

Autumn 2023

P-O Life

Life in the Pyrénées-Orientales

N° 79
FREE / GRATUIT



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La Côte Vermeille in Autumn
© Sheila Taylor

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REGION

...Les Tours
de Cabrenç

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Edito ☺

COUCOU LES AMIS

Autumn has swept into the P-O with a flurry of warm reds, golds and browns, and daily generous doses of that magnificent light to boost the spirit and warm the soul.

The beaches are empty of people but full of sunshine, the sea is still warm(ish), the nights are cool. Life slows down...but certainly doesn't come to a stop. There are festivals little and large, museums, art galleries, wine tastings, great walks and bike rides,and at a time when money is tight for many, so much is free. Elle n'est pas belle la vie?

In this edition, Tim and Chris take us walking to the Tours de Cabrenc, Henry enjoys a bit of rough, Robbie keeps us up to date with winter flights, Lesley has ants in her pants, and Tony and Robyn take us up, up and away.

As always, a big, big thank you to these talented guest writers who have volunteered (or been volunteered) to be your personal guides around the region, and prevent P-O Life from becoming Kate-bound.

We've been going for 18 years now. Every new magazine is a joy to produce and a struggle to finance. We rely on our advertisers, often hard won, to keep us going, and our readers to support them and persuade them to keep on advertising. In the absence of a lottery win, please please think first of our advertisers when you're looking for a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker.....



My grateful thanks to you all - you are what make P-O Life special!

Wherever you are, and whatever you're doing, we hope your autumn is golden this year in the P-O.

Kate

WORST JOKES EVER?

In my continued mission to bring you the worst ever France related jokes, I think I've finally excelled myself. Beat these!



1 What's the difference between a tick and the Eiffel tower?

Nothing. They're both Paris sites.

2 What happens when you drink too much water on the Continent?

European.

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Love our front cover?

Céret based artist **Taylor Sheila**, is founder and President of the Association 'les aquarellistes Ceretans'.

You can visit her workshop and gallery at 42 rue de la République, Céret or participate in her various watercolour workshops.

Contact Sheila on: collioure66@icloud.com

Impression: **ROTIMPRES** (Girona): 15.000 ex.
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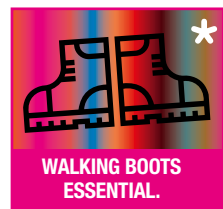


Les tours de Cabrenç

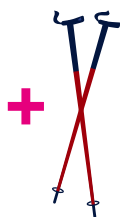
Easy route **challenging route**

WITH TIM AND CHRIS PARKER

This well-known walk to the **3 Towers** (Les tours de Cabrenç) from **Serralongue** offers a number of alternative routes and even a choice of starting points. The detailed description offers a **challenging ascent**, but included is a **medium Aller/Retour** which can be **made even easier** by driving to a parking area along the route. Add **half an hour** to visit the towers to the times below.



WALKING BOOTS
ESSENTIAL.



From **Serralongue** village the **three towers of Cabrenç** are easily visible, **perched on a nearby mountaintop**. The **first** is the remains of the **10th century castle**, built on a rocky outcrop, only accessible from the south. The **second**, the keep of the castle (**le Donjon**) added in the **12th century** and the **third** the signal tower (**le Guet**) built in the **14th century**. A key for access is available on request from the Mairie in Serralongue.

A/R Easy route from car park at Can Tony.
Approx 2 hrs 15 mins + visit. 6km 406 metres of ascent.

A/R Medium route from Serralongue.
Approx 3 hrs 30 mins + visit. 12km 675 metres of ascent.

Challenging route from Serralongue
via side of ravine to Pla de Castell then along ridge.
4 hrs 30 mins + visit 15km 675 metres of ascent.
Walking boots essential. Poles advisable.
Avoid in very wet weather.

Access: map IGN 1:25000 Massif du Canigou 2349ET

GETTING THERE

Take the **D115** from **Perpignan** via **Amelie les Bains** and **Arles sur Tech**. Continue in the direction of **Prats de Mollo**. **Before Le Tech village**, turn left, signed **Serralongue**, onto **D44**. Use car park at entrance to the village. On a clear day the view of the **Massif de Canigou** is stunning.



THE WALK(S)

When you can take your eyes away from the wonderful mountain views, make your way up the approach road into Serralongue itself.

Behind the village the 3 Towers can be seen on the horizon.



Serralongue village was built in the **10th century** to provide lodgings for the serfs of the **Castle of Cabrenç**. Imagine the walk to work and back every day! Cobble roads, old stone houses, and a large and ancient '**lavoir**' await you in this tranquil village.



Pass the main street, on left, noting the **café Chez Fleur**, also known as **L'Hostal de Cabrenç**. Pass to right of the school and Mairie, taking a peek at the very large old washing area (**lavoir**) on the corner. Toilet available behind this.



Continue up the road, direction **Lamanère** for 300m, turning left into **Casa Minore**. Pass some older properties to enter woodland. Narrow, well-trodden path goes gradually upwards, turning right towards a meadow after approx. 8 mins. **Emerge on broad unmetalled road. Turn left and follow this past a number of properties.** Some of road is concreted. After 4 bends, look out for signed path to the towers on right, opposite metal gates.



Walk the region Les tours de Cabrenç

Easy route challenging route

WITH TIM AND CHRIS PARKER



Path cuts a corner, exits to piste and continues from the lower piste of the junction on your right. Exiting this next short section of woodland, turn left onto a **broad grassy track**. Follow this double track all the way to its end at **Can Tony parking area (the start of the easy route)**. Notice a metal gate on right, the descent route exit onto the common trunk which you have just completed. **(1 hour from start to this point)**

Gate accessing easier ascent to the towers/ point of exit from descent.



Easy route (Starting from Can Tony car park.)

Piste to Can Tony starts from the road to Lamanère. Drive through Serralongue D44 and take the second turning left after Casa Minore. Follow winding piste to Can Tony, park, then take footpath for Medium route.

Medium route (continuing from Can Tony)

Go through gate and bend right. Zig zag up through chestnut trees, eventually turning left along top of wood with meadow on right. Follow waymarked path along top of wood. Path eventually turns right and follows edge of meadows up to a beech wood. Enter wood and continue upwards, passing a few rocky places. Exit onto broad track, **Turn left and follow signs to the towers, arriving at the first tower, le Guet**. Picnic tables available here for a well-earned refreshment stop. Visiting the other 2 towers will mean some more ascent! Descent is same route.



> LE GUET

Challenging route (continuing from Can Tony)

Continue 1.5km along piste from **Can Tony parking area**. (Ignore "Variante 2" path ascending steeply along the ridge unless you fancy this equally challenging route instead!)

Piste descends slightly - note concreted corner. **Signed path to Pla de Castell** rises from this bend.

Take this path and enter woodland. Rise steadily up the right hand side of the ravine. There are some yellow marks from time to time. Early on there are white spots on trees/rocks. Cross a side tributary - path then bends right and moves further to right above the ravine. **Keep following the path onwards and upwards, crossing a couple more dry tributaries**. At a bifurcation take the path right **signed Pla de Castell**. Eventually emerge on grassy path leading to a meadow.



(2 hours from start to this point)

There are many mushrooms in the woods and a range of interesting fungi.



Just before meadow, **meet path to the 3 towers - a right turn**. The path is unmarked at this point but soon after you turn right, pass ruined building and note the way marking, red and yellow. If you need a break, the meadow is a good picnic place before returning to the path to the towers.



The word '**cab**' (as in taxicab) actually comes from the Spanish for goat (cabra) as the first carriages for hire were so bumpy that they reminded people of goats bouncing around in the hills! **Cabrenç, meaning goat in ancient Catalan**, seems an apt title for paths that could well have been designed by these tough little animals!

Very quickly after ruins find a **way mark post indicating 3 towers**, which is also a recognised route to Lamanère.



