

spring 2017

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées-Orientales

N° 55
FREE / GRATUIT



Eva Hodneland



www.anglophone-direct.com

P-O LIFE
Airport News

LET'S ^{Get} PHYSICAL
Bike,
Sail, Ski, ...

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St Laurent, Collioure

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EDITO:-)

3

Coucou

Spring is in the air! The P-O is shaking off its winter colours with a vigorous shrug of its vine-covered paysage and beckoning us into the sun. And despite all the doom and gloom of Brexit and a poorly pound to euro rate, there is so much you can do here in the Pyrénées-Orientales without spending a centime.

Walk, swim and picnic along the coast, clamber around the mountains and waterfalls, pop over the border...or just sit in the sunshine and watch the world go by... Possibilities are endless and will not cost you 'la peau du cul' (great French expression referring to the skin on your bottom!) Or why not bike the mountains with Ian Pendry, go wake or water skiing in Le Barcarès, or sun, sea and sail in Argelès?

A big thank you to **Leigh** and **Merry** who walk us up to the Sentier Botanique in Montesquieu, **Simon Bridges** and **Katja** who take us over the border for golf and another perfect picnic, **Cindy Guilbert** and **Fiona Sass** who talk roses and chickweed, **Lesley McLaren** for stirring up a hornet's nest, and **John Fairclough** who provides us with the ever invaluable airport info.

Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, we wish you sunshine and a springtime of laughter and relaxation in this beautiful region.

Think Sunny!

Kate

What do you say to persuade a French bear to eat cheese?

"Cam-em-bert"!



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CERET: In the heart of the historic centre, delightful, airy, fully renovated apartment. Large fully equipped open kitchen/living room with a balcony.

PRICE : 115,000 € • REF: 5272

Dpe D



MAUREILLAS: Detached villa. Living room with fireplace, separate kitchen, garage, 5 bedrooms, 1 en suite, 2 shower rooms and a house bathroom, 2 terraces. Landscaped garden with pool and watering system.

PRICE : 385,000 € • REF: 4746

Dpe C



LE PERTHUS: Semi detached bungalow with conservatory, large fully equipped open kitchen/living room, 2 bedrooms with en suite shower room/bathroom and garage. Garden with watering system and summer kitchen.

PRICE : 240,000 € • REF: 5189

Dpe C



MAUREILLAS: Pleasant Village House with terrace in need of renovation. Open kitchen/living room, shower room, one or two bedrooms.

PRICE : 55,000 € • REF: 4919

Dpe F



CERET: Sunny villa with independent studio. Garage, fitted kitchen, lounge and 3 bedrooms. Large flat garden with watering system and swimming pool.

PRICE : 525.000 € • REF: 5288

Dpe E



MAUREILLAS: Modern bungalow with pool on large plot of land. Three bedrooms, one with en suite shower room, house bathroom, utility room, garage, spacious and fully fitted open kitchen/living room.

PRICE : 480,000 € • REF: 5217

Dpe A

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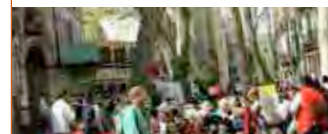
By Fiona Sass and Cindy Guilbert



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EDITORIAL

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



WELCOME TO THE PYRENEES-ORIENTALES!

www.tourisme-pyreneesorientales.com

Agence de Développement Touristique
2, bd des Pyrénées - CS 80540 - 66005 Perpignan Cedex
Tél : +33 (0)4 68 51 52 53 - info@cdt-66.com



Sentier Botanique, Montesquieu

This is a very pretty circular walk above the charming Albères village of Montesquieu, which anyone interested in the flora of this delightful region should enjoy. It follows a well-marked trail with some lovely views from Canigou to the coast. It is about 6km long and takes about 2 hours. Some of the climbs are a bit steep and overall it is a medium level walk, so good boots and sticks are recommended.

ACCESS

Map IGN 1:25000 Banyuls/Col de Perthus/Cote Vermeille (GPS) 2549 OT

START:

From the car park next to the Post Office in the village on the main road (490150m E, 4707250m N, 166m alt). Walk north through the village on the ironically named "Grand'Rue", past the font in the place de l'Houm – one of several on the trail, restored by the local association. Follow the right-hand bend signposted D11 to Villelongue and then take the first turning on the right, up Chemin Saint Cristophe. After 100 metres or so you leave the road behind and head off into the woods.

THE WALK:

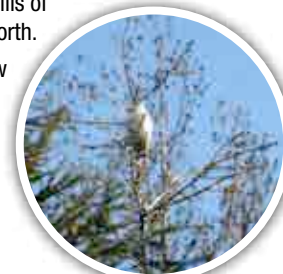
The path climbs some steep steps through the trees, and many of the plants and bushes on either side are labelled with their common and scientific names. We found a few non-native

species that must have been planted by some botanical enthusiasts (Eucalyptus, anyone?), so it's an interesting trail. Quickly the views behind you become very pretty, looking down on the little village below.

The trail continues to wind southwards up the hillside, following a shallow dell until you come to a ridge at 490270m E 4706700m N. This overlooks a bowl-shaped hidden valley with a couple of stone Mas tucked away on the far side, surrounded by neat pasture and orchards, and with the magnificent snow-capped (in spring) Canigou as a backdrop. Follow the trail up, keeping the hillside on your left. Keep going through the trees, following the yellow markers, up some quite steep climbs in places. Eventually the trail emerges onto a piste at 490498m E 4706196m N at 345m altitude. From here you can see all the way back down the valley to the plain below, and the hills of the Corbieres to the north.

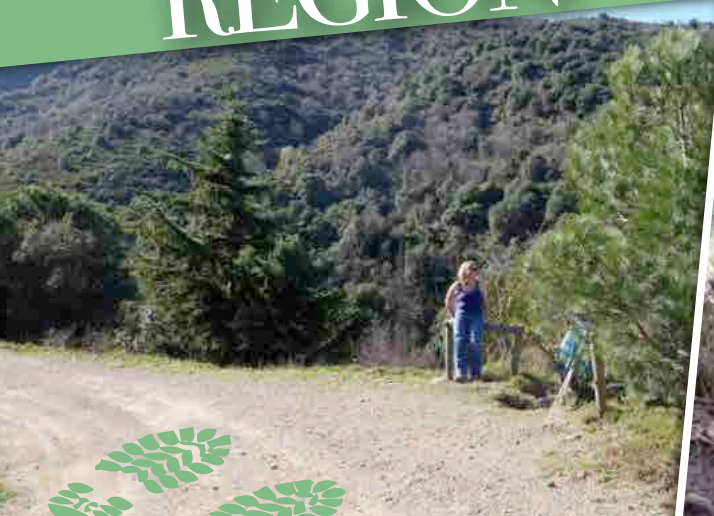
We did see quite a few pine processionary caterpillar nests in the trees near here,

so dog owners should be aware, although by the time this walk is published, they should hopefully have all disappeared.



WALK ^{The} REGION

with Leigh and Merry Foster



Turn right and continue on the piste to the south, to where it crosses the little Correc de Sant Cristau. Here there is another little font (the "Ravelade") by a pretty waterfall, and a picnic table. You can actually turn off the track here and walk all the way up to the Col de Llinas and even to the Puig de Sant Cristau. We stayed on the easy piste however, and wound our way westwards, along the opposite side of the valley from where we had come. Around each bend you are treated to a larger panorama. More of the coast to the east, and mountains to the west are gradually revealed, and the plain spreads

out below, with villages like scattered toys on a green- and brown-mottled carpet.

After about 1km, at 489870m E 4706400m N a narrow footpath to the right drops steeply down into the valley, cutting a corner off part of the trail (not advisable without a stick). If you prefer your walking easier, however, stay on the piste for about another 1.5km. At the picnic area below the hillside of Treize Vents, follow the track downhill (to the right) and, just before Mas Pericot below the Chartreuses du Boulou, turn right again, onto the lane that heads northeast, back towards the village. Descend Rue des Albères, finally turning right at the T-junction and crossing the river once more before regaining the main road, just below your start point.

ALLO ALLO!

If you see members of the French Navy out on manoeuvres when you're walking, make sure you greet them with their motto in order to strike up some friendly conversation.

"A l'eau, c'est l'heure" (to the water, it's time).....but don't say it too quickly!!

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LET'S ^{Get} PHYSICAL



MOUNTAIN BIKING in the Pyrénées Orientales



By Ian Pendry,
UIMLA. International Mountain leader
and Mountain bike guide

The Pyrénées Orientales are a mountain Biking paradise and one of the best-kept secrets in the mountain bike world.

For those of us in the know there is an unfathomable amount of mountain biking potential here. Between the summits and the sea you can ride to your heart's content on trails suited to all abilities, thousands of kilometres of waymarked and non-waymarked trails.

Essentially there are three types of mountain biker: those who like to only go downhill, with lifts to get them back up; those who like to ride cross country trails (including everything from families to long distance trail riders), and those

who will do anything to access those out-of-the-way, hard-to-reach gems hidden in the mountains. This third category generally needs a high standard of cross country fitness and downhill technique on natural trails.



DOWNHILL

Here in the P.O. we have some great downhill bike parks.

Les Angles ski station offers trails with lift access using its gondola from mid-June to mid-September. La Molina ski station just across the border in Spain offers the same, using its gondola, and in Andorra there is the world famous Vallnord bike park, and a second bike park at Soldeu.

Whilst the idea of taking a lift up and screaming down the mountain appeals to many, a word of warning. Do not just turn up at one of these bike parks, rent a bike and a helmet and think it will be plain sailing. Noooooooo. These places require a certain level of skill and ability, and injuries (some serious) are common, so if you are not sure of your ability, get an instructor to show you the ropes. It is not for nothing that Full Face helmets and back protectors are standard protection!



IAN PENDRY
Altitude Adventure
www.altitudeadventure.com
04 68 04 15 30 • 06 78 23 81 30

CROSS COUNTRY

Families with kids of all ages can ride on some beautiful trails in the Capcir valley. The main parking area at Lake Matemale also opens up the potential for non-riding members of the family to take part in one of the many other activities on offer around the lake – from high ropes to canoe rental on the lake.

The Tourist office at La Quillane can supply you with a trail map to follow for all levels: green, blue, red, black – with green being the easiest, just like the ski pistes. The map has over 700km of trails marked throughout the Cerdagne, Capcir and Têt valleys, so you'll never run out of track.

If you need to rent a bike there is also a hire centre at the lake. For those of you who like the idea of a bike with some assistance, electric mountain bikes can be rented at the Col De La Llose cross country ski station.

For more information on the trails and bike rental stations check out
<http://www.capcir-pyrenees.com/Destination-VTT>



When you hire your bike, ask the rental guy to switch your brakes to UK style as grabbing a handful of brake in an emergency – only to find that it is the front brake – is a nasty surprise. Remember this is mountain biking so always wear a helmet!

LET'S ^{Get} PHYSICAL

HARD CORE!

Get a guide. It will save you an enormous amount of wasted energy and time. The trail options are endless and the guides know how to get you to the best of them (and how to get home again afterwards).

These trails are not way marked (sometimes not even on the map!). You will need a good level of skill, experience and fitness, but the rewards are awesome. You can ride anything from a one-day epic with over 2000m of natural single-track descent, to a multi-day voyage on incredible trails from the "Summits to the Sea".



Check out

<https://www.altitudeadventure.com/pyrenees/mountain-biking>

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- > **Bike** - Your own or a rental bike adapted to the type of riding you are planning on doing.
- > **Helmet**
- > **Cycle clothing**
- > **Drinks, snacks a pump and spare inner tubes.**
- > **Phone and waterproof jacket.**

If you have a problem or the weather changes these could save you a lot of unnecessary hassle.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

> **LAKE MATEMALE** - Pony trekking, high ropes, canoe and pedalo rental, swimming in the lake, husky sled rides and much more

> **CANYONING** - Mainly done nearer to Prades in the Llech and other canyons, this is a fantastic day of thrills in stunning natural environments. Contact Stéphane Roucal Tel. 0681898991 to get one of the nicest guides out there.

> **ZIP LINES** - Head to Llo or Porte Puymorens to get your kicks whizzing from cliff to cliff on zip wires. High adrenaline fun!

> **HOT SPRINGS** - For something a bit more relaxing or soothing after all that effort, the hot spring spas at St Thomas les Bains, Llo, and Dorres make for a great treat. Natural hot thermals provide the water, which has a multitude of health benefits.

> **TAKE A JOURNEY ON THE YELLOW TRAIN** from Villefranche de Conflent to La Tour de Carol. It is a beautiful journey through historic villages on this incredible railway line.



