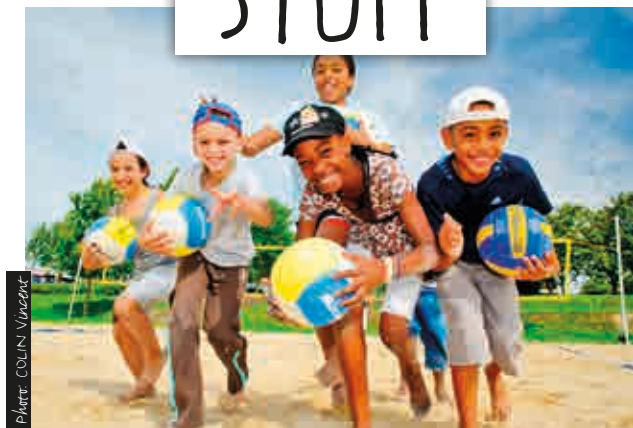
After your picnic, if it's warm, it's easy to lie back and soak up the peace as well as the sunshine. An added benefit of this is that wildlife is more likely to appear and approach if you keep still and quiet. Stay like that too long, though, and you might attract a squadron of griffon vultures. Huge, impressive and totally silent, they soar overhead – just checking if you've turned into lunch for them!



WHAT'S ABOUT?

Lots of exciting migrants – too many to list! A tramontane will force them to fly lower, so they're easier to spot. Check out www.migration.net for daily sightings at Etang Canet-St-Nazaire by the Groupe Ornithologique du Roussillon.

UCPA IT'S KID'S STUFF



FANCY GETTING RID OF THE KIDS?

Angels or devils, we love 'em to bits... but there comes a time when the grown ups need to stop being Mum, Dad, Gran and Gramps for a while, and turn back into normal human beings - a cold glass of beer or two, a bit of risqué conversation, a few naughty jokes... and that's where UCPA comes in!

Based in Saint Cyprien and Port Barcarès, this well established sport and leisure group provides closely supervised and exciting land and water based courses for children from 6 - 15+, as well as water sports tuition and equipment rental for adults.

Just opt for a morning or afternoon session if your little monster prefers to spend his or her

time 'en famille' ... but for young thrill seekers, full days and full weeks are available - and boy, are they full!

From archery, horse riding, karting, canyoning and kayaking to street dance, beach games, mini golf, tennis, stand up paddle, tree rope courses, sailing....(pause for breath before we turn blue).....and even scale model making, activities



available are varied and exciting experiences they'll never forget. Many of the activities take part in their own purpose built centre, a 'parc' of 3 hectares with heated pool, a short walk from the beach.

Instructors are experienced and well qualified in both childcare and sport leadership, and they all have enough English to handle any problems that might arise from the language - but what a great language learning and social experience it is as well.

Activities are geared first and foremost to having fun - but also to encouraging, motivating, challenging, and most importantly, building up confidence. It is a chance to make new friends of all nationalities, and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Et bien sûr, c'est la France.... so if you choose the full day option, don't expect a sarnie for lunch. Oh noooo.....a three course meal served up in an 'all you can eat' style buffet of starters, main course and dessert will fuel 'em up big time for the adventures ahead.

AND WHILE THE KIDS ARE AWAY, THE PARENTS CAN PLAY....

St Cyprien is very much a family resort. Cafes and restaurants allow a lazy port side lunch, a lengthy apero, or a romantic dinner as the sun dips down behind the boats, and melts like mercury into the still waters of the Marina - and the children snore quietly, with secret smiles, and dream of what has gone and what is still to come.



Take a wander around the magnificent flower garden, Le Jardin des Plantes des Capellans, just a five minute stroll from the UCPA centre, where rare roses bloom and peacocks strut amidst fountains, bamboos and local Mediterranean plants.

Or just lie on the golden sands and listen to the waves lapping and the sound of silence.

For strictly watersports, head to their nautical base at Port Barcarès, where you can windsurf, funboard, wakeboard and kitesurf, or take out small catamaran sailing boats, with or without instruction, from just 15 €.