Lamanère, its claim to fame that it is the most southerly village in France, lies in the wooded valley of the Lamanère river, its solid houses and sturdy church built on steep riverbanks, their stones a rusty red from the iron they contain. Once two small espadrille factories and nearby mines provided work. **Now all that remains of village industry is a small museum**. Collect the key from the Centre d'Accueil (Welcome Centre) if you wish to visit.

Walk the region Les tours de Cabrenç

Easy route challenging route

WITH TIM AND CHRIS PARKER



Although the post suggests 35 minutes to Le Chateau it took us more as **there are some tricky sections on the ascent and it becomes very steep as you approach the top.** It must certainly have presented a formidable challenge to marauding armies of yesteryear!

Emerge at the top – well not quite – you will need to cross the lower ruins of the chateau to scramble over the rocks to the summit! Cables have been attached to the rock to help you.



The views from the top are well worth the scramble. **In every direction there are mountains.** A fine ceramic table of orientation points out Barcelona.



112 kms away, the Bay of Roses easily visible, only 40kms to Collioure if you're a bird, and Toulouse a mere 160 kms.

Look down to the village of Serralongue, over into Spain and out to sea near Argeles/St Cyprien/Canet. **The Massif de Canigou is ever present.**



Drop back down and go through gap in walls to continue along ridge **to le Donjon.** Having explored this site drop down the rocky base and head **towards le Guet on a stony path.**



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PRICE: 184 000 €

Ref 1580m



VILLELONGUE DELS MONTS: 70 sqm stone village house in a quiet pedestrian lane, close to all the shops of Villelongue dels Monts. This atypical property has perfectly private garden and fruit trees. 2 bedrooms + study, **view over the plain and the Corbieres !**

PRICE: 212 000 €

Ref 513A



BANYULS-SUR-MER: Located in the centre of Banyuls-sur-mer, 2 steps away from the beach! Very pleasant one-bedroom apartment (42 sq.m) with terrace and private parking space. Very bright living-room with beautiful mountain view. Air conditioning, lift. **Excellent condition.**

PRICE: 374 000 €

Ref 1578m



SOREDE: Comfort and proximity to Sorede and Laroque des Alberes shops for this stunning 81 sqm detached 3 bedrooms, 2 shower rooms villa built on a flat and fenced 412 sqm land with sun catching and shaded terraces as well as **a sun catching heated swimming pool!**

PRICE: 493 000 €

Ref 507A



BANYULS-SUR-MER: Located in the centre of the village, superb 122 sqm duplex apartment, 3 bedrooms with large 30 sqm terrace. **Fully renovated in 2023.** Possibility to rent a garage.

PRICE: 599 000 €

Ref 1583m



LAROQUE DES ALBÈRES: Located in a very quiet area, a short walk to all the shops of Laroque des Alberes, this 126 sqm detached villa with 3 bedrooms on the ground floor, has been built on a superb 1147 sqm land with pool and terraces. **Very pleasant living room with high ceiling, covered terrace with barbecue.**

PRICE: 424 000 €

Ref 1594m



BANYULS-SUR-MER: Very pleasant and bright 3 bedrooms semi-detached villa set on a 180 sqm land. Very quiet location just a step to all the shops of Banyuls. Living-room open onto a terrace, separate kitchen opened onto the garden. Garage.

Contact us to successfully market your property now!

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Walk the region Les tours de Cabrenç

Easy route challenging route

WITH TIM AND CHRIS PARKER



About 45 minutes from the start of descent from le Guet arrive at the metal gate close to Can Tony. The route is well marked.

From here retrace your steps back to Serralongue – the whole route being marked by the small wooden signs “Le Village” (Another 45-50 minutes)

Whichever route you have taken you can be well satisfied that you have made this classic walk and been rewarded with the most wonderful views.



Depending on the time of day you may be able to find refreshments at Chez Fleur. If you have not done so before, you may also like to take a wander round the attractive village and view the church and the Conjurador behind it.



THE CONJURADOR

Built to appease the elements and chase away evil spirits, famine, drought, floods and war, each wall has an opening that faces one of the cardinal points. Centuries ago, when bad weather threatened, the priest would perform the ceremony as inhabitants held hands, prostrated in a circle.

The grassy area here has picnic tables under the trees and is a great place for a rest before the descent. A waymarker post at the head of the rough, stoney approach road indicates the way down. (on a corner, pass the top of signed route Variante 2, via the crest).

After descending this road for 10 minutes look out for the waymarker to Serralongue indicating a right turn into beech wood.



The path through the wood is delightful. Soon reach the other side turning right downhill to follow the edge of a large meadow area with fence on left.

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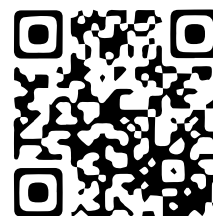
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Perpignan

A GATEWAY TO FREEDOM
and BUTTER ON YOUR BOTTOM


Historic Perpignan, colourful mix of old and new, chic and shabby, trendy boutiques, narrow, cobbled streets and small intimate bistros, owes much of its heritage and cultural development to the kings of Majorca, whose palace still dominates the town.

Jaume I, King of Aragon, Count of Barcelona, was **justifiably known as James the Builder**. His reign was a period of peace, prosperity and tolerance for Perpignan. Politics, commerce, religion, art all flourished. Different religions, colour and creed lived side by side.



Today, the streets are full of tourists, artists, photographers, smart businessmen and women, **but just 80 years ago, the town was less of a culture hotspot and more of a gateway to freedom**. For many escapees and evaders, the town was one of the final stepping stones before embarking on the start of a difficult journey, across treacherous, snow topped mountains, dodging German patrols. **Their goal? To reach neutral Spain and ultimately Gibraltar, Britain and the rest of the free world.** Resistance groups and escape committees provided guides at great risk to themselves.





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From the opposite direction came those from that free world, **wishing to take a more active role in the clandestine struggle against the Nazis**, and those fleeing persecution in Franco's Spain.

Once over the Pyrenees, it was usually possible to find help from the British consulate and reach Gibraltar, and on to Britain: sometimes by sea and sometimes by air.

Perpignan's position between Med and mountain also meant that British navy vessels could come in to shore at Argelès-sur-Mer, Canet, Bayuls-sur-Mer and Cerbère and reach Gibraltar directly by sea, avoiding the possibility of being picked up by the Spanish.



Perpignan therefore was a pivotal location in supporting the British and Allied war effort.



Perpignan

A GATEWAY TO FREEDOM
BUTTER ON YOUR BOTTOM



One of the largest and most successful sea escapes was 'Operation Rosalind'.

In 1941 at Canet-Plage, forty escapees waded into the sea every night for a week, waiting in vain for the flashing light from the rescue boat sent from Gibraltar.

Until Pat O'Leary, real name Dr. Albert Gursehzad, head of the successful escape and evasion route, the 'Pat Line', radioed London with the message "Pas plus de bateau que de beurre au cul!" (There's no more a boat here than butter on my arse!)

The rather rude message produced results and they were picked up 2 nights later.



> Canet-Plage 1933-1942

When the Germans took over the 'zone libre' at the end of 1942, sea escapes had to stop but evaders continued to cross the Pyrenees, using the P-O as a starting point, until the Allied invasion of France.



SECRET AGENT, UNSUNG HERO

by Peter Dowding

Young Australian teacher Kenneth Bruce Dowding, known as Bruce, loved sport, music, architecture, the classics....and speaking French.

On an extended visit to France in 1939, he volunteered to act as interpreter with the British Service Corp. He quickly became an integral member of escape operations for allied servicemen trying to return home, including a

period in Perpignan moving evaders over the Spanish border.