THE WIND IN YOUR SAILS...

with Central Windsurf

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infos@centralwindsurf.com · centralwindsurf.com/contact

Central Windsurf was the first water sports club in Argelès, created in 1978 by windsurfing enthusiast Jean-Claude Cuffy, to share his passion for what was then a relatively new sport.

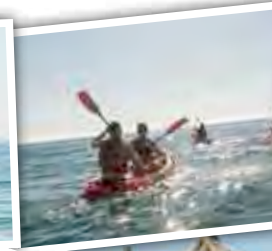
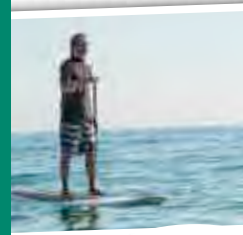
Today, under the management of British born Alex Lalljee, Central Windsurf is a sunbaked paradise of sea, sail and sunbeds, a perfect place for the whole family as the kids learn with an instructor, Dad sails, Mum lies in the sun with a book....or any way round you want to play it!

With its own section of beach, dedicated navigation channel to direct you out to sea and lifeguard post

nearby, Central Windsurf is a safe and secure place to learn, practise and perfect your water sports skills – from absolute beginner to seasoned pro.

The friendly, competent English speaking instructors clearly love their job - and who wouldn't?

Lessons and equipment rental, sailing, windsurfing, kayak and stand up paddle are all on offer, and if you fancy something different they have a 9 meter sailing boat at the port to take you cruising along the coast!



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Water sports – Le Barcarès **TAKE A WALK** on the wild side

If you're a fan of thrills and spills, (and we wish you more of the first and less of the second bien sûr!), you won't be able to resist a visit to this 'téléski' in Port Barcarès, to try out, practice or perfect your water-ski and boarding skills. Wakeboard, waterskiing and kneeboard await – maybe with a few 'Air Tricks' once you've become a bit of a pro.



Towed along the water by overhead cables attached to pylons, the 900m run is suited to everybody, from 8 to 80, from absolute beginners (who can quickly progress), to the more experienced. And don't panic if you're more of a landlubber. There is a sunny panoramic terrace and snack bar overlooking the action, the perfect spot for a cold drink, salad, burger, pizza...or a new relaxation area if you want to lie back and catch a few rays. Sun, fun, water, sport, friendly and welcoming team to show you the ropes and pick you up when you fall...what's not to like?



Did you know that the wakeboard was originally dubbed the 'board of happiness' as so many become addicted to the great sensation of lightness, similar to snowboarding - and it's easy to get the hang of!



Useful french bread vocab

Miam miam. Can you remember that moment when you arrived in France and headed straight for the boulangerie for your first baguette in ages? Délicieux!

Today though, the iconic baguette is just one of a mind boggling selection of different types of bread. Here's a little bit of useful vocabulary to help you to recognise which side your bread it buttered on when you visit the boulangerie.

le pain > bread

- ...azyme > unleavened bread
- ...de campagne > farmhouse bread
- ...complet > wholemeal bread
- ...d'épices > gingerbread
- ...grillé > toast
- ...au lait > sweet bread bun
- ...perdu > eggy bread
- ...de seigle > rye bread
- ...de son > bran bread
- ...multi céréales -> multi-grain bread
- ...biologique (pain bio) > organic bread
- ...au levain > traditionally made yeast bread, often quite chewy
- ...de mie > sliced, packed sandwich bread
- ...au pavot > with poppy seeds
- ...de seigle noir – dark rye bread (pumpernickel)

- une baguette – french stick
- un petit pain – roll
- une flûte – similar to baguette, slightly fatter
- une ficelle (lit. string) – very thin baguette
- un bâton – thick, long French stick
- la croûte – crust
- une tranche (de pain) – slice (of bread)

Bio monde Leucate

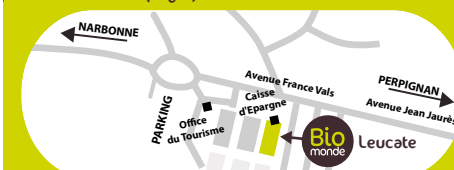


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Restaurant REVIEWS

We love publishing your reviews. They're honest (mostly!), objective (always), unrelated to advertising (bien sûr!) and cover a wide range of tastes, prices, and places. You might not always agree, the chef might be having a bad day, your standards might be higher....or lower – but they give you an idea of what's available.

Once again, we start by going back over a few past reviews and picking out some choice phrases. We've checked they are still open. Over to you now to see if the review still fits the restaurant.

LA SALAMANDRE

SOREDE....with Merry

Tasteful modern style, beautifully presented, delicious dishes.....the cuisine has modern "Masterchef" touches without being overly fussy. Scallops with leeks and a tasty lightly seared salmon slice, perfectly cooked beef fillet in a mouthwatering jus, and the catch of the day, Dorade from Argeles, came with pearls of Banyuls vinegar which burst in your mouth in an explosion of flavour. Great value from a talented chef.



3, route de Laroque-les-Albères, SOREDE
04 68 89 26 67
<http://restaurant-salamandre.com>

AU REMP'ARTS

ELNE....with Louise

Lovers of good food will enjoy this little gem, tucked away in Elne old town. Homemade Mediterranean food based around fresh, seasonal produce and set menu at 15 euros for 3-course lunch or 23 euros in the evening. A la carte is, as you would expect, more pricey. While the choice is pretty standard for the region, the chef gives each dish a little touch of originality.

A really enjoyable meal.

3, Place Colonel Roger. ELNE
04 68 22 31 95
www.remparts.fr

LA TABLE DE VALMY

ARGELES.....with Allan

Stylish restaurant with a lovely terrace and spectacular views over the vines and the sea.

Excellent service, the place had a real buzz about it. Using the restaurant as a showcase for their wines, they offer a 4-course menu with a different wine served with each course at €45 or without wine at €35 – in both cases coffee and water are included.

The food was very good, though not spectacular, but the place should be taken as a complete package, the location, the view, the wine, the food and the general ambiance – overall we thought it was terrific.



Chemin du Chateau Valmy. Argeles
04 68 81 25 70
www.chateau-valmy.com

L'AUBERGE DES ALBÈRES

SAINT GÉNIS-DES-FONTAINES...with Sue C

A pleasant, light restaurant with good space between the tables, and option of outdoor, semi-outdoor (in veranda) or indoor seating. We selected from the medium-priced menu at €26.90. Other evening menus were available at €19.90 and around €35 with a 3-course lunch for €15.30. Magret de Canard, pieces of succulent duck breast fillet wrapped in bacon, accompanied by Banyuls sauce, Entrecôte, grilled exactly to requirement and very lean, Duo of Sea-Bass and Gambas in a Langoustine Sauce, Moules-frites, Paëlla royale, Zarzuela, a good selection of the usual desserts.....

LA TOMATE D'OR

ST CYPRIEN PLACE... with Stéphane

Something for everyone! Impressive selection of pizzas to eat in or take away, but also meat and fish dishes, grandes salades, tapas, burgers ... and home-made desserts. I chose the very reasonable 3-course menu at just 14,80€ (there is another at 19,00€): a tender and flavoursome pièce du boucher with steaming fries followed a delicious, home-made fish soup starter, rounded off by a delicate Crème Catalane. Good service and friendly atmosphere with a smile.



19 boulevard Desnoyer
Saint Cyprien Plage
04 68 36 42 03
www.latomatedor.com



78 Avenue Maréchal Joffre
Saint-Génis-des-Fontaines
04 68 89 88 38



AND THE NEW (TO P-O LIFE) KIDS ON THE BLOCK..

with Kate and (Facebook) Mates

LA GARRIANE

PERPICNAN....with Kate

Unpretentious restaurant near the station with an unprepossessing exterior that you could easily walk past without a second glance – but wow! This culinary jewel in Perpignan's crown really is all about the food! Accent on fresh fish and veg, but meat eaters won't be disappointed either. The four-course fixed lunchtime menu is excellent value at 23 euros, and the evening menu an experience to remember. Like lunch, there is

no choice – but the superb dégustation menu at 45 euros presents 9 exciting and innovative dishes, all with a special culinary twistA great experience in fine dining which will not fail to impress.



15 rue Vallette . Perpignan
04 68 67 07 44

CHATEAU DE JAU

CASES-DE-PÈNE....with Claire

Fabulous setting in a vineyard, 5 courses with a different wine to complement each course!

No choice but plentiful, rustic and something for everyone (tho' vegetarians beware). Just sit down and the food and wine will come to you! Very good value for money too! I recommend taking a taxi or getting a lift! Wine flows very freely.



Cases de Pène
04 68 38 91 38
www.chateaudejau.com

CAN JORDI

CÉRET....with Liliane

I really like Can Jordi in Céret. Seasonal food, cooked simply but really well. The welcome is friendly and easy. Prices are reasonable. My favourite when I don't want a load of fancy stuff that hides the taste of the ingredients, but a meal made with good fresh, seasonal ingredients.



10 Boulevard Jean Jaurès, Céret
04 68 87 71 75

LA BARTAVELLE

ARGELÈS....with Karrie

Best food I've eaten in France.

This tiny place is a must for food lovers. Chef Thibaut Lesage and Stéphanie, his pastry chef wife, put an inspired spin on the classics to produce dishes that diners delight in. Modern, stunningly presented food, skilfully cooked with oodles of pride. You will need to book ahead if you want to try it for yourself!



24 rue de la République, Argelès village
06 19 25 70 13
<http://www.restaurant-labartavelle.fr/>
MICHELIN Guide recommended 2016

LA MERIDIENNE

PRADES....with Pdraig and Fiona

Absolutely deserves a mention. Always consistently excellent food and a great welcome and friendly service from Brits, Dave and Kathie. Vegetarians well catered for with prior notice. Great value weekday lunch menus from 12,50€ (2-courses) and evening menus of 17,50€ and 23,50€. Freshly prepared using local ingredients, the food is always varied and delicious – and piping hot!



20 Rue des Marchands, Prades
04 68 96 78 87
www.lameridienne.eu

SECTION 10

LE BOULOU....with Kate and Olivier

Little side street off the ramblas, clean loos, delightful couple who really bent over backwards to make the evening special. A little shocked to find they didn't have any gin, but got over it with red wine and vodka!! Complimentary 'amuse-gueules' and asparagus mousse verrine to start with. So nice when restaurants make that extra effort.

Crème catalane style foie gras was delicious and the main dishes of perfectly cooked and very tender veal and guinea fowl were excellent. Beautiful presentation, plenty of side veg, and little touches on the plate. Not all tastes

completely worked for all of us, but this is a work in progress in my opinion and is likely to get better and better. Delicious desserts including a chocolate spoon which my friend took home because it looked too good to eat.

Cute English speaking waiter and young, passionate chef Aurélie. Definitely worth a visit.



5 Rue Rouillé, Le Boulou
04 68 88 95 28

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FOOD & DRINK

THERE'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Argelès Port...

I just love Argelès port. It has that certain 'je ne sais quoi', that special atmosphere that sets it aside from other ports. Sails moving gently in the breeze, sea air, totally pedestrian, (tho' you may have to hop out of the way of a stray bicycle), people strolling along and chatting, or watching the world go by - a refreshing change to the manic pace of life.

But with so many restaurants sitting side by side, **where to dine?**

Time to recommend our personal favourite, **L'Amethyste**. If you're a fan of mussels, from moules marinières and aioli to moules à la crème, au curry, au roquefort, à la provençale, chorizo, catalanes with Banyuls....

Moules paradise! Plenty of fresh fish dishes, great steaks too, tapas, salads....

It's not gourmet or fine cuisine, and it doesn't try to be; it's unpretentious, reasonably priced food, with plenty of taste....and it has never varied in the many times we have visited. Service by owner Franck and his young team is always friendly, dogs are welcome, so are kids! What's not to like?

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Oysters

Not Everyone's Tasse de Thé!

Ewwwww, I don't know about this. I'm not really an oyster fan



Actually, those were rather nice!

French poet Leon-Paul Fargue described eating oysters as like 'kissing the sea on the lips'.

Exotic, erotic by reputation....and not everybody's tasse de thé, the sight and texture of an oyster has made many a strong man (and woman) gag. Still alive as you tip it into your mouth, might it wriggle and jiggle and wiggle inside, like the old lady who swallowed a spider?

Never fear. We have an oyster recipe that is easy to follow, looks good, tastes good...and maybe even does you good.



Choosing your Oysters

Make sure you buy your oysters from a reputable supplier and keep refrigerated ☺ the fresher the better ☺ but whilst you might wish to put them ON ice, never place IN ice or they will freeze, and die. Check to see if shells are tightly shut. Discard any that gape open, even after a light tap (it means they're dead and unfit to consume raw). When opened, touch the oyster with the tip of a knife. It should move, meaning it is alive, and thus edible.