Another delightful resort, with plenty of spots to while away those quiet waiting hours.... and if you're hoping for a bit of wind in your sails, Port Barcarès is one of your best bets.

UCPA
SPORTYOUR
NATURE

UCPA Saint Cyprien

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Phone: 04 68 21 90 95
Web: saintcyprien.ucpa.com
Email: stcyprien@ucpa.asso.fr



OUT for THE DAY

with
katja willemssen

Pretty Perfect P-O Picnics



Even after a mild winter, nothing celebrates spring like a picnic by the sea!

Perched on the edge of the Cap Béar cliffs, a heart-etched wooden table is the perfect place for a spring feast of cold wine, fresh baguette and local *tomme de brébis* cheese.

The Tramontane and Marin winds are known to lambaste this headland, so choose a still day to get the most out of this easy stroll to our well hidden picnic spot. Even better, go at sunset and watch Mother



Nature lavish the Côte Vermeille in reds and golds worthy of Matisse.

To find this little corner of paradise, drive past Port Vendres, following the instructions in the insert below.

Park just before or just after the first no-entry sign. The track leads up to the fort which is a no-go military zone so don't wander up too far!

Built in 1883 to protect the French border, Fort Béar sprawls over the headland, looking more like a tourist attraction than an active commando training centre. It played a key role in protecting the Paulilles ammunitions factory during WWII and still belongs to the military today.

Walk a hundred metres or so along the track and before the next no-entry sign, turn right into a sandy lane. Enjoy a lazy amble through a wonderland of cistus, lavender, gorse, and vineyards bristling with bright green shoots and leaves.

The directions get a little tricky as there are no clear signposts but if you miss one of the markers, don't panic, you can't get lost, and the views are breathtaking from every angle.

After about 15-20 minutes, you will see a private track that goes off to the left and is marked by a cement post

wrapped in red chain. Walk past and soon after, the path forks - stay on the top track. The next marker is a rusted pole on the left that prevents entry to another private path - walk straight past!

A few minutes later, the track forks, head to the right towards the bay of Paulilles. The path will take you seawards between small beach cabins dotted on either side. After a hairpin bend, watch out for the most important marker of all: prickly pear cacti and a ramshackle metal fence that starts a third of the way down the hill.

To the left of this fence is a narrow footpath, partially hidden in spring growth, which leads to the picnic spot. It's a bit of downward scramble but worth every slippery stone!

Take a moment to absorb the seascape in front of you. The bay of Paulilles glistens in the sun, vineyards drape the slopes like intricate patchwork quilts on the other side, and in the distance, the slender Cap Creus peninsula stretches far into the dark blue waters of the Med.



Close to cliffs of jagged schist that fall dizzyingly into the sea, the path splits. **Don't take the "official" signposted way to the right, instead turn left towards the yellow cross marked on a stone at your feet.** Your table awaits just ahead!

Sit on the weatherworn bench, open a bottle of white and raise a glass to the dreamer who dragged railway sleepers to these cliff to build this idyllic picnic table. Romance lies in the carvings of hearts, names and dates etched into the faded wood... but perhaps our intrepid carpenter also left his initials somewhere on its weathered surface? Bon appétit!

A wolf cult, kidnapped child, and the Tour de Massane create high tension in Shepherd's Prayer, a fast-paced thriller set in Collioure.
Available on Amazon



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).



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In the latest of his observations of local golf courses, Simon Bridges travelled to the picturesque Domaine de Falgos estate high up in the Pyrenees.

'Of all the golf courses in all of P.O. this must surely be the most beautiful.'

Not as memorable a line as "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world" but Rick's bar this certainly isn't.

The estate is so stunningly beautiful that it sometimes requires a great deal of concentration to ignore the scenery and try to hit a golf ball accurately. The course is around one thousand metres high up in the Pyrenees and straddles the border between France and Spain; it is a bit of a slog up twisty mountain roads to get there but oh so worthwhile when you emerge through the large iron gates onto the **Falgos** estate.

Male and Female French national Rugby Union Squads have used the grounds as a training camp because of its unique situation and have almost certainly played a round or two of golf after training is over. It must surely have inspired them.