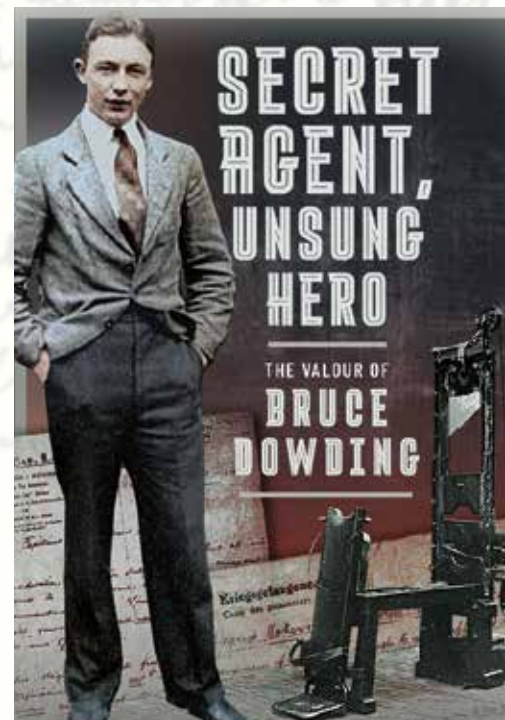
Along with many other loyal men and women, he was betrayed to the Gestapo by the traitor Paul Cole, and beheaded in Dortmund on 30 June 1943.

This biography, researched over decades, is written by Bruce's nephew, Peter, to honour Bruce and the millions who gave their lives for our safety.

Kenneth Bruce Dowding
4 May 1914 - 30 June 1943



Peter at Bruce grave



Brings from the shadows a forgotten Australian hero, denied France's highest National honour by his own Government's negligence

PETER DOWDING

Is the nephew Of Bruce Dowding. He is a prominent Australian Lawyer & s former western Australian Premier.

KEN SPILLMAN

Holds a PHD in history and is a prolific Australian author. His work span many genres.

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Perpignan MUSEUMS

Discover the **rich history of Perpignan** with a visit to one of the town's many museums and galleries.

Musée Casa Pairal Le Castillet



Gateway, fortress, prison, and today a **museum of French Catalanian Tradition**, climb the spiral staircase of **La Casa Pairal to the terrace, originally added to support cannons**. The **views** across the city, the plain of Roussillon, and the sacred Mount Canigou **are spectacular**. (2€).

Place de Verdun · 04 68 35 42 05
casa.pairal@mairie-perpignan.com

Centre d'Art Contemporain



Recently converted from an ancient Perpignan school building, designed by **Léon Baille in 1898** this must-see art gallery proposes exhibitions that illustrate and challenge the diversity of contemporary art. (Free).

Place du Pont d'en Vestit · 04 68 66 33 18
perpignan.culture@mairie-perpignan.com

Musée des monnaies et médailles Joseph Puig



Housed in the pretty villa Les Tilleuls, and named after its donor, the **Joseph Puig Museum of Coins and medals** is the only one of its kind in France and **the largest in Europe**. With **more than 45,000 coins from around the world**, from all time periods and locations, with some very rare coins from Catalonia and the Roussillon, if you love money, this museum is a must-visit. (Free).

Av. de Grande-Bretagne · 04 68 62 37 64
musee-puig@mairie-perpignan.com

Muséum d'histoire naturelle



A permanent exhibition of rare or extinct animals of the **Pyrenees-Orientales**, including many bird species, mammals, fauna, arthropods, crocodiles, minerals and corals and **an Egyptian mummy from the XXIII dynasty in its sarcophagus, donated by Ibrahim Pacha in 1847** after a thermal treatment in Vernet-les-Bains. A paradise for natural history lovers. (Free).

12 Rue Font Neuve · 04 68 66 33 68
museum@mairie-perpignan.com

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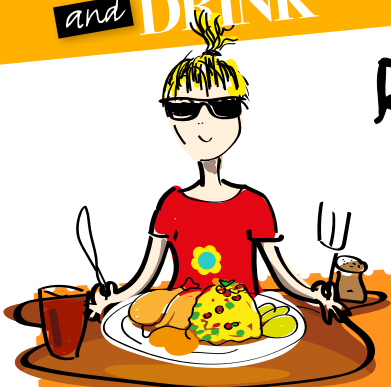
mairie-perpignan.fr

PERPIGNAN
LA RAYONNANTE



Restaurant REVIEWS

ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER
AUTUMN 2023



How lucky are we here in the P-O that we can still sit outside for lunch most of the year. Fresh food, fresh air, 'un petit laine' just in case...

Thank you as usual for your reviews. They cover a wide range of tastes, prices, and places, and they're honest and objective, (we hope)! 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. Late autumn and winter opening hours, days, and sometimes weeks can be a little erratic. We definitely advise phoning in advance. Bon app

LE RELAIS DE L'ORME

Oms...with Ciaran

A walk around a beautiful mountain village and a **superb lunch menu for €17.50**, wine included! Definitely worth a visit, something very special happening here.



16 rue de l'Orme, Oms
Tel: 09 52 55 29 12

CHEZ DENISE

Argelès...with Harbeer

A very nice find and experience. Quality and flavour over quantity leaves you satisfied. **Perhaps the best tarte tatin I've had.**



4 All. des Palmiers,
Argelès-sur-Mer
Tel: 04 68 67 34 08

LA CUISINE-COMPTOIR

Collioure...with Leigh and Merry

Interesting dishes and original tapas menu with **great veggie and vegan options included**, all full of flavour. Served on a shady terrace hidden away in the centre. We ordered two tapas each and had plenty to eat. **Fresh ingredients, beautifully prepared.** The menu changes daily but examples can be seen on their FB page. A selection of local beers and wines available. **Booking recommended.**



2 Rue Colbert, Collioure
Tel: 04 68 81 14 40

AU BOUDDHA GOURMET

Molitg-les-Bains with Linda

Delicious, clean and not expensive. Newly opened definitely worth trying out!

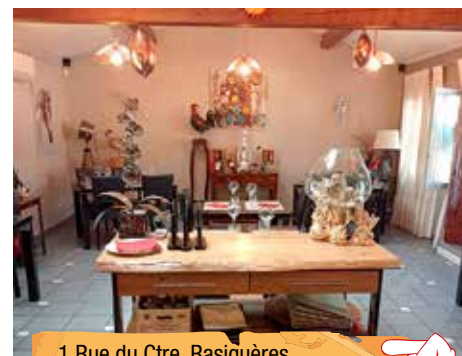
Les Thermes 4, Molitg-les-Bains
Tel: 06 34 05 24 49



RELAIS DE SCEAURY

Rasiguères...with Aliette & others

The restaurant you HAVE to visit! This is one of our favourite local restaurants - **fabulous food, warm friendly welcome, excellent service. Top quality food** at a reasonable price. **The Grand Marnier soufflé is to die for!**



1 Rue du Ctre, Rasiguères
Tel: 04 68 63 33 42

LE P'TIT WEMBLEY

Canet...with Karen

New restaurant opened this summer on the promenade in Canet. We had an excellent meal and excellent service. Brochettes are their main dishes - we had duck, beef, chicken & saucisse - all excellent. Frites were 10/10. Tiramisu 11/10. Excellent Sangria also - my drink and I am picky on that. **We already know what we will try the next time!**



5 Prom. de la Côte Vermeille, Canet
Tel: 06 23 01 61 82

Restaurant
REVIEWS

LE JARDIN DE SIMPLES

Saint Andre...with Ciaran

Wife cooks, husband front of house, a powerful little team serving beautiful locally sourced food. Great pride in their ingredients, lovingly prepared and served.

29 Rue des Mimosas, Saint-André
Tel: 04 68 89 14 69



FRIDA'S

Perpignan...with Mark

Named after Frida Kahlo, this quirky bohemian restaurant has lots of references to Latin-American art, and the vegan cuisine is an eclectic, colourful mix of styles from around the world. The crunchy starters and tapas get my tastebuds a-drooling every time and the team Jean-Claude and Colombian Ignacio are adorable. This off-beat restaurant in the newly renovated and now ultra-smart Place Rigaud should be in any list of not-to-be missed eateries in the department. Have you guessed I'm sold on it?