Huîtres Gratinées au Champagne



Merci à Victoire, ma gentille belle-mère pour cette recette et pour m'avoir donné goût aux huîtres.



Ingredients for 2 dozen oysters

- 1 cup champagne
- 24 oysters (number 2 size works well)
- 1 cup cream (crème liquide entière)
- 30g crunchy breadcrumbs (chapelure)
- 1 tsp pink peppercorns (baies roses)
- parsley or chives
- salt and pepper to taste



METHOD

1. Reduce the champagne to about half and pour in the cream, salt and pepper. Simmer gently for about 3 mins.
2. Preheat oven in grill position.
3. Open the shells (not too far in advance to keep fresh), empty out the water, take out the oysters and set aside.
4. Using only the curved half of the shell, replace an oyster in each (depending on their size, you can put two oysters in one shell).
5. Place the shells with the oysters on an oven tray, on plenty of tin foil to stop them rocking and spilling the topping.
6. Pour the champagne cream mixture over the oysters and sprinkle on the breadcrumbs.
7. Add a few pink peppercorns to each oyster and grill for 5 mins or until golden.
8. Sprinkle on the parsley or chives and serve.



CHURROS

The churro is named after the shape of the horns of the Churro breed of sheep, reared in the Spanish grasslands.

Ingredients

- 1 cup water
- 2½ tablespoons white sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup flour
- oil for frying
- white sugar to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

METHOD

Combine water, 2½ tablespoons sugar, salt and 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a small saucepan and bring to a boil.

Remove from heat and stir in flour until mixture forms a ball.

Heat oil in deep-fryer to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) and pipe strips of dough into hot oil using a pastry bag. Fry until golden; drain on paper towels.

Mix remaining sugar and cinnamon and roll drained churros in mixture.

Délicieux!

When I first moved here, my neighbour Evelyn showed me how to make 'bunyetes', accompanied by good advice from daughter Fleur.

"Ne mange surtout pas la pâte crue. J'ai roté et pété toute la nuit!!"

DID YOU KNOW

An egg a day keeps the doctor away? The giving and receiving of **Easter eggs** first began in France during the 4th Century A.D, when a law was passed forbidding the eating of meat or eggs during Lent. Bien sûr, the hens continued to lay, and the uneaten eggs led to a surplus after the 40 day fast. These were then used to make omelettes. Many believed that if you ate an egg for breakfast that had been laid on Good Friday, they would remain fit and healthy until the following Easter.

good egg



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GOLF *in* CATALUNYA...

Gualta Par 3 and Pitch & Putt

*with
Simon Bridges*

The pretty little Spanish town of Torroella de Montgri is around a one-hour drive from the motorway péage at Le Boulou. It is also the nearest town to Gualta golf course.



If you are looking for a beautiful English golf club set in the dramatic Catalan countryside, then Gualta is definitely for you. It has a lovely clubhouse containing a bar, restaurant, and shop selling everything a golfer could possibly want. The staff are wonderfully helpful and fluent in Spanish, French, Catalan and English.

You don't have to be a golfer, or even a golfing enthusiast, to be made very welcome at Gualta pitch and putt. Golfing "Other halves" are looked after very well indeed during the couple of hours it takes for the one with the clubs to play the course. If retail therapy is a preferred option there are also several opportunities to get the credit card out at nearby La Bisbal or Palafrugell, which are only very short drives away.

One of the great attractions of Gualta is the presence of a very fine golf school – The Jackson Golf Academy. Richard Jackson is British by birth but has travelled widely and is proficient in several languages including Danish, French, Spanish and Catalan. Outright beginners and experienced experts alike have found that their game has benefitted enormously from time spent with Richard. He uses the Trackman system to record exactly what you are doing and then plays it back to you in slow motion so you can see precisely what your body is doing during your golf swing. If you feel your golf

could do with a "Tweak" you could do a lot worse than arrange a lesson. More information can be found on the website www.jacksonsgolfacademy.com

The peripherals of any golf complex are important but the heart of the place is the course itself. The course at Gualta has two sets of teeing off positions, one for those playing the Catalan Pitch and Putt game and one for those adhering to the more traditional par three.

It is not like England where the greens are "given a rest" during the winter months...the courses are played every day of the year and, despite this, they are in excellent condition.

The par 3 course is a modest 1,710 metres long but you shouldn't be deceived into thinking it is a pushover, for it most certainly isn't. The avenues

of trees, the lakes and the bunkers are all there to ensure that the challenge is reasonably strict. The course is ideal for beginners in that they can play after just a few lessons, whereas experienced golfers will most certainly find the challenge they seek. They will also discover that playing a par three will sharpen up their short game, and the difference will be immediately noticeable when they return to full-sized course play. Handicaps are not obligatory to play this course but a basic level of competence is expected.

Gualta has all the facilities that any golfer would expect to be present at a course. The driving range is very useful for practising your tee shots, as well as the practice green and chipping area.

<http://gualta.com/>



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A TOUCH OF TARTAN IN THE 66

JOHN B, owner of '**Esperluette**', is a lovely, chatty, sociable Scot, with a great sense of humour! Back in Saint Cyprien from a busy and stressful job in Saudi Arabia, he has finally achieved one of his life ambitions.....to own a small Picture Framing, Arts and Crafts Shop.

But this is not just any old picture framing shop. Oh no. Equipped with 4 small bistro tables for those who wish to relax and partake in 'one of the best cups of coffee in the village' (John's words - go along and check out the truth of it!), you can actually buy the very cup or mug that your coffee is served in if it appeals. Cups are all handmade and individually painted in the west coast of Scotland.

John also sells jewellery supplied by Orkney jewellers, Sheila Fleet and Ortak. Heather Gems and Kit Heath jewels complete his collection. Framed, traditional modern art, Edge Sculptures, Scottish woollen goods, scarves and tartan blankets are also on display.

Pop along and say hello.
You can be sure of a warm welcome.



JOHN B
Esperluette

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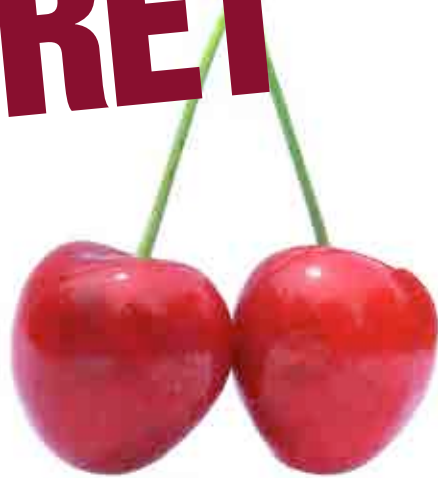
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Ample, free parking nearby

OUT for THE DAY... ...in CÉRET

Céret is the undisputed cherry capital of the P-O, and probably the whole of France, its cherry trees the last of the spring fruits to blossom but the first to bear fruit. By May, the first cherries of the season are on their way to the President of France, and stalls, trestle tables, and rickety makeshift benches laden with the fruit appear on every street corner, in garages, lay-bys and the Saturday market.



These early fruits are usually not cheap - but they splash vivid colour around Céret and bring with them the feel of early summer.

Don't miss the Fête de la Cerise, a colourful weekend of stone spitting, music, dancing and entertainment in the streets, not to mention the inventive recipes involving cherries served up in the local restaurants.... Or why not try a glass of cherry beer, cherry wine, cherry pie, cherry pasty, cherry burger, cherries on toast, cherries with spam.....?

So Véry Céret.



The weekly market, held every Saturday morning beneath the hundred-year-old plane trees that line the streets of the town centre, is one of the best in the area. Like the first cherries, it's not cheap, but locals and tourists alike are drawn by the very 'Frenchness' of it, the smells and sounds as the strains of accordion or jazz mingle in the warm southern air with artisan made goat's cheese and paella 'à emporter', and the café trottoirs overflow with people watchers.



The old ramparts, the grand city gates, the Place des Neuf Jets with its attractive fountain and choice of cafes and restaurants, the narrow, cobbled streets, all make Céret a delightful town through which to stroll - and a magnet for artists.

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OUT for THE DAY...

....in CÉRET



In 1911, Picasso and Braques arrived in Céret and began experimenting with Cubism, a painting style that was to revolutionise art. Other artists were drawn to the town, discussions held in the Grand Café were animated, and Céret became a popular meeting place for artists from far and wide.



Juan Gris (1913)
Landscape with house at Céret

Juan Gris went on to create The Musée d'Art Moderne de Céret in 1950, a permanent collection of both internationally famous and local artists, including 78 pieces by Picasso – 57 of which were gifts of the artist. Each summer, it stages an impressive exhibition, often the work of famous 20th century artists who were influenced by a sojourn there. Not only Picasso and Braques but Matisse, Gris, Max Jacob, Marquet, Maillol, Manolo, Chagall, Dufy, Miro and Dali have all fallen under the charm of this gentle Catalan town. Watch out for a Dali special this summer.

www.musee-ceret.com

Music is also well catered for in Céret with the Musée des Instruments.

Have you ever seen a percussion instrument made out of the lower jawbone of a donkey, teeth still intact, with a little wooden stick to bump along the teeth? Or how about a silver- and jewel-encrusted horn-trumpet conch shell from a Tibetan Buddhist monastery? This small but innovative and eclectic museum looks at instruments from all over the world. (See P42 for more info).

www.music-ceret.com

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Pont du Diable

The Legend of the Pont du Diable

Many bridges built in medieval Europe were named 'the Devil's Bridge' – often amazing feats of architecture, built by hand with skills considered beyond human capabilities.

Le Pont du Diable in Céret, a 14th-century bridge with a 46-metre span, the world's largest bridge arch at the time of its construction, has its own story attached.

In the fourteenth century, the two banks of the River Tech were joined by a wooden bridge, which was regularly washed away by the rain and wind. The people of Céret wanted a more solid, stone bridge, but local engineers insisted that the banks were too steep, and no-one would take on the contract.

One greedy engineer, drawn by the large sum of money, accepted. His first two attempts were destroyed by storms.

The angry Cérétans, who had paid a bras and a jambe for this bridge, gave him a deadline, after which he would be hanged for taking the money and not completing the work!

So he set to work. The night before the fatal deadline, a severe storm carried the bridge away once again! In despair, the engineer fled to the mountains where he met a stranger, who promised that the bridge would be standing again at midnight – on condition that our desperate engineer granted him the first living being to cross the bridge.

The stranger then disappeared in a puff of sulphur-filled air! Hmmmm, very suspicious!

That night, just as the devil was about to place the last stone, the engineer sent a black cat across the bridge. Surprised, the devil dropped the stone, and chased the cat to Le Boulou to claim its soul. To this day, the bridge remains unfinished. No one has been able to replace that one last stone.

Three bridges span the Tech in Céret, one of which, Le Pont du Diable, was supposedly built by the devil in 1321 in exchange for the soul of the first Cérétan to cross. The crafty engineer sent a cat across first, but it nevertheless took the wary locals many years to use the bridge happily.

Find out everything you need to know about Céret at the newly relocated Tourist Office in the Rue Ferreol, with seating for visitors, tablets to surf and a cellphone charging station where you can plug in your phone, head off to lunch, and return later to retrieve it fully charged.

And don't forget to check out the fabulous walks and amazing views in the Céret area, including the "Chemin Sublime" a town trail which highlights some of the attractive architecture painted by Picasso, Dufy, and Soutine, with reproductions of the paintings next to the buildings.

Sit in the shade of the ancient plane trees on a sunny day with 'un grand crème' or a cold beer and drink in the extraordinary charm and character of this rather special little Mediterranean town.

Relax in the square under the plane trees

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Musée des Instruments, Céret

Two primary collections displayed in a series of rooms on two floors (lift available) showcase more

MUSIC does not represent the music performed in guilded opera halls or acoustically-designed spaces for symphony orchestras but that of ordinary and extraordinary people, used to celebrate day-to-day life, ease death, fill in the spaces of loneliness in remote pastures, and blend into the cacophony of clanking and clanging in crowded marketplaces. It's the real deal.

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The latest addition to outlets in **Le Boulou, Céret, and Cabestany** is a **large and airy shop next to Feu Vert in the Auchan complex**. Gérard is constantly fighting and negotiating with suppliers in order to offer affordable ways of consuming organic produce. With several shops, he has greater buying power. Prices are kept low, and wherever possible he buys locally.

But Réso Bio is more than just a health food shop. Along with the usual organic produce, you will find **organic cosmetics, wines, baby food, household products, pet food, gluten and lactose-free products and both vegetarian and vegan foods**....and a special for me, not often found in France..... COTTAGE CHEESE!