The mountains dominate the area and the remoteness contributes greatly to the allure of **Falgos**.



The pro shop is well stocked, which is just as well because it is a long way to the next golf store!! There are disadvantages to remoteness but the style and comfort of the facilities in this estate more than compensate for them. The level of service is excellent. Details of all amenities can be found on their website as well as the ubiquitous tripadvisor comments.

Younger and fitter golfers will not find walking the course too much of a strain but those of a slightly more mature status would find the hire of a buggy a definite advantage. The tracks between the greens and the next tee have all been refurbished and concreted which makes for an excellent and safe ride. A buggy removes the physical challenge of the variation in heights

of the course and enables the less athletic golfer to concentrate on his game rather than his fitness level.



Each hole presents its own challenge and no two are quite the same. Lizzie certainly has a long way to go on this hole...

The fairways are in excellent condition although many a golfer would say some are too narrow !! Do not expect to finish your game with the same ball you start is the best advice I can give. The pro-shop would be delighted to sell you a few spares... just in case!!

One of the many opportunities for losing a ball is on this hole. If you happen to overshoot the fairway, the bunker is there, but miss that and the mountains are ready to swallow your ball, never to be seen again.



Falgos is high, but as you can see, it is below the tree line and many a golfer has clattered the trees on the side of this avenue. If you manage to stay out of the water and avoid the bunker there is always the dog-leg to make your eventual arrival on the green that bit more problematical !!

Not all the golfers on this course are of the human variety. Here, a clever bit of topiary may be found next to the terrace where a cool beer awaits those who feel they have earned it.

It would be remiss of me not to mention, the hotel, the restaurant, the pool, the spa, the children's area and all the extras that make **Falgos** that extra bit special.

The hotel rooms are lovely and if you are fortunate enough to get one with a view over the golf course, the balcony is where you may well end up enjoying a sundowner.



Falgos is a wonderful complex and I commend it not only to golfers of all standards but to families seeking a special day out.

Airport news...



with
John Fairclough

When I first started compiling this Airline report quite a few years ago, timing for the spring edition of PO Life used to be a knife-edge experience. The copy deadline is end of January, and a number of airlines used to be very tardy in unveiling their summer schedules by then.

Thankfully, due to the airlines trying to steal a march on each other with tempting early booking offers, most of the summer flights are loaded onto websites by Christmas these days.

So, yet again a mixed bag of news for 2016. Nothing to shout about as far as new routes are concerned, but to counterbalance that, no routes have been axed from last summer either.

As always in this edition, please note that, firstly the above frequencies/services are correct as of end Jan 2016, and, secondly they all relate to the Jul to Aug high season. At other times in the Summer schedule (which runs from end Mar to end Oct) frequencies may be lower or not exist at all. For further details, see the airlines' and airports' own websites.

The seemingly endless refurbishment of **PERPIGNAN** airport's terminal drags on, but we are now seeing some fruits of their labours, and I'm assured that it will all be completed in time for the peak season in summer. More disappointingly, there are still no new destinations in the UK /Ire to report, so it's very much 'as you were'.

STANSTED	6x pw	Ryanair
BIRMINGHAM.	2x pw	Ryanair
SOUTHAMPTON.	2x pw	FlyBe
DUBLIN	2xpw	Aer Lingus

Nothing new to report at **CARCASSONNE** either, save to say that Ryanair have moved their Liverpool service to Manchester.

STANSTED	8x pw	Ryanair
MANCHESTER	2x pw	Ryanair
E MIDLANDS	3x pw	Ryanair
DUBLIN	5x pw	Ryanair
CORK	2x pw	Ryanair

A similar story up the road at **BEZIERS**

LUTON	4x pw	Ryanair
BRISTOL	3x pw	Ryanair
MANCHESTER	2x pw	Ryanair
EDINBURGH	2x pw	Ryanair

I'm hopeful that I can run a full report on the new airport facilities at Perpignan in the next edition of PO Life, and just a reminder to let us know here at the magazine if you come across any new services I've not mentioned. Bon voyage!!