24 Pl. Hyacinthe Rigaud, Perpignan
Tel: 06 16 97 10 29

DO YOU KNOW A RESTAURANT YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECOMMEND?
We'd love to hear from you.

CONNAISSEZ-VOUS UN RESTAURANT QUE VOUS VOUDRIEZ
RECOMMANDER?

On serait ravis de vous entendre.

Send your comments to us at info@anglophone-direct.com

No restaurant owners please ;-)

FANCY A THREESOME
with Peter ?

66 SUR VINS

Maureillas

This small, intimate restaurant (with outside terrace) sits in the middle of Maureillas and offers delicious food from a short menu (which is not a bad thing). It's not the cheapest around but I would thoroughly recommend a visit.

Perhaps the best tarte tatin I've had.



10 Pl. de la République,
Maureillas-Las-Illas
Tel: 04 68 81 66 69

L'ALTO

Argelès /Palau

Unfortunately this great restaurant got hit by covid just after it opened. Impressive building set in beautiful grounds which complement the excellent fare.



Traverse de Saint-André,
Argelès-sur-Mer
Tel: 04 68 22 04 48

LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

Laroque des Albères

We visited twice this summer and both times we had delicious meals, sitting under the enormous palm trees, on some very balmy evenings.

Service is good with well priced menus.



33 Rue Louis et Michel Soler,
Laroque-des-Albères
Tel: 04 68 89 40 51

OVER THE
BORDER ...IN SPAIN

VORA ESTANY

Banyoles..with Maria

One of our favourite places in Banyoles.

It is on the lakeside with tables inside and on the terrace. We have the menu out of laziness! It's always good around €16.00 last time we were there.



Passeig Antonio Gaudí Banyoles
Tel: +34 972 57 63 53

FOOD and DRINK

What a great season to stroll along the prom prom prom (tiddly-pom-pom-pom) followed by lunch on the port or sea front, or wander around the market, visit the art gallery, museum or theatre, before a cosy meal in an inviting bistro.... But wait! Oh là là! Everything's closed! 'Fermeture annuelle', or 'congé d'hiver' on the doors of two out of three of the eateries in the P-O, leave us to shuffle home with heavy heart and empty tum. *Mais ne vous inquiétez pas!* Restaurants advertising in this autumn/winter edition of P-O Life remain open most of the season. ('though it's always worth giving them a ring in advance just to be on the safe side).



Ideas for EATING OUT



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Le Jardin de Canet..... 04 68 05 42 73
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P-O Life

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isabelle@anglophone-direct.com

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...COLLIOURE

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Restaurant and cocktail bar..... www.lacotealos.fr

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...LAROQUE-DES-ALBERES

Le Catalan 04 68 98 20 57
Bar - Cave à Vins

Restaurant Le Catalan

www.lecatalan.fr
2, Place de la République - Laroque Des Albères
Bar - Cave à Vins - Réservation **04 68 98 20 57**

**FOOD
and DRINK**

**Ideas for
EATING
OUT**



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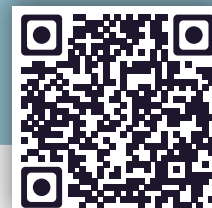
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Food for Thought

with SUZANNE DUNAWAY

AUTUMNAL TOMATO SOUP

This is a recipe I adore and have made for years with the rich tomatoes picked after summer's end. There are some lovely tomatoes in the markets in this part of the world. We are so lucky to live in the Pyrénées-Orientales!

Ingredients

- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 6 large ripe tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 sweet onion (Cevennes or those beautiful purple ones), chopped coarse
- A sprig of fresh basil
- A squeeze of lemon
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- A sprig of coriander
- A grate of pepper
- A teaspoon of butter
- food for thought

Method

In a small soup pot, heat the olive oil on low and in the bowl of a food processor, whiz everything up until fairly smooth. Add the tomato purée to the olive oil and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the butter and eat as is or use a hand mixer to make a smoother soup.

I add rosemary-flavored croutons fait maison to the soup bowl or a dollop of Greek yogurt. Put your imagination to work. This is also a nice pasta sauce or basic tomato sauce for other recipes, but as a warm soup on a cold November day, it can't be beaten.

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*From November

For reservations, telephone:

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78 avenue Maréchal Joffre

66740 Saint Genis des Fontaines



ZARZUELA (sar-soo-eh-lah)

This Catalan seafood stew is traditionally served on Christmas Eve, originally to fortify people through the late night mass.

Delicious but also very snazzy as the word **actually** means **operetta** or **variety show** in Catalan.



FOOD
and DRINK

Ideas for EATING OUT

...SOREDE

La Salamandre 04 68 89 26 67
Fine mediterranean cuisine..... free parking next door

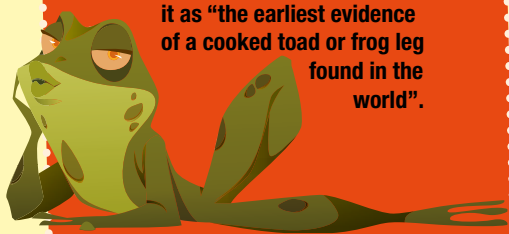


FROG'S LEGS ACTUALLY BRITISH!

It seems that the much maligned **Frogs'** legs which gave the French their playful nickname of 'froggies' were actually eaten first by Brits up to 8,000 years ago.

Archaeologists working on a site close to Stonehenge discovered the charred leg bone of a toad dating back to between 6250 BC and 7596 BC. A spokesperson for the University of Buckingham described

it as "the earliest evidence of a cooked toad or frog leg found in the world".



HAVE YOU VISITED THE MÉMORIAL DU CAMP DE RIVESALTES YET?

Camp Joffre opened in 1938 and closed in 1970.

Its history is horrific, housing "Undesirables", refugees from the Spanish Civil War, Jews and Gypsies. So handy for the railway. Destination: Auschwitz, via Drancy.

Inside, the **4,000-square-meter** award winning memorial building, long single-story sunken construction in concrete, **monolith style, broken up by narrow patios, the only view the sky**, visible through a few roof windows and the patios.

Outside, the desolate, abandoned barracks and ruins of the former camp emphasise the stark reality represented within the Memorial museum. **You will not come away unmoved.**

www.memorialcampprivesaltes.eu



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Festivals and TRADITIONS

AUTUMN 2023

31ST OCTOBER & 1ST NOVEMBER.....

La Toussaint & La Castanyada

La Toussaint is a time for French Catholics to honour the dead. Families visit the cemetery together and place flowers, traditionally chrysanthemums (chrysanthèmes) on the graves of their loved ones. On sale on every street corner, don't offer them to your hostess when invited out for dinner! They are for the dead!

A popular festival in Catalonia, la Castanyada is traditionally celebrated on the eve of la Toussaint. Historically, whole villages would stay awake throughout the night, taking turns to ring the heavy church bells to honour the dead. To keep up their strength, they would eat 'castanyes' (roast chestnuts) along with 'moniatos' (roast sweet potatoes) and 'panellets' (small almond balls covered in pine nuts) and share Muscat in 'porrons', traditional glass wine pitchers with stem to pour wine into your mouth without touching lips, particularly useful in times of plague...and Covid!

Look out for the symbol of La Castanyada, la Castanyera or chestnut lady, a mythical figure depicted by an old lady with a basket of chestnuts and a handkerchief on her head, usually shown roasting and selling chestnuts on the street.

According to some legends, every chestnut eaten that night frees a soul from purgatory.

MOST SHOPS CLOSED



ARMISTICE OF WWI (1918) - 11TH NOVEMBER

The armistice of 11 November 1918 marked Germany's surrender and the end of the First World War. The remains of a single French soldier slain on the battlefield were buried beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris on November 11, 1920, two years after the end of the ironically named 'Der des Ders' or 'War to End All Wars'. His name is unknown but he represents and honours more than a million French soldiers who died during this conflict. On this date, flowers are placed on war memorials throughout France.