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

OUT for THE DAY

With Katja Willemssen

Pretty Perfect P-O Picnics



Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes

If the festive season has left you frazzled, pack a picnic and head for the majestic Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes that overlooks Port de la Selva in Spain.

A narrow road whiplashes wildly up the mountain to the monastery, a hair-raising drive with steep cliffs on either side and increasingly spectacular views the higher you go. Spare a thought for the serfs and donkeys that hauled up building materials long before the road was built. (See inset for directions.)

It's not just a monastery you'll be visiting but a sprawling complex of ancient buildings that cover the three crucial elements of feudal life: prayer, produce and defence. There's even a 6000-year-old dolmen that's worth stopping for on the drive up.

History

The origins of the monastery are buried in legends and lore. Since its construction in the 10th century, it's lived through splendour, wealth, wars, looting by pirates and bandits, and finally, abandonment by the monks in the 18th century. Restoration started before World War 2 and has continued on and off ever since.

Village of Santa Creu de Rodes

Park in the main car park and walk through the trees up the well-trodden path to the remains of a hamlet discovered during archaeological digs about twenty years ago. Careful dusting and diggings have exposed parts of houses and streets and give an exciting peep into medieval life. Most spectacular of all are the two gateways, which were the only way in and out of the village.

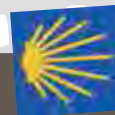
Next to the hamlet is the ancient chapel of Santa Helena, behind which is a perfectly positioned stone bench for picnicking. The vista over the bay of Llança and the peninsula of Cap Creus is breathtaking.



DID YOU KNOW?



The Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes is the Catalan start of the Santiago Way.



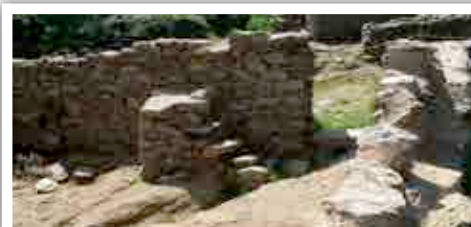
Monastery of Sant Pere

The monastery dominates the sea-facing flank of the Verdera mountain and has been restored with Spanish pizzazz. Concrete, glass and steel blend unconventionally with ancient stone walls, worn floors and vaulted ceilings and crypts. The building is a maze of interconnected rooms over three levels constructed into the steep terrain. Filtered light through arched windows creates a moody atmosphere of shadows and ghosts.



Castle of Verdera

Near the main entrance of the monastery, you'll see signs to the castle. It's a steep half-hour hike up a rocky trail but worth the effort as the views from the crumbling remains of the castle of Sant Salvador de Verdera are heart-stopping. It's so steep that a cannon ball lobbed off its cliffs would probably hurtle all the way to Figueres. Cadaqués twinkles in the sweeping curve of the bay of Roses and snow-capped Pyrenees glisten in the sunlight across the vast Empordà plains.



Picnic spots

There are endless places to picnic. Throw down your blanket in the woods just above or below the parking area, or sit on the stone bench behind the church, or walk along any of the many trails and find a private spot, but for a really dramatic picnic, hike up to the castle ruins and toast the 360° Mediterranean-to-Pyrenees skyline!

If you're not in the mood for picnicking, enjoy a hearty Catalan lunch on a covered terrace on the sea-facing side of the monastery.

HOW TO GET THERE

An hour from Perpignan if going via the A9 and Figueres, or just over two hours if you take the scenic route along the coast.

Scenic coastal route:

- Take D914 coastal road all the way to Cerbère, after which you enter Spain and the road becomes the N260.
- Stay on the N260 and pass Llança.
- After about half an hour of driving in Spain, turn right into G1-604 and once in Vilajuïga, follow signs to Monestir de St Pere de Rodes, turning right into the GI-6041.

ABOUT THE MONASTERY OF SANT PERE DE RODES

> **Monastery**
10 am to 5.30 pm.
Closed on Mondays, 25 & 26 December, 1 & 6 January.
Entry: 4.50€ for adults and 3.50€ for children.
Kids under eight are free. NO WHEELCHAIR ACCESS.

> **Restaurant/ coffee shop**
Only accessible with ticket to monastery
Open: Tuesday to Sunday
Lunch: 12.30pm to 4pm
Coffee: 10 am to 4pm
Reservations: 0034-972 19 42 33



OUT for THE DAY

The Parc Natural Cap de Creus

Extending from Port de la Selva to Roses, just south of the Spanish border, this protected national park is the largest uninhabited area in the Spanish Mediterranean. Stunning views, unique fauna and flora, clear emerald waters and hidden coves make it an absolute paradise for walkers, scuba divers, bird watchers..... and easily accessible for those who just want to sit down with a book and a picnic on the cliff tops, and say 'wow!'

This peninsula sits on geological rocks more than 450 million years old, fascinating and bizarre in their formations, several of which inspired the work of Salvador Dalí.

Head towards Figueres and take direction "Llança-Port de la Selva" or "Roses-Cadaquès" along winding roads, (don't forget the sick bag!) through an incredible lunar style landscape, with startling views of the ocean around each impressive curve.



COMBINE A VISIT TO THIS ART GALLERY WITH A PERFECT PICNIC OVER THE BORDER.



Pilar Pineda

**Espai d'art
Pilar Pineda**
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El Port de la Selva 17489
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listened to the sound of
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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 chateau and remnants of ancient walls built to protect the villagers from marauding pirates, plus the iconic Canigou ever present in the distance. it's all happening in Canet once again this Spring.

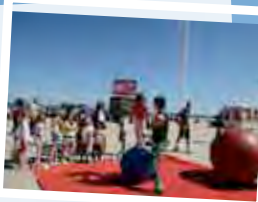
Fabulous walking, riding and cycling for every level through the surrounding nature reserve, carefully preserved fishermen's reed huts, aquarium, arboretum, bird-watching, windsurfing, long and gloriously sandy beach, plenty of shops, cafes, bars, and restaurants, a varied events programme. Great fun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

Take a look at some of the highlights...

19th - 29th April

FESTI'KIDS

Activities for the kids (FREE)
Painting, pottery, mosaic and craft workshops, supervised bike rides, circus workshop, sandcastle competition, kite and windmill making, mini car circuit



6th May - 11th June

LES PRITCHARD'S FONT LEUR CINEMA

Step into the world of artistic duo Sabine and Eric, known as 'Les Pritchards'. Entertainment, sculpture, painting and video merge in this special exhibition.
Grand Opening:
5th May at 18h30



7th & 8th May

FÊTE DE LA VICTOIRE

Théâtre de la Mer (FREE)

Who do you think you are kidding Mr H?
Over 100 period military vehicles, a carefully reconstructed military encampment, vehicle exhibition and parades through the streets, (departs 11h and 15h30 on the 8th) and hundreds of 'extras' dressed in period costume wandering the streets.
Dance to live music from the era
(18h on the 7th and 16h on the 8th).



25th - 28th May

L'EFFET MER

Beach and Street Art Festival (FREE)

Magnificent sand sculptures, graffiti on specially constructed units, urban art on the theme "Le monde des océans et les pirates", initiation workshops, hip hop concert. Check out the full programme at the tourist office.



10th - 11th June

FISE XPERIENCE

Théâtre de la mer (FREE)

International extreme Sports Festival. Thrills and spills in this exciting festival bringing together the best of Europe's BMX and skateboard champions, and a chance to try them out yourself. New this year, a 'Flat' competition (acrobatic biking).



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

17th -18th June

INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING MEET

Centre de Natation Arlette Franco
Hundreds of the best swimmers from 20 countries, many of them National and World champions, meet and compete. (See Tourist Office for cost).

4th June

BOUTEILLES A LA MER

Air du Mas (See Tourist Office for cost)

A morning stroll around the Canet vineyards, in festive atmosphere with music and tastings, followed by a gourmet lunch and wines based on a sea theme, prepared by the 'Toques Blanches du Roussillon'.



From April to September, pick up the 'Carte Canet Club' or the 'Canet Pass', both multi-activity privilege cards offering reductions on tourist attractions, guided walks and tours, sport and entertainment and many of the Canet shops, bars and restaurants.

FAITES LA PHOTO

Win a camera!

Young photographers...

send your Canet sea and beach photos to d.camus@imagine-canet.fr before 9th April

(don't forget to add your contact details) and win a camera for the best of each category (7-11 year olds and 12-16 year olds) and framed photos for the first three runners-up!



**POP INTO THE TOURIST OFFICE
TO FIND OUT ALL ABOUT THE
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IN AND AROUND CANET**

**For more details on any of the events ...
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LIVING off THE LAND

Chickweed and Roses ... little stars!

By Fiona Sass and Cindy Gilbert

Fiona Sass and Cindy Gilbert have much in common.

They both live in the High Vallespir....and they both have a passion for edible and medicinal weeds and wild plants.

Over the next few editions, they will introduce you to gentle weed walks, pomades, poultices, and plant based remedies and recipes.

Fiona on chickweed



Chickweed has got to be one of my favourite worthy weeds. It germinates in autumn or late winter, then forms large mats of foliage, producing small white flowers followed quickly by the seed pods. Its Botanical name is *Stellaria* (little star) *Media* (in the midst of).

Find this little star along misty cliffs, deep mountain valleys and in municipal pots when the flowers die off. It is my favourite salad green, not just because I can harvest it fresh all winter long, but because the taste is exceptional: clean, bright green without any bitterness, just a little salty.

Snip the growing leafy tops off and leave behind the solid stalky stuff. Lay it in a neat bundle with all the stalks parallel to make chopping easier when you get back to the kitchen. No fuss, no mess, no dirt, no tedious washing.

CHICKWEED POULTICE

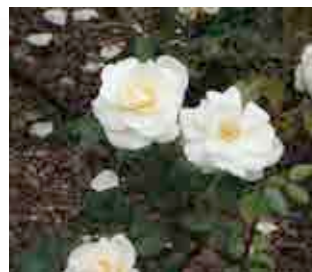
Chickweed has many health benefits, can cool a fever, soothe rheumatic pain....For a soothing poultice....

Either... Apply the fresh herb, washed, directly onto sores, closed eyes, wounds.

Or... Simmer in half water, half vinegar for about 5 minutes. Cool, and apply, covered with a cotton towel or a thin layer of clay, and poultice for 5 minutes to 3 hours. Replace when poultice feels hot to the touch and oozes. (Yes hot! Although most poultices are applied warm and removed when they are cool, chickweed poultices actually heat up as they draw out infection and heat). Poultices used on infections, such as pinkeye, must be thrown away after use. Poultices used on clean wounds and unbroken skin can be reused several times if chickweed is in short supply.



Cindy on roses



I have always loved flowers and herbs. My book *Naturelle Magick* in the Pyrenees, was written to encourage the use of commonly found herbs and flowers here on our doorstep, to see their

value as not only something pretty to look at, but also a useful aid in our everyday lives. Roses are abundant as I drive down from our village of St Laurent De Cerdans to the plains of Perpignan and beyond. They thrive in this wonderful climate. If you don't have them growing in your garden or know a kindly voisin happy to let you share some of theirs, wild ones can be found on the pistes and lanes, poking out between other wild nature. They delight the eyes and nose – but they are also full of goodness. A great addition to food: used for summer salads, desserts, cakes, ice creams, punches, cocktails ... and great for the skin.

CONFIT DE ROSE

This rose petal confit should be made to one's own taste and can involve a bit of trial and error, dependent on the type of rose and strength of flavour. I make it regularly as follows:

ROSE PETALS

1 LEMON, JUICED

2 KG SUGAR

50 ML WATER

Fill a saucepan full of rose petals and add water. Boil until it reduces to about half the original amount. Add lemon juice and sugar and simmer until consistency thickens, just like making jam, tasting to see if more sugar is required.

Sometimes it thickens really well, other times less so, but if it turns out too liquid, it's lovely added to a glass of champagne, punch, or poured over ice cream. For a light sweet snack, spread onto a cracker. Or, for a hot treat, stir into your favorite hot tea as a natural sweetener.



OUT for THE DAY

Bewitched in Villefranche de Conflent

As you head up the N116 towards the high Pyrenees after Prades, the Têt Valley narrows dramatically where it meets the valley of the Cady, and the perfectly preserved fortified medieval town of Villefranche de Conflent whisks you back thousands of years in time.

At the confluence of the rivers Têt, Cady and Rotja, Villefranche was built and fortified at the end of the 11th century by Count Guillaume Raymond de Cerdagne, to protect the valleys from invasion. It was later reinforced by Vauban in the 17th century.

Today, Villefranche is a World Heritage Site, and deservedly classified among the most beautiful villages of France.