MONTPELLIER airport welcomes Aer Lingus back to the fold

GATWICK	6x pw	EasyJet
LUTON	2X pw	EasyJet
LEEDS BFD	2x pw	Ryanair
DUBLIN	2x pw	Aer Lingus

The usual choice at **TOULOUSE** to

HEATHROW	20x pw	British Airways
GATWICK	20x pw	Easy Jet
BRISTOL	5x pw	EasyJet
DUBLIN	5x pw	Aer Lingus

From an unprecedented zero services over winter, to a pretty good selection at **GIRONA** this summer.

STANSTED	5x pw	Ryanair
LUTON	4x pw	Ryanair
BOURNEMOUTH	4x pw	Ryanair
BRISTOL	5x pw	Ryanair
MANCHESTER	3x pw	Ryanair
	2x pw	Thomson
GATWIC	3x pw	Thomson
BIRMINGHAM.	2x pw	Thomson
NEWCASTLE	2x pw	Ryanair
GLASGOW INT.	1x pw	Thomson
DUBLIN	5x pw	Ryanair
CORK	2x pw	Ryanair
KNOCK	2x pw	Ryanair

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...Airport news

The popularity of **BARCELONA** shows no sign of abating, and the main news here is a massive expansion of the UK/Ire services by BA's Spanish budget subsidiary, Vueling. As competition heats up, no fewer than 5 UK airports now have connections with El Prat by 3 or more airlines.

STANSTED	5x pw	Ryanair
LUTON	4x pw	Ryanair
BOURNEMOUTH..	4x pw	Ryanair
BRISTOL	5x pw	Ryanair
MANCHESTER.	3x pw	Ryanair
	2x pw	Thomson
GATWICK	3x pw	Thomson
BIRMINGHAM.	2x pw	Thomson
NEWCASTLE.	2x pw	Ryanair
GLASGOW INT.	1x pw	Thomson
DUBLIN	5x pw	Ryanair
CORK	2x pw	Ryanair
KNOCK	2x pw	Ryanair
HEATHROW.	56x pw	BA
	7x pw	Vueling
GATWICK	40x pw	EasyJet
	14x pw	BA
	26x pw	Vueling
	4x pw	Monarch
	3x pw	Norwegian
STANSTED.	31x pw	Ryanair
LUTON	12x pw	EasyJet
	7x pw	Vueling
SOUTHEND	4x pw	Easyjet
BIRMINGHAM	7x pw	Ryanair
	6x pw	Vueling
	6x pw	Monarch

	3x pw	Norwegian
E MIDLANDS	7x pw	Ryanair
LIVERPOOL	7x pw	Ryanair
	11x pw	EasyJet
	7x pw	Vueling
MANCHESTER.	7x pw	Ryanair
	6x pw	Vueling
	4x pw	Jet 2
	7x pw	Monarch
LEEDS BRAD	3x pw	Jet 2
	2x pw	Vueling
	3x pw	Monarch
BRISTOL	10x pw	EasyJet
NEWCASTLE	6x pw	EasyJet
CARDIFF	4x pw	Vueling
GLAS PIK	7x pw	Ryanair
GLAS INT	2x pw	Jet 2
EDINBURGH	7x pw	Ryanair
	7x pw	Vueling
DUBLIN	7x pw	Ryanair
	12x pw	Aer Lingus
CORK	4x pw	Aer Lingus
BELFAST INT	4x pw	EasyJet
	2x pw	Vueling

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April Fool à la Française

Of uncertain origins, many believe that the tradition of April Fools' Day was born in the 1500s in France. Until the 16th century, France celebrated New Year on April 1st according to the Julian calendar. In 1562, Pope Gregory changed the calendar to the one we use today, the Gregorian calendar, and New Year began on January 1st. Those who forgot or continued to celebrate New Year on the 1st April were called Poisson d'Avril because April fish are young and easily caught!. Children, (and certain adults), stick a paper fish on people's backs and run away yelling "Poisson d'Avril".

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DID YOU KNOW

To Rome...with bells on

Did you know that church bells ring out everyday throughout France - apart from Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday? Every single church bell throughout France stops ringing on this day in remembrance of the death of Christ. If you're used

to hearing the village bells chime out, their silence is deafening.