MOST SHOPS CLOSED



DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS BACK SUNDAY 29TH OCTOBER

(Mornings will be lighter but it will grow dark earlier)

OH NOOOOOOOOOO HERE COMES CHRISTMAS AGAIN!

Where does the time go? The good thing about Christmas is that it happens every year so here at P-O Life we can dig out the same old Christmas Catalan Traditionsand here they are!

PESSEBRE VIVENT

The 'pessebre', or nativity scene is nothing new, but here in Catalonia these nativity scenes come alive! The 'pessebre vivent' places leading characters in period clothes, on decorated stage-sets portraying historical and biblical scenes. Sometimes they will sing and talk, other times they will just stand or sit without moving! Often, there will be a commentary with spectacular special effects and lighting. Check out Perpignan Tourist Office and also over the border at Bascara near Figueres (www.elpessebre.cat)



CAGA TIO

Look out for the caga tió (literally "poop log"!), a hollow log standing on four little stick legs with a smiley face painted on one end and red "barretina" hat. From December 8th, he is "fed" every night and on Christmas Day, beaten with sticks to make him drop the sweets and nougat placed inside him.



THE HOME DELS NASSOS - 31ST DECEMBER

Legend says that the 'man of noses' starts the new year with as many noses as the year has days, losing one every day. By New Year's Eve day, the only day that he can be seen, he only has one nose left! One of his relatives is the 'home de les orelles', same story but this time with ears, who appears on the 30th.

THE DAY OF THE THREE KINGS - 6TH JANUARY

A big celebration for children telling of the arrival of the kings with toys and sweets. At bedtime, they leave shoes and a snack near the window. On the morning of the 6th, good kids find gifts from the kings, and naughty ones find a piece of coal!



EL CAGANER

-THAT BARE BOTTOMED BOUNDER- What every Catalan child is really looking for amidst the 'pessebre' is that bare bottomed bounder, the 'caganer'. A popular and much loved Catalan Christmas figure, this small statue, originally of a pooping peasant wearing traditional floppy red Catalan cap (barretina), crouches with trousers half down, in a 'toilet' position, making his small contribution to the land. Often hidden behind a tree, or round the back of the stable, the fun is to find the cheeky chappie, symbol of fertility, hope and prosperity, health and happiness for the coming year. Some say that this uninhibited little figure is 'fertilising' the land to ensure a rich and successful harvest, others that he represents equality, in that we are all equal when it comes to biological functions. All agree that he or she symbolises good luck for the coming year and after the past couple of years we all need a bit of that!



CHECK OUT OUR SITE AT

www.anglophone-direct for more autumn and christmas events, traditions, markets and entertainment.

P-OLife

BON NADAL

for Christmas 'à la Catalane'

CHRISTMAS

Gift and lunch ideas

Please buy local if you can.

...ARGEES

l'Atelier du Rêve 06 72 53 14 76
Gifts, decoration, local crafts, leisure activities
and creative workshops, puzzles ... latelierdureve66@orange.fr

Épicerie Val Marie 04 68 81 45 69
Argeles-sur-Mer www.epicerievalmarie.com

...CERET

J & B Art Glass 06 72 68 79 95
Creation, restoration, Glass sessions artglassjb@gmail.com

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Origins of the MILE

The kilometre high club?
It just doesn't quite sound right does it?

Have you measured yourself lately? Are you 5ft 8ins or 1m72? And how much do you weigh? Nine stone or 63 kilos?

As the Brexibonus causes Britain to drift further away from the rest of Europe, **its unique-in-Europe way of measuring imperial over metric continues to be seen as quaint.**

In fact, despite the fact that European goods have been labelled in both metric and imperial for many years now, **Britain remains obstinately resistant and out of step with the neighbours.** Maybe there's a certain reassuring comfort in hanging on to familiar systems.



During the Roman occupation of Britain, the **mille passus** became the main measurement of **distance**, particularly along the Roman roads. The word soon entered the English language, shortened to mile.

As the metric system was introduced to France by Napoleon when France and England were at war, perhaps there is still an underlying reluctance to collaborate with the enemy?



Or could it just be that the British government doesn't see the point in spending millions of tax payers' pennies updating road signs and maps and confusing the UK even more on its European-ness, or lack of it?

Ironically, despite its French origins, **Britain is also the only European country to measure distance in miles instead of kilometres.**

The word mile actually comes from the French mille, (1000), which in its turn came from the Latin 'mille passus', literally a thousand paces or steps, based on 1,000 Roman soldier strides when marching.



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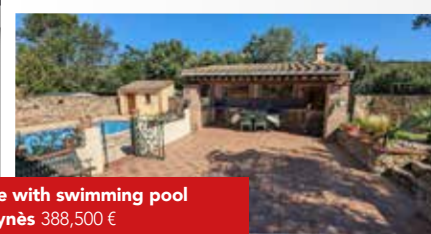
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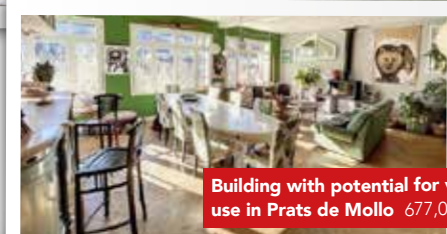
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introduce
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MAGIC SHOWS

MAGIC' GALA

Friday November 3rd
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Espace Jean-Carrère.

Abrac'Argelès...

Prepare to be hallucinated.

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Saturday November 4th at 8
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Jérôme Mentizard presents a
special Halloween show, an
explosive mix of mystery and
dreams, a cross between the
paranormal and urban legend.

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9am to 12pm (village)

Sunday November 5th from

9am to 12pm (port)

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(FREE)

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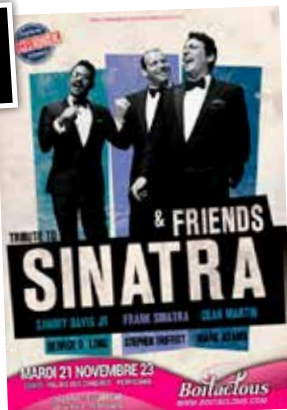
'Sinatra & Friends'

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Palais des Congrès, Perpignan

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Members 10€



HAPPY 60TH BIRTHDAY LES ANGLES

Ringed by mountains, Lake Matemale glistening before the village, impressive snow park, slopes that descend through pine forests into the old village itself....

BUT LES ANGLES IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE SKIING!



EXCITEMENT

LOU BAC MOUNTAIN - Sledge 2000 meters downhill on this monorail, amidst over 430 meters of vertical drop at a max speed of 42 km/h. **Breathtaking views - you're in control.**

RELAXATION

ANGLEO - Balnéo & Spa in the heart of the village. Swim, steam, sauna, salt, solarium, skin care... **Sweet!**



NATURE

PARC ANIMALIER - boar, wolves, bison, bears, reindeer, marmottes, izards ... all in spacious enclosures...Beautiful views of lake and mountains. Take boots!

+ **ICE DIVING - DOG PULLED SLEIGH RIDES - BIKE AND SCOOTER IN THE SNOW - SNAKE LUGE**



Le Barcarès

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE 2023-2024



Have you been good this year? Even if you haven't, Le Barcarès Village de Noël is right up there with some of the most well known and exciting Christmas markets in France with festive delights and enchanted attractions at every turn. So why not treat yourself?



No need to head for the mountains to enter an enchanting winter wonderland. It's right here by the beach, at the foot of the iconic steamship, Lydia, dressed up in her finest, surrounded by ice rinks, a mountain village, labyrinth, ice slide, magical, mythical creatures....



Alleys lined with alpine chalets offer a warm atmosphere and great gift ideas for the whole family.