The Town

Enter the town by one of two ancient gates, the Porte d'Espagne or the Porte de France. Originally built into the valley bottom, space was limited in Villefranche, so the houses are tall and narrow and there are just two main pedestrian-only streets, Saint Jacques et Saint Jean. An enchanting glow comes from the famous pink-coloured marble, mined in the area and used in much of the town's construction.

Take Rue St Jacques to visit the 17th century Romanesque church of Saint-Jacques, with its 12th-century carved pink marble entrance, or choose Rue St. Jean for the many art galleries, souvenir shops and local craft shops. Several sell handcrafted witch dolls, 'poupées sorcières', as befits the legends of magic and witchcraft surrounding this region, steeped in history and superstition.

Known also as Villa Franca, town of free trade, special tax privileges were offered to attract skilled and assorted trades people. Settlers could live tax-free for three years, after which they could pay as little or as much tax as they wanted, whenever they chose. All right for some!



But never fear: although you may well be bewitched by the town itself, these dolls are supposed to bring good luck and protection, so you can put the pins away!

As you wander the streets, look up at the fascinating shop signs, forged from local iron.

As the warmer weather arrives, grab a coffee or a cold beer and settle down in one of the squares at

either end of the town to take in the magical atmosphere...

and if you're around at Easter weekend, look out for the annual **Fête des Géants**, and the '**Goig des ous de xocolat**'.

Giants parade through the streets accompanied by musicians playing Catalan instruments (gralles, flaviol and tambourin) and asking for chocolate eggs from the inhabitants in exchange for their music. What a treat.



Géants are enormous painted figures, several metres tall, constructed on a wooden framework with heads made from paper maché and plaster of paris – a tradition which goes back to the Middle Ages, depicting religious figures in parades.

The 'geganter' walks inside the framework, hidden by the giant's clothes, and navigates via a hole cut into the robes, covered with mesh or lace.

For parades, Giants are normally accompanied by

'little big-heads' (Capgrossos) smaller figures with oversized head, who will often use one hand to hold the head, carry a whip or pig bladder in the other, to frighten children or young women.

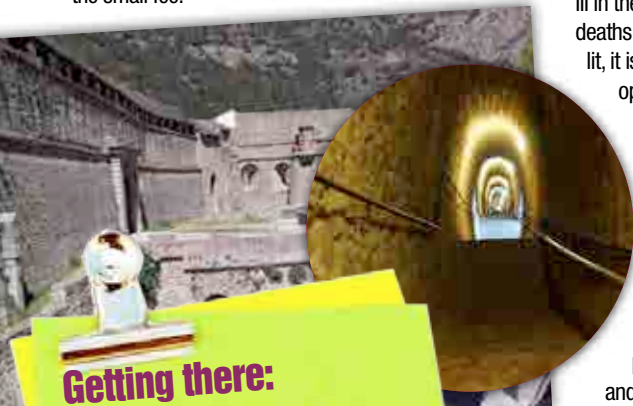
Most Catalan towns have their own giants, often representing some important person in the town's history. They usually appear in couples, often as king and queen, or some other important person and go out during the patron saint holiday of the town (Festa Major) or on special days, dancing in the streets.

OUT for THE DAY

Bewitched
in Villefranche
de Conflent

The ramparts

First built in the Middle Ages with a tunnel running around the walls, Villefranche-de-Conflent city walls were transformed by Vauban during the 17th century, when he added another level with a traditional slate roof. Walk round alone, or with an audio guide. It's well worth the small fee.



Getting there:

By car: N116

Bus: 2 Euro Return from Perpignan Bus Station located next to the new side of Train Station. Buy tickets on the bus.

Train: 2 Euros Return from 'old side' Perpignan Train Station. Buy tickets from the red machines located in the hall.

Fort Liberia

If you're interested in history and military architecture, you won't want to miss Fort Liberia, perched above the town, and dominated by Canigou.

One way up is via 'Les milles marches'. This underground staircase was built in the reign of Napoleon III in the nineteenth Century. Twenty-two men fell to their deaths during its construction. Steep, narrow and dimly lit, it is cooler on a hot day but might not be the best option for those with claustrophobia or bad knees!

There are 1279 steps – including those in the fort itself so give yourself at least 20 minutes for this climb! Or perhaps come back down this way, bringing you out where the little Yellow train passes the fortified walls of Villefranche on the start of its climb to Latour de Carol.

Alternatively, you can walk the steep open pathway, with its stunning views over mountain and valley, or you can take a shuttlebus from inside the town walls.

Inside, you can buy tickets or a guide, available in English, and drinks, snacks and loos are available.

Built in the same impenetrable pink marble as much of the town, with defensive interior walls of soft brick to absorb cannon balls, and internal corridors within massively thick outer walls from which to fire on attackers, the defenders of Fort Liberia were well equipped to repel invaders from both sides of the border.



There is plenty to see and explore, including La Prison de Dames with its horrible history of female prisoners. The Marquise de Brinvilliers was found guilty of poisoning her father and brothers, imprisoned in the fort and eventually burnt at the stake. Her lady-in-waiting, Anne Guesdon, and another alleged lady poisoner, La Chapelain were imprisoned for the remaining 36 years and 43 years of their lives respectively, chained to the wall of their cell. Wax models of them sit there still.

Going Commando

Fort Liberia is still occupied by military personnel. The National Commando Training Centre trains special forces in this area, and they can be regularly seen on manoeuvres in full combat dress, so don't panic if you're approached by masked men in full camouflage when out walking in the Conflent!

DID YOU KNOW

Exceedingly Nice Walk

If you head up the Conflent to pretty Vernet-les-Bains, leave yourself some time to stroll around the 'Kipling circuit', a short walk around Vernet with illustrated panels and quotations from Kipling's own writings - the village seen through the pen of the celebrated author.

Nearby

Castell

Small but delightful animal park, home to lions, bears, monkeys, a llama, deer, and several species of bird. Children and adults alike will love it. Two walking circuits of 2.5 and 3.5 km and picnic area allow you to enjoy both the animals and nature.

www.parcanimaliercastell.com



Grottes des Canalettes

Two caves just opposite Villefranche, formed naturally by erosion from water trickling down through the rock. Stalagmites, stalactites and coloured pillars of mineral rock. Take the man-made path through the caves to the auditorium with 'Son et Lumière' (depending on time of year) highlighting the colours of the minerals, to the accompaniment of Strauss, Bach, Casals and Pavarotti. Not for the claustrophobic. Riverside picnic area, bar and shop on site.

<http://grottescanalettes.com>



St Martin de Canigou

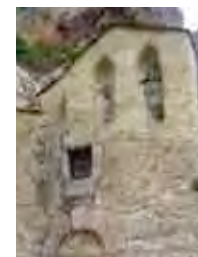
This Benedictine Abbey is a working abbey and you are asked to respect the silence and enjoy the beauty in peace...or stay a few nights if you need a spiritual break. You can also head down through the woods for a walk up the Gorge of the Cady River, past rock pools and perfect picnic spots.

<https://www.stmartinducanigou.org/en>



Notre Dame de Vie

Just outside Villefranche on the N116 after the level crossing, next to a small shrine, a rocky little footpath leads to the eagle's nest chapel of Notre Dame de Vie. Stunning views down the valley of the Rotja await if you don't mind a steep and vertiginous climb of approximately 45 minutes. When you arrive at the chapel it is worth carrying on to the massive cave above it. Easy to imagine prehistoric man surveying the splendid scene spread out below.



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IDESCO / © Photos - Sud de France - Yves Cavalli

OUT for THE DAY

Where the Pyrenees plunge down to the Mediterranean, ancient terraces of sunbaked vineyards sweep to the very edge of the town, and brightly painted houses reflect the colours of the Catalan Barques moored on the quay, you will find Collioure.



Notre-Dame-des-Anges, our Lady of Angels, with its emblematic pink bell tower stands firm against the onslaught of winter storms and summer crowds. Across the bay, its walls also plunging into the sea, is the impressive Summer Palace of the Kings of Mallorca. Today festivals, markets and exhibitions are held within its ancient walls.

The wild and colourful artists Matisse and Derrain put Collioure on the art map of Europe in 1905, colour dancing off their brushes as they painted the sparkling sea, the Catalan Barques....and gave birth to Fauvism.

Don't miss Collioure's **Museum of Modern Art**, or the recent 'Chemin du Fauvisme', a walking circuit of reproductions of works at 20 sites around Collioure.



....in COLLIOURE



The forts of Miradou, St Elme, Dugommier, Carre and Rond overlook the town amidst endless clifftop and inland walking opportunities. Fort Miradou is the only one still in use today by the Commando Training Centre.

Choose any flavour of ice cream from the many stands and wander the narrow maze of cobbled streets, their tall, brightly painted houses and ancient steps adorned with tumbling bouganvillea and geraniums. Visit the artists studios, craft shops, lively Sunday and Wednesday market, cafés and restaurants, and as summer approaches, expect to be serenaded by wandering musicians, entertained by mime artists, jugglers or fire-eaters....



DID YOU KNOW



Fête du Muguet & Fête du Travail

Don't forget to offer your loved ones **Lily-of-the-Valley (Muguet)** on May 1st the day in 1561 when King Charles IX of France offered the flower to all the ladies of his court. Today, anyone can legally sell flowers without a license on that date, as long as they are a reasonable distance away from the nearest flower shop.



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And there are restaurants, good, bad and indifferent to suit every taste.

Art lovers shouldn't miss the bar restaurant in the legendary **Hotel des Templiers**. Roof-to-floor paintings crowd the walls, an estimated 2,000 originals received in payment by not-yet-famous, struggling artists over the years in exchange for food and drink, along with photos from satisfied customers....Picasso and Dali, hobnobbing with the locals

Over the other side of Collioure, reader Peter Spencer recommends the **Can Pla** run by young couple, Serge and Stephanie. "The food is good value local Catalan fare and, in the many times we have visited, we have never been let down (not least when taking visitors including our son's "soon to be" in-laws). I would thoroughly recommend seeking out this gem".

This picture postcard town gets very crowded in August but for the rest of the year it is the most beautiful place to spend a day out.

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A family affair since 1925
OPEN 7/7 ALL YEAR

In the heart of Collioure,
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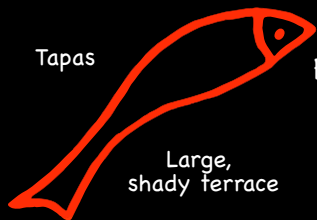
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OUT for THE DAY



IN ST LAURENT DE CERDANS



A day out in the High Vallespir is always a pleasure. Today, we are heading up the D915 through Arles sur Tech, (worth a day out in its own right) to St Laurent de Cerdans, pretty cluster of old village houses wrapped around the church with its tall steeple.

You'll catch glimpses of stunning scenery through the trees on the drive up, and find plenty of room to park comfortably in the main car park at the entrance to the village.

First stop, a short walk to the delightful showroom shop of "les Toiles de Soleil". Home of the vibrantly coloured Catalan stripy fabric, ancient industrial revolution machines produce the famous material in the Dickensian factory behind the shop. Have your credit cards ready for gorgeous goodies – at a price!

www.toiles-du-soleil.com



OUT for THE DAY

IN ST LAURENT DE CERDANS

At the Espadrille factory, higher up in the village, similarly brilliant fabric is used to make 'vigatanes', traditional Catalan rope-soled shoes – unique and handmade – along with brightly coloured hats, bags, and other surprises.

www.espadrille-catalane.com



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Wander down the hill to the little cinema and Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions in an old cooperative workshop. You can see how the espadrilles are made, follow the history of the Bear Festival, and find information on walking the Cami de Retirada – the route many escapees took over this part of the Pyrenees. A fascinating photographic record of the Retirada is displayed on the wooden dormitory bunks in which some of the 70,000

refugees slept on their long retreat from Franco at the end of the Spanish Civil War. Yet another corner of the museum is dedicated to cinema history in the form of old film posters, film equipment and machinery.

Golfers will not want to visit Saint Laurent without carrying on a few kilometres more to the Domaine de Falgos – golf resort and Spa par excellence. Open all year round, with endless stunning views, you can play or learn to play golf, tennis or just relax in the pool and spa.

www.falgos.com



Simon Bridges on Falgos

The estate is so stunningly beautiful that it sometimes requires a great deal of concentration to ignore the scenery and hit a golf ball accurately.

The hotel, the restaurant, the pool, the spa, the children's area and all the extras make Falgos that extra bit special, and if you are fortunate enough to get a hotel room with a view over the golf course, you will feel blessed as you sip your sundowner on the balcony.

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



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P-O NATURALLY



Know Your Hornets!

By Lesley McLaren

We're talking stingers again! Hornets. Despite being maligned and feared by many, they are far less hostile than 'social' wasps – at least towards us humans. Some hornet lovers label our native European species 'gentle giants'. But we also have Asian hornets in the PO. How do they differ and what's the problem with them?