Children commenting on the silence (in the days before Playstation and ipads) were told that the Bells had flown to Rome to see the Pope. These flying bells return on Easter Sunday morning and bring with them lots of chocolate and eggs before returning to their towers on Friday to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.



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READERS PHOTOS

thank you
readers!!

Some great spring photos from
around the P-O. We love seeing them
so please do keep 'em coming!



Alain Darmois



Peter Spencer



Marianne Pryor



Margueritte Buxton



Kate Hareng



Leigh & Merry Foster



Mike Goldsmith



Dave Sivilov



FEMMES FORMIDABLES

Continuing our series of Femmes Formidables in the P-O, we look this time at some of the sung and unsung ladies whose lives have touched others.

the past...



Friedel Bohny-Reiter worked for the Swiss Red Cross at Rivesaltes internment camp from 1941 to 1942. Touched by the misery of the interned Jews, Spanish refugees and Gypsies, **she did what she could to improve their lives, handing out extra food, organizing activities for the children and providing medical services.**

When the deportations began in August 1942, she smuggled Jewish children out of the camp to children's homes, one

of which was in Chambon-sur-Lignon in the Auvergne, **whose inhabitants protected some 3000–5000 Jews from the Nazis between 1941 and 1944.** The home was run by Auguste Bohny, later to become her husband.

Thanks to this brave young woman, many children were saved from certain death in the extermination camps in the East. For her efforts, she was decorated 'Righteous among Nations' in 1990.

Friedel kept a diary which was published fifty years after its creation, noting down daily her experience of the camp: hunger, fear, despair. Despite all the hardship, she wrote on December 15th, 1941 **'These children's eyes are the reason I stay here'.**



Courageous Belgian lady **Andrée de Jongh** (Codename Postman, nickname Dédée), was one of **the principal creators of the Comet escape line.**

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

Betrayed, captured and tortured in 1943, she was sent to Mauthausen and Ravensbruck concentration camps until, desperately ill and undernourished, she was liberated by the allied

armies in 1945. **After the war, she was honoured by Britain, Belgium and America and made a Belgian countess in 1985.**

Andrée de Jongh died in Brussels on 13th October 2007



Elisabeth Eidenbenz was the daughter of a Zurich pastor, who volunteered with the Asociación de Ayuda a los Niños en Guerra ('Association to Aid Children at War'), in the South of France. Appalled by the situation of mothers and children amongst the Spanish refugees pouring across the border, Elisabeth obtained a grant from the Swiss Red Cross to convert the abandoned château of the Bardou-Job dynasty near Elne into a maternity home.

When the Germans occupied the 'Free Zone' in November 1942, the Gestapo came to La Maternité looking for Jews. Elisabeth resisted whenever possible, despite the "strict neutrality" imposed by the Swiss Red Cross, ordering her to "give up Jews, Tziganes and Spanish refugees if requested and do nothing to shield them from the roundups."

It is estimated that she saved up to 600 babies.

Elisabeth received the 'Righteous among Nations', the Légion d'Honneur, the médaille de l'Ordre Civil et de la Solidarité, and the Croix de Saint Jordi.

She died in 2011 in Zürich at the age of 98.

... and the present



Penny Parkinson is president of CSF (Cancer Support France) for Aude, Ariège, Pyrénées-Orientales and Tarn.

If you were to tell Penny that she was 'formidable', she would shrug it off with a 'don't be ridiculous' smile, and move on quickly to the next item on the

agenda. But the **many people in and around the P-O that Penny has helped, both practically and spiritually are a testament to this kind and competent lady.**

She learnt about the excellent French Health System up close and personal when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006. Despite a high standard of care, she was aware that limited French speakers needed support in this most difficult of situations. Learning about CSF, she started off as a volunteer coordinator and went on to become president.