The exciting extravaganza continues until mid-January, so if you haven't made plans for New Year's Eve yet, there's an idea to welcome in 2024.



With a designer market, Santa parades with elves and fairies galore, torchlit parades, bars and restaurants open 'til late, firework displays, and plenty of surprises...
It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas!

NEW THIS YEAR

Christmas rides and workshops specially for toddlers

Everything you need to know at www.noelbarcares.com



(Ooh I do like)

A BIT OF ROUGH

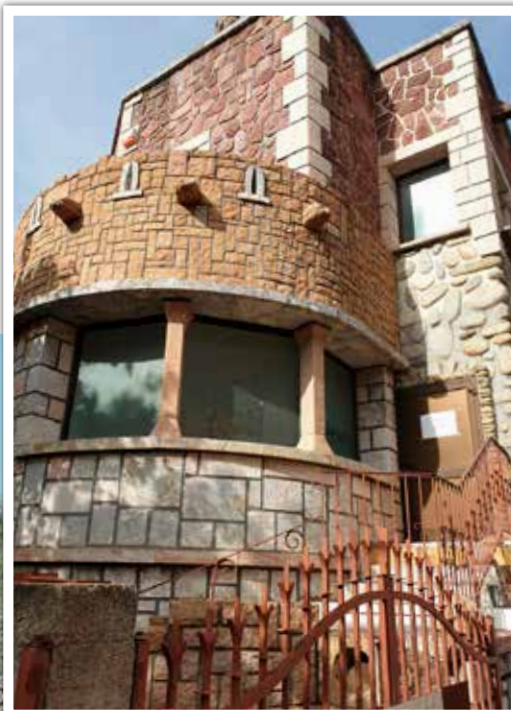
BY HENRY SHAFTOE

In a previous edition of P-O Life I waxed lyrical about the smooth curvy lines of Perpignan's « art deco » heritage. But there is another architectural style that is evident in the town and surrounding areas – a sort of rough-hewn look that makes use of local materials: rough hewn rocks, huge pebbles (cailloux) and flattened bricks, (confusingly known as cayroux).

Remparts St Jacques, Perpignan



Most of the latter were probably produced at the brickworks (still functioning) at **St Jean Pla de Corts**. These 'cayroux' are used to bond and stabilise the 'cailloux' and are often laid in horizontal double courses every metre or so up a wall. **Even the walls of the St Jean Cathedral in Perpignan are built like this.**



One of the most spectacular examples of this 'rough hewn architecture' is 'la Casa Carrère' in Bages, on the road to Elne (covered in a previous edition of P-O Life, and sometimes open to the public).

But there are some fine buildings throughout the region that are built in a similar 'rough style'. **Two fine examples in Perpignan are to be found in Rues Ramon Llull/ Elie Delcros and Quai Bourdan:**



Corner of rue elie ducros and rue Ramon Llull



Quai Bourdan



Cobbled domesticity, rue Victor Hugo, Prades

And there is a **fine example near the Post Office in Prades**

But arguably the most impressive bit of rough round these parts is the **parish church in the centre of Palau del Vidre** - a monumental construction at its most cobbled.

You could say that this style of building, using local 'found' materials, was ecologically well ahead of its time. And it is extraordinary to think that the huge oval pebbles used, (and collected along the coast and from riverbeds), must be the result of thousands, if not millions of years of being worn smooth by water!



Palau del Vidre



WINTER - 29 OCTOBER 2023 - 30 MARCH 2024

by Robbie Shaw

This covers the winter schedules period from Sunday 29 October till Saturday 30 March but bear in mind that airlines constantly change schedules according to demand, so there is a good chance that several that I have listed will be out of date by the time you read this, as these details were researched in August/September 2023. My best suggestion is to constantly monitor the airline websites yourself.

Car hire prices are still higher than they really should be, and it does vary country by country. Ireland is still ridiculously high. The main reason apparently due to the shortage of cars caused by a shortage of computer chips.

FRANCE BEZIERS



Like Carcassonne, **Ryanair** has a free run at this small airport. However like most places in P-O, a good selection in summer quickly vanishes in the winter. The only destination served this winter is surprisingly **Luton**.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
LUTON	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-27 March

CARCASSONNE



Ryanair remains the sole operator here. Last September my wife flew Carcassonne-Cork, booking only a few week's notice – the fare was €15 ! This winter Manchester and Stansted are the sole survivors of this summer's destinations served.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
MANCHESTER	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-30 March
STANSTED	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-29 March

MONTPELLIER



EasyJet operate from both **Gatwick** and **Luton**, the latter only for a short summer period. The **British Airways** thrice weekly Gatwick service which was operated by their **Gatwick** subsidiary **British Airways Euroflyer** in the summer months is not operating this winter.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
GATWICK	7	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March

NIMES



Ryanair is the sole operator for P-O readers during the summer but **no flights at all in winter**.

PERPIGNAN

Come on Ryanair. Take your blinkers off. There's a large ex pat British community in the P-O and not a single winter flight to the UK.



TOULOUSE / BLAGNAC



There tends to be more flights to Toulouse from UK regional airport in the winter due to skiing opportunities, with Andorra not too far away.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
BIRMINGHAM	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-29 March
BRISTOL	4	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March
EDINBURGH	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-30 March
GATWICK	2-7	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March
HEATHROW	21-27	BRITISH AWAYS 29 Oct-30 March
STANSTED	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
DUBLIN	7	AER LINGUS 29 Sep-30 March
	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-27 March

SPAIN

BARCELONA / EL PRAT



As always a huge variety of flights to **Barcelona**, most of which run all year round, but with seasonal increases. For those unfamiliar, take care on the Barcelona ring-road, one wrong turn could be very time consuming. A new winter service is Cork, and plenty flights from **Stansted**. Still does not compare with the 80 weekly flights from **Gatwick** or the 60 from **Heathrow**.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
BIRMINGHAM	2	JET2 29 Oct-31 March
	8	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
	3	VUELING 29 Oct-30 March
BRISTOL	3-12	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March
	4	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
EAST MIDLANDS	3	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
EDINBURGH	9	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 Oct
	2	VUELING 29 Oct-30 March
GATWICK	26	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March
	54	VUELING 29 Oct-30 March
GLASGOW INT'L	2	EASYJET 29 Oct-31 March
HEATHROW	60	BRITISH AWYS 29 Oct-30 Mar
LEEDS BRADFORD	2	JET2 29 Oct-27 November
	2	JET2 09 Feb-29 March
LIVERPOOL	2	EASYJET 29 Oct-29 March
		RYANAIR 30 Oct-30 March
LUTON	11	EASYJET 29 Oct-30 March
	3	RYANAIR 27 Oct-30 March
MANCHESTER	2-4	JET2 29 Oct-31 March
	3	EASYJET 29 Oct-31 March
	11	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
	7	VUELING 29 Oct-30 March
NEWCASTLE	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-29 March
STANSTED	28	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
CORK	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-27 March
DUBLIN	11	AER LINGUS 29 Oct-30 March
	2	RYANAIR 29 Oct-30 March
	6	VUELING 29 Oct-30 March

GIRONA



In the last couple of years there had been a big increase in flights to **Girona**. No doubt passenger confidence in the Boeing 737MAX will have taken a battering after two crashes, and the type being grounded for a considerable time. To counter this **Ryanair** has renamed the 737-MAX8 as the 737-8200, and many are now in service, with more to come. **Jet2** who suddenly found the airport a few years ago operated services to a number of UK regional airports, but in the winter months these have disappeared. There are no **Ryanair** flights at all to Ireland in the winter, some have switched to **Barcelona**. Similarly a huge reduction in UK flights compared to the summer.

FROM	NUMBER OF WEEKLY FLIGHTS	AIRLINE
BELFAST	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-30 March
BIRMINGHAM	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-30 March
STANSTED	2	RYANAIR 30 Oct-29 March

REAL CONVERSATION RECORDED BETWEEN AN AIR FRANCE PILOT AND THE CONTROL TOWER.
(Flight number changed to protect the innocent!)