Both have the same lifecycle: Around last November new queens left their nest, mated, and hibernated for the winter. The rest of the colony died, and that nest won't be reused. This spring, surviving queens are emerging to start new nests. Each will grow as its population increases.

Advice from vespa-crabro.com

Although hornets rarely make unprovoked attacks, **if close to them DO NOT:**

- * Move quickly
- * Block flight path
- * Breathe on or shake their nest!

Credit: Anon



Credit: P. Namek



European hornets (*Frelons européens*)

- Length 25-35mm
- Head/face - brown/yellow
- Body mostly yellow, some black markings – very wasp-like
- Legs dark
- Also fly at night
- Nest usually in dark places, eg. tree hollows, walls crevices, roof spaces
- Colony population 400-700 by autumn

Although fruit is a favourite food in the autumn, earlier in the year, while larvae are being fed, 90% of their diet is comprised of flies. A large colony can capture several kilos of annoying or harmful insects in a season. What's not to love about that?

They do kill some bees, but can also be beneficial to bee colonies, preying on damaging wax moths. In Germany, European hornets are a protected species – perhaps France should follow suit?

Credit: Anon



Credit: C.J. Sharp



Asian hornets (*Frelons asiatiques*)

- Length 20-30mm (smaller!)
- Head/face - brown/orange
- Body mostly dark, velvety, with orange segment towards the end
- Legs yellow towards the bottom
- Never fly at night
- Nest usually in open, eg. tree tops, hedges. Huge - up to 90cm high
- Colony population 1,000-2,000 by autumn (one source states 5,000, but this is unverified)

It's thought they came to France in 2004, in a consignment of pottery from China. One nest can produce up to 350 queens in a season! Not all make it through the winter, but plenty survive to start fresh colonies. They spread at a rate of about 100km a year and, in 2016, several nests were spotted in and around just one Albères village. A new generation may be buzzily setting up home in

If you find an Asian hornet nest: **DO NOT try to destroy it yourself.** Report it to the local Mairie, which should be able to advise – or take action if the nest is on public land. No point destroying a nest in winter – it's empty and won't be used again

a tree near you right now, but this early in the year, that papier mâché sphere will be hard to spot.

Considered even less aggressive to humans than the Europeans, their sting is said to be no worse than a wasp's. But all hornets can sting multiple times – and will protect their nest en masse! If you react badly to a sting, seek medical advice.



Credit: J. Haxaire

The problem is their potentially devastating impact on the bee population. Several will work together, hovering in front of hives to pick off bees. Whole colonies can be wiped out. That's bad for bees but also for us because we – and other creatures – depend on their pollination for many foods. No bees, no PO cherries!

Although it's now impossible to eradicate Asian hornets from France, we should still try to limit their numbers. Current methods may be ineffective (traps), illegal (pesticides), or positively dangerous (shooting nests down!). But there is a glimmer of hope.

Pollinis.org (a nonprofit organisation) is developing a "safe, clean" alternative: a microwave weapon!

P-O NATURALLY



What's That Bird?

The spring migration is well underway – ending around mid-May. There are many interesting species to look out for, from relatively common, to rare or just passing through. Among those that stay, some of the especially colourful and exotic tend to be heard more often than seen – but what a joy when you do finally spot them!

Can you identify these summer visitors?

(See bottom of next page for answers)

A

A bit bigger than a Green woodpecker. They raise that crest when they make their distinctive – monotonous – call. Also distinctive is the black and white patterning on the wings in flight. Often seen probing for insects with that long beak – on the ground in gardens and vineyards. Some now over-winter in the PO.

Credit: A. Nicolai



B

Big (Jay-sized), those bright colours are most noticeable in flight. Nest in trees, walls or buildings. They often perch on wires or telephone poles, and are quite social. Uncommon – I've yet to see one! The call is hard and crow-like.

Credit: C. Syvane



D

This is a male. Females and immature birds are much less colourful – more greenish-yellow and easily confused with Green woodpeckers, which are similar in size. Common but shy. Because they like to sit in treetops, usually the only fleeting glimpse you get is when they fly across a road or path. Musical, liquid, call.



Credit: Dixi

E

Similar size to starlings, these nest in colonies in holes in sandy banks. They also hunt insects in flocks, often flying too high for those colours to show. They love to perch in dead trees, and their mellifluous call carries a long way.



Credit: Elgollimoh

F

Significantly bigger than a buzzard, this eagle is common in the PO. If seen perched, the head looks big, owl-like, with bright yellow eyes. There are dark and light forms. At a distance, many appear totally white underneath. Their favourite food is snake.



Credit: J.M. Garg



Credit: A. Ronning



Lesley McLaren is one of "The Warblers" – a group of natural history enthusiasts in the PO. Photos by "The Warblers" unless otherwise stated.

www.mediterraneanpyrenees.com
Twitter @66warblers

A. Hoopoe (Huppe fasciée) B. Roller (Roi d'Europe) C. Wryneck (Torcol fourmilier) D. Golden oriole (Loriot d'Europe)
E. Bee eater (Guêpier d'Europe) F. Short-toed eagle (Circaète Jean-Le-Blanc)

P-O SMALL ADS

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AIRPORT NEWS

with John Fairclough

The events of the past few months, allied to the deep fall in the value of Sterling, means that everyone is looking to extract the best possible value from their travel budget. In fairness to the airlines, they are doing their bit by largely keeping most of the existing flights available, introducing new aircraft onto routes, and taking advantage of the continuing low fuel price by offering keener than ever fares.

The owners of **PERPIGNAN** airport have been busy trying to attract new routes from there, and it's borne some fruit by the introduction of a FlyBe service twice a week to Southend. Whilst any new route is good news, I have to say that Southend's proximity to its giant Essex cousin Stansted, does mean that there is a risk of overcapacity to/from that region. Meanwhile, Ryanair has begun to look at the airport afresh and have just announced the start of a year-round link to Marrakech.



Perpignan Mairie and Tourist Board are now working with the airport in search of new routes to the North and West of Birmingham, notably Manchester, Bristol and Scotland, but to date, somewhat surprisingly, there has been no success in that venture. Also high on their list is the need for a winter link to the UK.

STANSTED5x pw Ryanair
SOUTHEND.....2x pw FlyBe
SOUTHAMPTON 2x pw FlyBe
BIRMINGHAM ..2x pw Ryanair
DUBLIN2x pw Aer Lingus

The people at **CARCASSONNE** airport have also been in the market for new capacity, and indeed there may be some good news soon on that front, but sadly not in time for this summer.



Rumours about the future of **BEZIERS** airport continue, but offers much the same choice as previous years, with also the introduction of a link to Stansted.



Also, **MONTPELLIER**'S UK/Ireland routes remain as before.



Fast growth continues at the region's biggest hub **TOULOUSE**.



STANSTED.....7x pw
EAST MIDS3x pw
MANCHESTER..2x pw
GLASGOW INT..2x pw
DUBLIN3x pw
CORK2x pw

All Ryanair

LUTON.....3x pw
STANSTED.....3x pw
EDINBURGH2x pw
BRISTOL3x pw
MANCHESTER..2x pw

All Ryanair

HEATHROW2x pw BA
GATWICK12x pw EasyJet
LUTON.....2x pw EasyJet
DUBLIN2x pw Aer Lingus

HEATHROW.....20x pw BA
GATWICK18x pw EasyJet
LUTON.....7x pw EasyJet
STANSTED21x pw Ryanair
BRISTOL6x pw EasyJet
BIRMINGHAM ..7x pw FlyBe
MANCHESTER.. 7x pw FlyBe
.....2x pw Jet2
DUBLIN5x pw Aer Lingus

Moving across the border, it's great to see some real growth back on the agenda at **GIRONA**. Ryanair seem to have rediscovered their appetite for the Costa Brava facility, and Jet2 have increased their presence too. It remains to be seen if this new enthusiasm continues into the winter!

BELFAST INT..... 2x pw Ryanair
..... 2x pw Jet 2

BIRMINGHAM 3x pw Ryanair
..... 2x pw Jet2

..... 2x pw Thomson

BOURNEMOUTH. 4x pw Ryanair

BRISTOL 5x pw Ryanair

EAST MIDS 2x pw Ryanair

..... 2x pw Jet2

EDINBURGH 2x pw Ryanair

..... 2x pw Jet 2

GLAS PIK 2x pw Ryanair

GLAS INT 2x pw Jet2

LEEDS BRAD 2x pw Ryanair

..... 2x pw Jet 2

LIVERPOOL 2x pw Ryanair

MANCHESTER.... 3x pw Ryanair

..... 4x pw Jet2

..... 2x pw Thomson

LUTON..... 3x pw Ryanair

STANSTED 5x pw Ryanair

..... 2x pw Jet2

GATWICK 2x pw Thomson

NEWCASTLE 2x pw Ryanair

..... 3x pw Jet2

DUBLIN 2x pw Ryanair

CORK 2x pw Ryanair

KNOCK 2x pw Ryanair

But, as ever, if schedule flexibility and large choice of routes is what you are after, **BARCELONA** offers unbeatable pickings. Notable is the further expansion by budget carrier Norwegian, who are now offering through fares to a whole host of destinations including the USA, in some cases direct but also via London Gatwick or various Scandinavian cities.

HEATHROW 56x pw BA
GATWICK 10x pw BA
..... 40x pw Vueling
..... 7x pw Norwegian
..... 40x pw EasyJet
..... 5x pw Monarch
STANSTED 32x pw Ryanair
LUTON..... 21x pw EasyJet
..... 14x pw Vueling
SOUTHEND 4x pw EasyJet
BIRMINGHAM 7x pw Ryanair
..... 5x pw Monarch
..... 2x pw Norwegian
..... 7x pw Vueling
E MIDS 7x pw Ryanair
BRISTOL 12x pw EasyJet
CARDIFF 4x pw Vueling
MANCHESTER.... 4x pw Jet2
..... 14 x pw Ryanair
..... 7x pw Monarch
..... 3x pw Norwegian
..... 7x pw Vueling
LEEDS BRAD 4x pw Jet2
..... 3x pw Monarch
LIVERPOOL 10X pw Ryanair
..... 10x pw EasyJet
NEWCASTLE 6x pw EasyJet
GLAS PIK 7x pw Ryanair
GLAS INT 3x pw Jet2
EDINBURGH 7x pw Ryanair
..... 2x pw Norwegian
..... 5x pw Vueling
BELFAST INT..... 5x pw EasyJet
DUBLIN 18x pw Ryanair
..... 14x pw Aer Lingus
..... 7x pw Vueling
..... 3x pw Norwegian
CORK 4x pw Aer Lingus

Please note that all the above schedules are good for the mid-season. Frequencies may differ in both the July/Aug high season. The usual plea: if anyone comes across any new routes not covered here, please let us know, here at PO Life.

BEWARE THE SAINTS DE GLACE

Named after the frosty trio of saints, St Mamert, St Pancrace, and St Servais, whose Saint days are respectively May 11th - 13th this year, the expression Saints de Glace describes a sudden return of freezing weather in late spring, just as you're planting your hanging baskets and bedding plants!

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STEPHEN MATURIN

Multicultural Catalan

He had come to The University well prepared as a graduate of the Dublin School of Medicine. His Irish father and Catalan mother had died when he was young, and he had been raised by his godfather at the family estate in the Province of Lérida, in Catalonia.

For him, the Revolution was exhilarating. July 1789 was a chaotic month to be a student in Paris, yet Don Esteban Maturin y Domanova was unperturbed. But his ardour cooled by 1793, as France under Bonaparte opposed Catalan independence. That shift and the events of 1800 defined his career. At a concert in Port Mahon, Minorca, he met Jack Aubrey, a British navy officer, who was in need of a doctor for his ship, the HMS Sophie.

So he signed on, under the shorter name of Stephen Maturin. That began a lasting friendship and long duty with the British navy as well as service on land, where he became a spy for British naval intelligence during the Napoleonic wars.

Though busy doctoring on a ship at war, Maturin pursued other interests.

He became a skilled naturalist and a member of the Royal Society, specialising in the studies of birds, beetles and tortoises. He was an accomplished cellist and often played duets with Aubury, a violinist.

The record of the engagements of the HMS Sophie fill 20 volumes, two made into a film and many detailing action off the coast of what now is the Pyrénées-Orientales.

Likewise, several skirmishes on land were in the Pyrénées-Orientales, as when Aubury and Maturin fled French pursuers over the border into Spain at a point about 7 km east of Le Perthus – Aubury disguised in a bearskin.

He even took part in the famous dance of Catalonia, the sardane, when put ashore on the Catalan coast as a spy. "You danced!" says Jack in amazement.