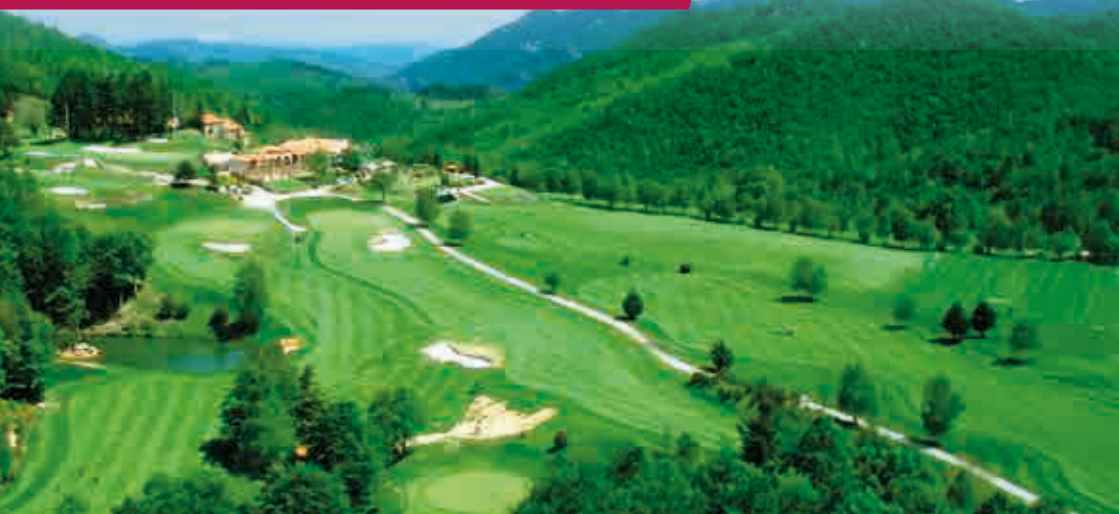
Penny is a non-judgemental ear, a shoulder, a chauffeur, a hospital and home visitor, a translator, a tea maker, a fund raiser, an organiser, an advisor....and a femme formidable in every sense.



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An Egg a Day
Keeps the
Doctor Away?



The giving and receiving of eggs first began in France during the 4th Century A.D, when a law was passed preventing the eating of meat or eggs during Lent. It became traditional to use up all of the household's eggs before Lent began, establishing the tradition of Pancake Day. Naturally, hens continued laying through Lent, leading to a

surplus after the 40 day fast. People would dye or paint the eggs with pretty designs and offer them as presents and use them for Easter meals.

Many believed that if you ate an egg laid on Good Friday, you would remain fit and healthy until the following Easter.



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A word about Windows Vista

If you have a Windows Vista system, it's time to start thinking about either migrating to a new machine or upgrading to Windows 7. Your old system will soon be unsupported by third party software vendors as well as Microsoft. This could make Internet banking, reading the newspaper, or on-line shopping difficult or impossible.

Most Vista systems will be upgradeable to Windows 7, but the leap to Windows 10 is less of an option due to the age of some components and the driver support available. If you need any advice please call.

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DID YOU KNOW



Tarlà of the Ramblas

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.



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TEST your FRENCH

Tongue twister (virelangue)

Repeat quickly three times

C'est sûr que son chat sait chasser!

Useful Expression

Avoir la frite
to feel great



Blague Bête

Un chameau rencontre un dromadaire.

Ca va ?

Oui, je bosse et toi ?

Ca va, je bosse, je bosse...

(bosser – to work une bosse – hump/bump)

Définition amusante Égalité des sexes

Nouveau concept créé par les hommes pour ne plus payer le restaurant.
(créé – created)



Language Tip

Marcher

to walk (getting from A to B)

Se promener

to walk (for leisure)

1 D POUR DANGER!

Match up the words, all beginning with D, with their definitions.

(Why not try to work them out first just from the definitions?)