Pilote: Air France 1234, on souhaiterait monter au niveau 330.
Contrôleur: Air France 1234, maintenez 290 cause bruit.
Pilote: Ah bon?
Pourquoi cause bruit?
Contrôleur: Parce que si vous montez et que vous encadrez l'avion qui est au-dessus de vous au 310, ça va faire beaucoup de bruit et les riverains ne vont pas aimer...

on souhaiterait - we wish to
niveau - level
maintenez - maintain
encadrez - smash into
au-dessus - above
riverains - residents



2=2
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EL BULLI....

BY PETER SPENCER

A 15 minute drive on a twisty and vertiginous road from **Roses** will take you to "Badia de Montjoi". Looking down on this pretty cove you'll find the recently opened museum of "El Bulli". It's quite a place dedicated to the culinary skills of **Ferran Adrià**, arguably the best chef on the planet. Look out for the bulldogs. The lady who originally owned "El Bulli" owned one. **Bon app.**



BONE TO PICK WITH YOU

Un squelette entre dans une brasserie et commande une paella et une bière. Le serveur la lui apporte en tremblant de peur. Le squelette mange sa paella, boit sa bière et demande la note. Le serveur toujours tremblant la lui apporte.



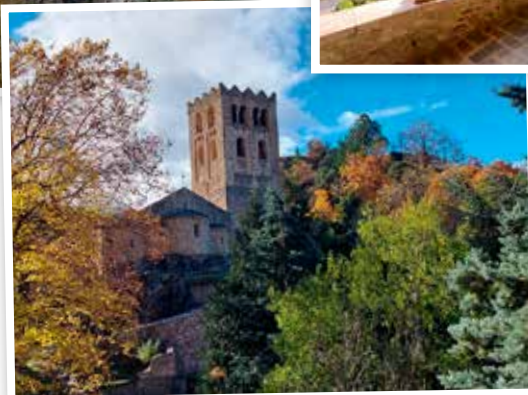
"Vous savez on ne voit pas souvent des squelettes venir manger ici."
"A 40 euros la paella cela ne m'étonne pas!"

squelette - skeleton
la lui apporte - brings it to him
en tremblant - shaking
la note - the bill

Autumn Picnic ^{at} St Martin du Canigou



Need some time out? A dramatic and wonderful 45 minutes walk from Casteil brings you to this Benedictine Abbey, framed by mountain peaks and rich forests, for a perfect autumn picnic. Fairly steep but well worth the effort, St Martin du Canigou has held its position on the slopes of Canigou for over ten centuries.



Religious life continues to this day on this unique site of worship and meditation. **Spread out your picnic on tables provided and enjoy the special atmosphere.**

Check out their website for the guided tour.

<https://stmartinducanigou.org/fr>

Grotte de Fontrabieuse

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*Cannot be used with other offers

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Open from 2 January to 30 December 2023 (closed from 06 November to 01 December)



PUNAISE!

Also used as a polite exclamation of irritation, (drat!) or a drawing pin, **this autumn we seem to be invaded by another meaning of 'punaise'** - the stink bug! They're not very pretty unless you're that way inclined, and have piercing mouthparts contained in a beak, to suck the juices from plants and fruit - but not humans.

As their name suggests, they give off an unpleasant smell if squished.



CAREFUL WHAT YOU BRING BACK FROM AMERICA!

The Fiesta Nacional de España is held annually on **October 12th** to celebrate the day when **Cristóbal Colón** (in Spanish) arguably discovered America in 1492, and claimed the land for Spain. When he returned to Spain, it is believed he also brought syphilis back with him!

there's *no place* like (MOBILE) HOME!

LOOKING FOR A NEW HOME? HOW ABOUT GOING MOBILE HOME?

Brexit, French red tape, Covid travel restrictions, increased VAT payable upon export, big price rises....Exporting your UK caravan has never been so complicated - **but Eurobase have got it covered.**

BUYING A MOBILE HOME?

Originally a UK company providing brand new British made mobile homes to British clients, throughout France, **UKEurobase Mobile Homes, led by director Simon Froggatt**, has been present in the Pyrenees Orientales for many years. **Today they provide brand new and second hand mobile homes, both British and French** - to save you all the export hassle and red tape.

And have you seen the style and spaciousness of today's modern mobile homes? Wow! Who needs a house?!



Visit their exhibition park near Argelès sur Mer to see a wide range of second-hand homes, over one hundred in stock at the moment, of all sizes, ages, conditions and prices.

SELLING A MOBILE HOME?

They also buy mobile homes so give them a **call on 06 73 81 95 43** if you want to sell yours.

They can install homes, uninstall and transport them as well as supplying decks and air conditioning.

NEED A SAFE HAVEN FOR YOUR MOBILE HOME?

They also store homes for people moving between sites or areas.

COMING SOON

Bigger and better exhibition park between Argelès and St André. Why not pop in for a coffee and a chat? We look forward to meeting you.



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ONE TO WATCH J'AI OUBLIÉ DE TE DIRE

(I Forgot To Tell You) 2009

Filmed entirely amidst the stunning scenery of the P-O, **the late and great Omar Sharif stars alongside the lovely Emilie Dequenne as Jaume (Sharif), an aging artist descending into dementia, from flowers in the fridge to vinegar in the cake mix. A strange kind of friendship develops between him and his young apprentice, Marie (Dequenne), who takes on the task of repairing and protecting the gruff artist as his mental health deteriorates. Tender, heartbreaking.....all the more poignant as Sharif was later diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's disease himself.**



Autumn antics



With
Lesley McLaren

Ants aren't loved by many, especially when they invade the house. However, one of the most common and arguably fascinating species in Mediterranean areas like ours is the Harvester (**Messor barbarus**), which won't be remotely interested in heading for your kitchen in search of meaty or sugary tidbits.

Whilst they will occasionally eat animal protein, as their name suggests, **they are primarily seed collectors**. You'll find them everywhere in the P-O: in verges, vineyards, orchards, scrub & light woodland.

We've had a colony under our small back lawn for a few years. The only downside to this is that they ensure little or no vegetation grows in a 1-2m circumference around it, which, on top of the drought, **is turning our grass into an unsightly, barren desert**.

On the plus side, Harvesters help aerate soil, mix deep soil layers with those higher up and incorporate organic refuse. They disperse seeds and can help keep weeds down. And they play their part in the food chain, being preyed upon by birds, lizards and geckos... They are also fascinating to watch close-to.

Colonies, which may be many thousands-strong, often have more than one entrance and can be quite deep, with many galleries. **Collected seeds are kept dry and away from daylight in big granaries, to prevent germination.**

Often they harvest only one type of seed until it's exhausted, before moving onto another. Workers of all sizes are recruited for transportation along multi-lane highways to & from the source.

70% of their diet consists of "ant bread", formed by chewed plant material mixed with saliva. Any remains are later removed and deposited in chaff heaps (called middens) around the colony entrance.

Highways can stretch for 50m.

In summertime they always sensibly have a siesta – avoiding the hottest, driest part of the day – and in wintertime they semi-hibernate.

Queens: 14-16mm

Males: 8-9mm

Minor & media workers: up to 8mm

Majors: 12mm

Workers (all female) can live 3 to 5 years. The most numerous – "minors" or "medias" – are all black.

Less numerous "majors" are instantly recognisable by their over-sized, reddish heads.

They are the heavy lifters of the colony, clearing galleries & paths of stones...

... transporting and grinding the biggest, hardest seeds...

... and sometimes feathering the nest!

After a day-long struggle to pull this feather into the nest, **it finally would go no further and had to be removed & dumped on the midden**. By then some shafts had been chewed around the base, presumably to remove any residual protein.

P-O NATURALLY

Autumn antics



Though not soldier ants as such, the majors will use their formidable jaws in defence if necessary. Raids and grain theft are not unknown!