It's the stuff of great fiction – which, of course, it is.

Dr. Maturin, Master and Commander Aubury, the HMS Sophie and all the incidents are accurate though fictional portrayals of early 19th century life on board a British navy warship, from the hand of Patrick O'Brian (1914-2000), who lived in Collioure from 1949 on and wrote many of the Aubury-Maturin sea stories there.

Look out for another work by O'Brian, 'The Catalans', a novel about a fictitious regional family with many detailed descriptions of the vendange, the sardane and Collioure in the 1950s.



SOS HMS SURPRISE

Ellen Turner Hall

The association Amis of Patrick O'Brian based in Collioure, O'Brian's home during the most prolific years of his writing life, has been entrusted with the contents of his writing space. The donation includes O'Brian's books and papers as well as his writing desk, pens and ink.

Pinned to the bookshelf beside his desk we found a plan from the British naval archives of HMS Surprise, the home to the action of much of the Aubrey-Maturin naval adventures.

Our objective is to promote O'Brian's work and life. In order to reach the widest public possible, the

contents of O'Brian's studio will be on display in the new Mediathèque of Collioure due to open its doors in autumn 2017.

We are sending out an SOS to O'Brian's fans and friends all over the world to help safeguard and restore the writer's books and objects with a view to display, study and research.

Our first goal is to clean and frame the HMS Surprise before putting it on exhibit in the future Patrick O'Brian Space in the Mediathèque.

Please help by sending your donation by cheque (to the order of Les Amis de Patrick O'Brian) or bank transfer (IBAN: FR76 1710 6000 3930 0041 6710 082 and BIC/SWIFT: AGRIFRPP871). Please send your name, address and email address to:

SOS HMS Surprise
La Présidente
Association des Amis de Patrick O'Brian
Résidence D'Ambeille 43
66190 Collioure



Watching British TV in France

Easy Fix for TV Junkies

You may not consider yourself to be a TV junky but when it comes to the small screen, it's probably true to say that many Brits, not forgetting those from the Emerald Isle, can get severe withdrawal symptoms if the box isn't on, or worse still, goes on the blink!

It's less an addiction, and more a part of life's routine. Like taking a regular tablet, or drinking your cuppa in the morning, the imminent countdown to the six 'o clock news can trigger an involuntary action that draws you directly to the remote control. But don't worry. Dinde froide is not on our TV menu!

I moved to the P-O just over a year ago from the Limousin, where my satellite dish and Humax box had stood me in good stead for many a year. But here in the deep south, I was suddenly faced with the unthinkable! No decent TV reception.

Fortunately, having spent the last 35 years of my childhood in IT, I had some ideas of how to tackle this.

If you have any computer type issues, don't hesitate to get in touch with Mayday on 06 82 26 31 54

www.webtv4me.com

So what are the solutions? Well, first I looked at the idea of installing a 1.5m satellite dish, certainly a possibility, but here in the P-O, a few hefty puffs of the Tramontane could take both it and your roof on a Magical Mystery Tour of Carcassonne.



Then there is Filmon. This can be watched on a computer type device or streamed via Apple TV to a television.

Or there is the option of using Kodi and accessing data streams from disparate sources on the Internet. Getting complicated for technophobes, that's for sure as these solutions require the user to do the work of configuration.

Are you still with me? Despite my technical background and love of a challenge, when it comes to the telly, I just like to turn it on to exactly

what I want to watch and experience the best possible picture with no interference.

So I produced a short bucket list for watching TV.

- **Obtaining the largest choice of channels in line with my viewing options in the UK.**
- **A decent picture.**
- **Ease of use.**

And I continued to look into the various solutions, an ongoing investigation that has proved both interesting and informative, helped by conversations with other ex-pats with the same aims.

One thing was clear: if there WAS a way to watch programs here in the P-O that had become unavailable following the Astra satellite re-alignment, there would be a great deal of interest. So on I plodded, in search of the simplest and most efficient resolution to the P-O telly-viewing problem. In the end I chose to team up with a simple system that does all the setting up for you.

The old adages, "there's no such thing as a free lunch", and "you get what you pay for", are certainly true when it comes to these types of service.

In order to provide a TV service over the Internet that can deliver a quality picture with the highest percentage availability means a massive investment in technology. We use the latest servers and software to do just this.

Our service brings together live TV with 14 day catch-up, a movie and box set library of over



70,000 titles, radio, karaoke, YouTube, a web browser, and even a comprehensive music library. For the hard of hearing, BBC and ITV can be subtitled, and there are special 'lighter' channels to improve reception for those with a weak signal.

All this is delivered via a portal for which there is an access charge and then the choice is yours as to what you watch.

Go gaga with Lala Land, pour a Pimms and settle down in front of Wimbledon, or the Tour de France, or crack open a bottle of champagne for a karaoke night in with the girls! Wella wella wella..... tell you more, tell you more? Well, c'est du gâteau. Anyone can use it.

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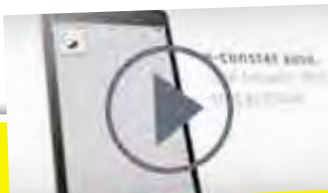
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...call **902 102 112** to make a 'denuncia' (police report) or visit the Spanish Police's website at www.policia.es/denuncia (English version available).

Most insurance policies require you to have some sort of crime number from the local police.

DRIVING STUFF



If you have a car accident in France....

...you are advised to always carry a 'constat amiable d'accident' (accident report form) with you in the car 'just in case'! You can pick up a blank form from most insurance offices – but it is now possible to use an 'e-constat' or 'constat électronique' depending on the circumstances, and complete your statement via smartphone. Check out

www.e-constat-auto.fr

The free phone app gives the option of completing the e-constat on one or two smartphones, with each able to check the information entered by the other driver. A summary is then sent to each party, and once agreed and signed, is sent to the insurance company involved.

And don't forget to...

- ...ask to see the other party's ID and proof of insurance, especially if they refuse to fill in the 'constat'.
- ...never let the other party fill in your part of the 'constat'
- ...try to take some photographs
- ...note down names and details of any witnesses.

NEWS



Don't Worry, Be happy

F If you're 16 - 27 years old, why not sign up for a Happy Card, aimed at encouraging the younger age range to use the train more often?

Available from 19th January, the card allows unlimited travel on all trains, including TGV, (Trains à Grande Vitesse) and costs €79 a month, with a minimum signing-up period of 3 months.

As yet, the card is only available online at www.sncf.com/en/discounts/jeune-card

Changing Banks

Sometimes it's easier to stay with an unsatisfactory bank, than to research and change to a different one, particularly if you have several accounts. It could be out of the frying pan...

However, a new French law says that if you wish to change your bank, it's down to the bank to sort out all the paperwork, organise the stopping of monthly payments etc – not you. All you have to do is tell them you're leaving, sign a form... and in theory,

Robert est ton oncle!

Whether, in practice, the bank will carry out this new order diligently remains to be seen!



Spring Cleaning with items to give away?



Abbé Pierre

Emmaus was founded in Paris in 1949 by Father Henri-Antoine Groues, Catholic priest, MP and former member of the French Resistance during WW2. He was better known by his resistance name of Abbé Pierre.

When a desperate, suicidal man came to him for help, he took him in and asked him to join in his mission to help the homeless. Georges became the first of a group of 'Emmaus Companions' supported by and living in the home of Abbé Pierre, working to build temporary homes for those in need. When the

money ran out, Abbé Pierre toured the restaurants and businesses of Paris begging for donations. His 'companions' were outraged. There had to be another way. They became rag and bone men, going through bins, collecting people's unwanted items and selling them on.... and so Emmaus was born.

Donate any unwanted items by taking them along yourself or arrange for larger items to be collected.

Mas Garria, Pollestres
04 68 54 59 60

When you need a chemist out of hours...

There will always be at least one chemist open on Sundays and bank holidays. This is called the 'pharmacie de garde' and details can usually be found on pharmacie doors, in local newspapers and at the local police station.

You can also ring 32 37 to find out the location of the nearest chemist – but it's not a cheap call.



Fermé pour Contrefaçons

Ever wondered why your Rolex was only 25 euros, and your Nike trainers a mere 30 euros over the border?

Well, if you've noticed quite a few shops closed down over the past few months in Le Perthus/

La Jonquera, around 50 in all, it's because they were

'fermés pour contrefaçons' - closed for selling counterfeit goods, and are only just being allowed to reopen now, many months later. At the end of a 3 year operation, police raided shops, supermarkets and warehouses in 2016, seizing over 8 million euros of fake goods, including handbags, watches, sunglasses and jewellery, and identifying as much as 9 million euros in related money laundering.

Much of it was stashed away, just like in the movies, behind hidden walls and in secret compartments! Some of the confiscated goods were manufactured in Spain, but much of it was imported from Portugal, China and Turkey.



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Tongue twister (virelangue)

Repeat quickly three times

Le grand bain du banc brun

Riddle

C'est le fils de ma mère mais ce n'est pas mon frère. Qui est-ce?

C'est moi!

Blague Bête

Quelle est la peine encourue pour bigamie?

Deux belles-mères!

(une peine - penalty)



1 H pour Horrible!

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



- | | | | |
|----|--------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | hotte | a | coquillage |
| 2 | hurler | b | petit mammifère qui pique |
| 3 | huître | c | heures de départ |
| 4 | hirondelle | d | fenêtre de bateau ou avion |
| 5 | hérisson | e | animal avec de grosses pincés |
| 6 | homard | f | qui aspire les odeurs |
| 7 | heurter | g | chaque semaine |
| 8 | horaire | h | toucher avec violence |
| 9 | hebdomadaire | i | petit oiseau migrateur |
| 10 | hublot | j | pousser des cris |

2 Trouvez la bonne définition

1 accoucher

- a) to go to bed
- b) to have a baby
- c) Bless you! (sneeze)

2 ortie

- a) nettle
- b) big toe
- c) should do (Scottish)

3 dégager

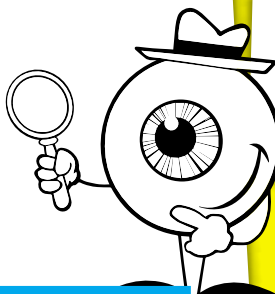
- a) to break an engagement
- b) to keep somebody quiet
- c) to clear the way

4 selle

- a) salt
- b) sole (of shoe)
- c) bicycle seat

5 écharde

- a) shallot
- b) sample
- c) splinter



3 Trouvez la couleur qui manque (find the missing colour).

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Avoir une peur | (terrified) | 5 | Travail au | (working illegally) |
| 2 | Rire | (forced laugh) | 6 | Examen | (mock exam) |
| 3 | à lèvres (lipstick) | | 7 | Voir la vie en | (optimistic) |
| 4 | de travail (overalls) | | 8 | Faire | mine (look miserable) |

See Page 86 for answers

4 Match up these French expressions with their English equivalent

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Quoi de neuf? 1 | a | Everything has its price |
| Tant pis 2 | b | Who asked you? |
| Tout se paie 3 | c | What's new? |
| Trouver l'oiseau rare 4 | d | To find Mr. Right |
| On ne t'a pas sonné! 5 | e | The previous evening |
| La veille au soir 6 | f | Hard luck |

5 Innit!

Like most languages, French has many informal shortened versions of longer words. Here are just a few.

Can you find their equivalents in English?

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| les actus 1 | a | brother-in-law |
| comme d'hab 2 | b | honest, dependable |
| d'acc 3 | c | waste |
| la der des ders 4 | d | the news |
| la fac 5 | e | OK |
| l'hosto 6 | f | brilliant |
| un beauf 7 | g | hospital |
| le gaspi 8 | h | the very last one |
| impec 9 | i | university |
| reglo 10 | j | as usual |

Blague Bête

Deux vaches discutent :

"Ça te fait pas peur, ces histoires de vache folle?"

"Ben j'm'en fous, j'suis un lapin!"



Encore une Blague Bête!

Pourquoi les flamants roses lèvent-ils un pied pour dormir? Parce que si ils levaient les 2, ils tomberaient!

(ils tomberaient - they would fall!)

Everyone should learn a foreign language

Cow 1: Meuh

Cow 2: Bahhhhh

Cow 1: Eh?

Cow 2:

J'apprends une langue étrangère!

Grammar Tip

ailleurs - elsewhere
d'ailleurs - what's more...

Il habite ailleurs

D'ailleurs, il n'habite pas loin de chez moi

(BUT il vient d'ailleurs - he comes from somewhere else)



Useful Expression

Un ange passe

Use to fill the gap of an awkward silence

AMÉLIOREZ votre ANGLAIS

See Page 86 for answers

Tongue Twister

(virelangue)

Répétez trois fois

Throw four thin things through



Ouch, that British Humour!