- | | | | |
|------------|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| dresser | 1 | a | à passer devant une autre voiture |
| désaltérer | 2 | b | un numéro fixé sur le dos |
| douanier | 3 | c | à partir de maintenant |
| doigt | 4 | d | contraire de baisser |
| disponible | 5 | e | désorienté |
| doubler | 6 | f | libre |
| dévaliser | 7 | g | tout voler |
| dossard | 8 | h | au bout de la main |
| dépaysé | 9 | i | calmer la soif |
| dorénavant | 10 | j | qui contrôle la frontière |

2 You would be amazed how many French expressions use the word 'cul' (arse). Can you match some of them up with their English equivalents? Some of them are rather vulgar, so look away if you're a bit sensitive! :-)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|---|----------------------------|
| Cul sec! | 1 | a | He's fed up |
| Cul-cul | 2 | b | Talk to a wall |
| Il a du cul | 3 | c | He thinks a lot of himself |
| Il pète plus haut que son cul | 4 | d | Don't believe you |
| C'est un faux cul | 5 | e | He's caught in the middle |
| Parle à mon cul, ma tête est malade! | 6 | f | He's lucky |
| Ça coûte la peau du cul | 7 | g | Down in one! |
| en a plein le cul | 8 | h | He's two faced |
| Mon cul! | 9 | i | It costs an arm and a leg |
| Il a le cul entre deux chaises | 10 | j | Silly |

Mobile or portable?

Both are used to mean cell phone but 'portable' refers to a laptop too.

See Page 86 for answers

3

MATCH UP THE IDIOMS

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----|---|---------------------------|
| Quelle mouche t'a piqué? | 1 | a | I am over the moon |
| C'est riquiqui | 2 | b | Each to his own |
| Tant mieux | 3 | c | It's teeny weeny! |
| Vous racontez n'importe quoi | 4 | d | You're talking rubbish |
| Pile ou face? | 5 | e | It's hardly cheap! |
| Va te faire cuire un oeuf! | 6 | f | What's up with you? |
| Chacun son truc | 7 | g | I couldn't resist! |
| Ce n'est pas donné | 8 | h | Heads or tails? |
| je suis aux anges | 9 | i | Get lost! Leave me alone! |
| J'ai craqué | 10 | j | Great (All the better) |

4

Use the vocab below to fill in the blanks of this fun little text

Un automobiliste...1...en panne sur une route de campagne. Il sort
2...sa voiture pour ...3... le capot et commence ...4... chercher la
panne. Une vache arrive et ...5... dit: "Je ...6... que c'est les bougies!"
L'automobiliste, ...7..., court ...8... le fermier. "Votre vache ...9... de
parler et elle m'a dit que la panne vient des bougies!"
"Ne l'écoutez pas" répond le fermier. "Elle ne connaît ...10... aux
voitures." (panne – breakdown bougie – spark plug)

a vient b vers c de d à e lui f rien g crois h tombe
i ouvrir j choqué

French often uses an adjective alone to describe people.
The masculine or feminine says it all.

Un Français/une Française – a French man/French lady

Un vieux/une vieille – an old man/old lady

Un jeune/une jeune – a young boy/girl

Un gros/une grosse – a portly man/woman

WHAT AM I ?

Mon premier brûle.

Mon deuxième ne dit pas la vérité.

Mon troisième est une couleur.

Mon tout est un bel oiseau ou un hôtel à Canet

Flamant rose (flamme-ment-rose)

Language Tip

Have you noticed that, whilst most adjectives come AFTER the noun they are describing (un livre intéressant), there is a small group which come BEFORE the noun (la petite fille)

These tend to be adjectives describing

Beauty

Age

Good and bad

Size

Here are some of the most common.

joli-pretty,

beau – handsome,

jeune – young,

vieux – old,

nouvelle – new,

bon – good,

mauvais – bad,

petit – small,

grand – big,

gentil – kind,

long – long,

gros – fat

eg une mauvaise idée,
un gros garçon

Blague Bête

Deux bonbons qui marchent en ville sont arrêtés par les gendarmes.

"Papiers s'il vous plaît".



AMÉLIOREZ votre ANGLAIS

Tongue twister (virelangue)

Répétez trois fois
**Shelly saw Sue
choosing shoes**

**Brexit –
British Exit
from the EU.**
Contraction
de 'British' et
'exit'



**Ouch, that
British Humour!**
Doctor W scratching head
"I studied anatomy at
medical school but
still don't know
where Sorède is
Oh now I remember
it's just above Sore Neck!"

1 H IS FOR HOUSE!

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

- | | | | |
|---------|----|---|----------------------|
| hurry | 1 | a | common sea fish |
| hose | 2 | b | cut and dried grass |
| huge | 3 | c | time to pick crops |
| hack | 4 | d | do something quickly |
| hop | 5 | e | where bees live |
| harvest | 6 | f | jump on one leg |
| hay | 7 | g | similar to a rabbit |
| hive | 8 | h | tube to direct water |
| haddock | 9 | i | very big |
| hare | 10 | j | cut roughly |

2 Ouch, that British Humour! REPLISSEZ LES BLANCS

I ...1... a National Health leaflet in my letter box the other day ...2...
me that I can have sex at 90. I'm particularly ...3... about this ...
4... I live at number 78. So it won't be far to walk home ...5...!
(leaflet – dépliant)

a pleased b afterwards c received d because e informing

CONFUSING WORDS!

- There is not much difference..... the two.
a amongst b between
- People say I am my mum
a like b as

A doggy bag....

L'emballage dans lequel
le client d'un restaurant
peut emporter les restes
de son repas. Très courant
aux Etats Unis et en GB.



See Page 86 for answers

3 GET IT RIGHT!

Pouvez vous trouver le français pour ces mots et expressions qui emploient tous 'get' ou 'getting'?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|---|----------------------|
| Get well soon | 1 | a | Débarrasse-toi en |
| Get over it | 2 | b | Il vieillit |
| Get it over with | 3 | c | Ne te saoule pas |
| Get rid of it | 4 | d | Va-t-en |
| Get down! | 5 | e | Ressais-toi |
| Get going | 6 | f | Descendez! |
| He's getting old | 7 | g | Bon rétablissement |
| You'll get used to it | 8 | h | Finis-en avec |
| Don't get drunk! | 9 | i | Il a été viré |
| He got the sack | 10 | j | Tu vas t'en habituer |

4 UN PEU D'ARGOT...

mais rien de méchant. Pouvez-vous trouver le français?

- | | | | |
|-------------|----|---|-----------------|
| Bling bling | 1 | a | De l'argent |
| A wuss | 2 | b | Très bouleversé |
| Dosh | 3 | c | Epoustouffé |
| A mate | 4 | d | Clinquant |
| Zit | 5 | e | Un pote |
| Gutted | 6 | f | Une mauviette |
| A babe | 7 | g | Une erreur |
| Gobsmacked | 8 | h | tout va bien |
| Cock-up | 9 | i | Une jolie fille |
| Hunky-dory | 10 | j | Un bouton |

Good or well?

Good décrit une personne
ou une chose
Well décrit COMMENT
on fait quelque chose
(She is a good teacher
and speaks English well.)

Funny regional expressions

bishybarnabee (de Norfolk)
Coccinelle

Another bad joke!

When you get a
bladder infection,
urine trouble!
(bladder – vessie)



Don't forget
your bröly
(Mot courant
pour umbrella)

OMG!

Quelques mots et phrases pour exprimer la surprise!

That's.....astonishing /crazy / incredible / amazing!
I don't believe it! / You're joking ! / I can't get over it! / Go on!
I don't believe a word of it! / You don't say! /
You're having me on! / It's unheard of!



Prades, Eoin, and all that Jazz

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DID YOU KNOW



White Monday?

On lundi de Pentecôte, or Whit Monday, the traditional pilgrimage to the Ermitage Notre Dame du Coral, near Prats-de-Mollo takes places. In 1428, the hamlet of «Miralles» was destroyed by an earthquake but its chapel was miraculously saved! According to legend, a wooden statue representing the Virgin, housed previously in the tiny chapel, was found in a tree trunk, sparking off pilgrim fever, and leading to the building of the present church and hermitage.

And **DID YOU KNOW** that 'Whit Monday' in English, comes from the white robes worn on Pentecost by those who have been newly baptised?



TEST your answers

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

AMÉLIOREZ votre ANGLAIS answers

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

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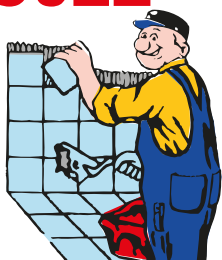
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