Why did the banana go to the Doctor?
Because it wasn't peeling well

Policeman to driver: "Can you identify yourself, sir?"
Driver, looking in his mirror: "Yes, it's me."

In fact...

JOKES ABOUT GERMAN SAUSAGE ARE THE WURST.



Language Tip Remember v Remind

REMEMBER = se souvenir
I always remember my Dad's birthday

REMINDE - aider quelqu'un à se souvenir de quelque chose
Remind me to post this letter.



Bad Joke

I can't believe I forgot to go to the gym again today.
In fact, that's 7 years in a row now.

1 N IS FOR NO!

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|----|---|--------------------------|
| nun | 1 | a | part of the face |
| nod | 2 | b | not sensible |
| naked | 3 | c | wild plant that stings |
| neighbour | 4 | d | living next door |
| nibble | 5 | e | religious lady |
| nonsense | 6 | f | frightening dream |
| nought | 7 | g | bend head back and forth |
| nose | 8 | h | not wearing clothes |
| nettle | 9 | i | eat with small bites |
| nightmare | 10 | j | the figure 0 |

2 Mettez ces instructions pour la tasse de thé idéale dans le bon ordre

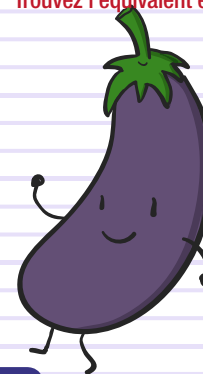
- Put tea or teabags in the teapot and pour on BOILING water
- Pour the tea into the cup
- Enjoy your cuppa
- Warm teapot with small amount of hot water and pour away
- Fill kettle with FRESH water and bring kettle to boil
- Leave the tea to brew for five minutes
- Add milk and sugar if required



3 Anglais britannique et anglais américain

Les Anglais et les Américains ne sont pas toujours d'accord en ce qui concerne la langue. :-)

Trouvez l'équivalent en anglais pour ces mots américains



American		British
eggplant	1	A rubber
eraser	2	B bottom
blow out	3	C torch
yard	4	D bill
garbage	5	E aubergine
janitor	6	F puncture
check	7	G caretaker
flashlight	8	H rubbish
rubber	9	I condom
butt	10	J garden

4

Language Tip Their – There – They're
Ces mots se prononcent de la même manière mais ne veulent absolument pas dire la même chose !

Their – leur(s) (à eux) There – là (there is – il y a) They're – ils/elles sont (contraction: they are). Choisissez le bon mot
1. here! 2. Take a look over 3. Do you know what doing tomorrow? 4. I hope they bring swimming costumes. 5. are two of them

5 Eye Eye!

Les verbes suivants ont tous un rapport avec la vue. Pouvez-vous trouver leur équivalent en français ?

to be cross-eyed	1	a	veiller sur...
to blink	2	b	être presbyte/myope
to peep	3	c	fixer du regard
to catch sight of...	4	d	apercevoir
to glance	5	e	scruter, avec du mal
to keep an eye on..	6	f	lancer un regard noir
to glare	7	g	faire un clin d'oeil
To be long/ short-sighted	8	h	regarder à la dérobée
to peer	9	i	loucher
to stare	10	j	jeter un coup d'oeil



Expression Utile

(She is) the life and soul of the party
(Elle est) la personne qui fait bouger la soirée

Origines intéressantes



Good bye

Originally a contraction of 'God be with ye' (ye = you in old English), 'God' developed into 'good' (also used for 'good day', 'good evening', etc.)



Terrible Joke

A duck goes into the chemist's shop.
'A tube of lipsil please.'
'Certainly, that will be 50p.'
'Put it on my bill, please.'
(bill – facture or bec)

FESTIVAL & TRADITIONS



P-O SPRING

Bank holidays

The many bank holidays in April and May 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 the Monday or the Friday off as well. (Major chains unlikely to do this.)

Monday 17th April:
Easter Monday (Lundi de Pâques)
Friday 1st May:
May Day (La Fête du Travail)
Friday 8th May:
La Fête de la Victoire 1945
(WW2 Victory Day)
Monday 5th June:
Whit Monday (Lundi de Pentecôte)
Don't forget... Sunday 28th May:
Mother' Day (La Fête des Mères)

Lundi de Pentecôte (Whit Monday) in France

The word 'Pentecôte' originates from 'pentêkostê' meaning 'fiftieth' (day) in Greek. The last of four public holidays in May, this 'movable feast' takes place 50 days after Easter, and celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit amongst Jesus's Apostles.

In 2005, President Chirac decided to cancel it! After the deaths of an estimated 13,000 elderly people during the heat wave of 2003, the government chose this day to raise funds to support the elderly and disabled.

They called it 'Solidarity Day' (Journée de Solidarité), and asked workers to work this day with no pay! Oh là là. After several years of demonstrations, with the majority of the French work force resolutely sticking to their guns and remaining at home, Lundi de Pentecôte was reinstated as a public holiday in 2008.

Incidentally, did you know that 'Whit Monday' comes from the white robes worn on Pentecost by those who have been newly baptized?



Goigs dels Ous

Dating back to the Middle Ages, the goigs (or joie des oeufs in French) are traditional Easter songs, ancient hymns signalling a return to life after the sadness of winter. Solemn choirs would wander the streets at night, collecting donations of eggs, black pudding, charcuterie and wine in thanks for the music..... and ensuring that the singers had everything they needed to cook up an Easter omelette the next day.

PARADES AND PROCESSIONS

With its strong Catholic roots, it is not surprising that many ancient religious parades have survived over the years.

Friday 14th April

On Good Friday, the impressive, Procession de la Sanch (pronounced 'sank') takes place in Perpignan, long black or red hooded and robed figures marching slowly through the streets to the solemn beat of black veiled tambourines. Some walk barefoot, others are on their knees.

In 1416, Vincent Ferrier founded the brotherhood of "La Sanch" (the blood) in the church of St Jaques in Perpignan, to assist and accompany the condemned to their execution. They carry 'misteris', full-size representations of the different scenes of the Passion, and crosses, crucifixes and religious statues weighing up to fifty kilos. Their suffering is not feigned! The death penalty has long since been abolished, but the Sanch lives on. Night processions also take place in the evening at Collioure and Arles-sur-Tech.



LES FEUX DE LA SAINT JEAN

Saturday 24th June

Important annual event in the Catalan calendar, and the longest day of the year, this date is linked with ancient practices and white magic. The curative powers of local herbs are supposedly 100 times stronger on the eve of Saint Jean, and carlina, a type of thistle shaped like the sun, acts as an aphrodisiac, and protects evil spirits and 'mauvaises fées' (bad fairies) from 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, and fires were lit to burn worn out household items and signal from village to village. On this eve, Catalonia is set alight 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.



Sunday 16th April

As Perpignan, Collioure and Arles parade death, so Ille sur Têt celebrates life with Les Reginas – the Resurrection and the beginnings of spring.

At 8 a.m. the 'statue de Ressuscité' (Resurrection) and the 'statue de la Vierge' (virgin) arrive from opposite ends of the place de la mairie. Upon the shoulders of 'porteurs', they salute each other three times. This is the 'acato'.

Suddenly, the first 'Régina', (religious music for Easter) blasts out: a 130-strong choir, accompanied by 40 musicians. Follow the procession to the Jardins de la Rodona, where the second Régina is performed. Believers and non-believers alike find this unique ceremony moving and memorable.

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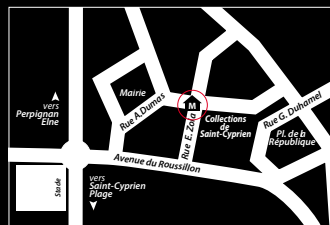
DALI SHOCKER!

Did you know that Dali produced a short 17 minute film in 1929 called 'Un Chien Andalou', designed specifically to shock? And it did! A woman's eyeball is slashed open, ants crawl out of a man's hand, priests, (one of whom is Dali) are attached to grand pianos, each with a bloody dead donkey inside. – an absolute gift to the psychoanalysts! Controversial then ... and not my 'tasse de thé today either!



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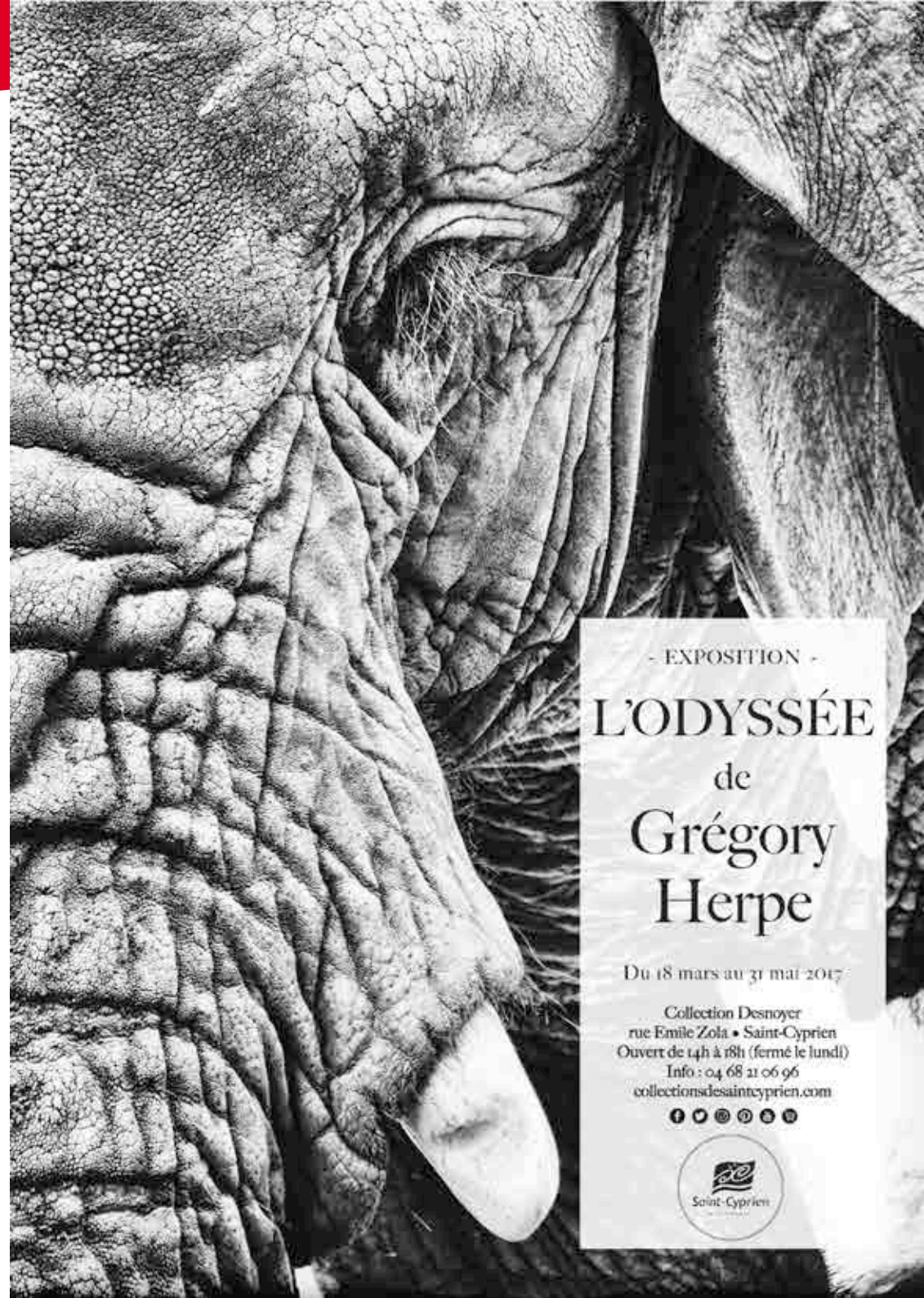
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ANSWERS

- ① 1f 2j 3a 4i 5b 6e 7h 8c 9g 10d
 ② 1b 2a 3c 4c 5c
 ③ 1 bleue 2 jaune 3 rouge 4 bleu
 5 noir 6 blanc 7 rose 8 grise
 ④ 1c 2f 3a 4d 5b 6e
 ⑤ 1d 2j 3e 4h 5i 6g 7a 8c 9f 10b



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

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, Smartphones and Ipads, were told that the Bells had flown to Rome to see the Pope, before returning to their towers on Friday to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.



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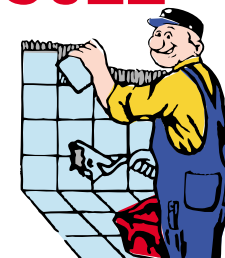
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