2023 may turn out to be a bumper year for the colony in our back garden. Last autumn, **unthinking**, I scattered a big boxful of grass seed over the lawn, in the hope of filling in the many bare patches. The ants must have thought all their Christmases had come at once and in no time created a network of super-highways crisscrossing the grass. Within about 48-hrs ALL the seeds had disappeared; subsequent middens were huge. This autumn's swarm could be a whopper!

After lift-off, the queens and males mate on the wing. The males die afterwards, even if they haven't managed to mate. The queens land, and find a suitable site to burrow underground – shedding their wings in the process – to start a colony of their own. The following spring each queen will raise the first workers by herself – and she may live for 20 years or more!

In autumn you may see huge swarms of flying Harvesters. They're comprised exclusively of new (massive) queens and males.



Last year we had two swarm events in our garden, on hot days after rain in mid-October



Queens having a chinwag.

Can they bite you? **Yes!**
Can they sting you? **Yes!!**
The double-whammy can be very painful for several hours. **Take care if you usually react badly to bites.**



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



Autumn days in the P-O are usually very kind...but evenings start to grow a little chilly



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Up, up and away...

a balloon ride over the extinct volcanoes of la Garrotxa

WITH ROBYN AND TONY GOODMAN



Seeking different views, new perspectives of the magnificently fabulous region we inhabit it was decided a Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg adventure was needed. A silent drift above the green clad extinct volcanoes of Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa was selected!

Travelling down the night before to avoid an early reveille we enjoyed a light dinner at one of the many restaurants Olot has to offer before staying at a modest hostel perfect for a group of hardy explorers.

Arriving at the base at 06:15 we were greeted warmly and enjoyed coffee and freshly baked pastries in the modern quite luxurious departure lounge while observing the flight crew and ground staff outside prepare our craft.

Boarding was effortless. Gone are the days of clambering over the side of the basket while trying to look elegant and failing miserably. **Modern panniers have doors allowing passengers to enter with ease and dignity.**



If flying for the first time what is most noticeable is the complete silence apart from the occasional burst from the burner. **Travelling with the wind, there is no real sense of movement.** The only clue is the landscape below slowly drifting by.



The flight was first class only, with **in-flight catering featuring freshly baked almond cake and a class of chilled Cava at 5000 feet** while admiring a rose pink sun rising over the **Bay of Roses**. The pilot from time to time would point out various landmarks and answered technical questions from the curious.

Despite being at 5000 feet, flights are not cold, no need to wear extra layers. What you are wearing for the surface will be fine. The early morning sun can still be warm so consider applying some sun-block, especially in summer and a hat or cap is also recommended.

Our flight lasted 90 minutes, it seemed much shorter. The pilot guided the balloon to a pinpoint landing at a pre-prepared site just **outside Besalú where the ground crew were waiting.** Transiting back to the base, the day was not yet over, greeting us was a **traditional Catalan breakfast of sausages and beans,** pastries, cava and coffee served in the modern restaurant. At the end of the meal we were individually presented with a quite elaborate certificate attesting to the flight.

We are already planning our next flight, when the landscape has a dusting of snow.



WHERE

Olot is a recognised global centre for hot air balloons, naturally blessed with perfect ballooning weather and spectacular landscapes flights are available year round. Olot itself is well worth a visit.

www.turismeolot.com/en/

STAY

The immediate area has a wide range of accommodation. **The flight company offers accommodation packages.**

WHEN

Flights are available year round depending on the weather. **Flights depart at 07:00 in winter, earlier in summer.**

WHO

We flew with **Vol de Coloms - Volar en globus a la Garrotxa** which has been operating for many years. It operates from a modern base located below **Volca del Croscat.** To satisfy ourselves we actually visited the centre before our flight and were impressed. www.voldecolums.cat/en/

HOW

The Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa is near Olot around 1 hour and 30 minutes from Perpignan via the AP7. A car is the only realistic transport option. <https://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/ca/xarxa-de-parcs/garrotxa/inici/>

Returning home we took the very scenic GI-503 and crossed back into France at the Col de Coustouges just above Saint Laurent de Cerdans.

Alice et les petits guerriers

What can you say when a bright and beautiful little girl loses the battle against that most treacherous of enemies - cancer? How do you find the words? Alice Brunel was just 7 years old when she passed away in 2022.

'Alice et les Petits Guerriers' is a sensitive and thought provoking book written by her Dad, Olivier, charting her struggle - and that of her family in Argelès - on this tragic journey.

"Once the first symptoms appear and the diagnosis is made, it's like entering a parallel universe where kindness rubs shoulders with the reality of a relentless disease. The hospital is peopled by good fairies. Nursery nurses, auxiliary nursery nurses, doctors..... all accompany children and parents caught up in an improbable twist of fate... First hope, then doubt, then the unacceptable outcome"



Olivier finds the words that only a parent can, to describe these heartbreaking times with humility, honesty and sometimes a little humour. **Hope, dignity, energy: three words to describe Alice, the child who drew life from her hospital room.**



ALL PROCEEDS from book sales will be donated to the "Alice et les petits Guerriers" association, a charity created by Olivier to provide better support for hospitalised children and their parents, who are often at a loss when faced with a child's illness.

PLEASE BUY. Good for your French and good for the soul to donate to a deserving charity supporting a devastating illness. May it never happen to you and yours!



Look out for the book at the following places.

Online
[https://capbearedition.com/boutique...search 'Alice et les Petits Guerriers'](https://capbearedition.com/boutique...search%27Alice+et+les+Petits+Guerriers%27)

Bookshops (librairies) AROUND & ABOUT Argelès village: Mag Presse Aspar
Perpignan: Torcatis, Cajelice, Librairie Catalane.
Port-Vendres: Librairie Oxymore

Find out more at
aliceetlespetitsguerriers@gmail.com

CSF - Sud de France (11, 09, 66, 81, 82) Association no. W 112000594

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Jill Merriam on 06 31 26 84 30

P-O Representative

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cancersupportfrance.com | www.csf-forum.org



A warm welcome awaits you at our informal groups in **Céret and Ille**

Céret, Pablo's Bar - Place Picasso
10h30 to 12 noon, First Wednesday of the month

Fabregue, 15 Avenue Louis Prat, Prades.
10h15 to 12 noon, Third Wednesday of the month



and at our Book Exchange at
Laroque-des-Albères, Café des Artistes
10h30 to 12 noon,
Third Monday of the month

Losing YOUR CARTE DE SEJOUR:

A READER'S EXPERIENCE

To be fair, dealing with public bodies in France is often not really any worse than in the UK but some make it easier than others.

For example, five stars for the service to change your driving licence from UK to French. The website gave clear instructions and was easy to negotiate. They gave an estimate of the time it would take and it arrived almost to the day.

MORE TAXING HAS BEEN GETTING A REPLACEMENT FOR A LOST CARTE DE SÉJOUR.

My first step was to go onto the site www.service-public.fr, search for 'perte de carte de séjour', ticking the relevant boxes and then 'Afficher les informations'. You are then informed that you can get a duplicate online, given a list of papers to send and the cost of 225 €.

But there it stops with no link to go on.

I contacted the prefecture in Perpignan by email and was directed to go to invite.contacts-demarches.interieur.gouv.fr/Etrangers. Once there I clicked on 'demande de duplicata' and a number of boxes came up.

You might think you should click on 'je demande ou renouvelle un titre de séjour' but following this ended in being told that the service wasn't operating and to contact the prefecture. I phoned the prefecture for help. The correct box is 'je déclare un changement de situation'.



If you haven't already signed up you will have to follow the link to do that first.

After that it is relatively plain sailing, costs nothing and will be able to be collected from Perpignan within a few weeks.

Another reader adds.....

I lost my 'titre de séjour' (and permis de conduire) in 2021 and went through a similar procedure as described above. I emailed the 'service publique' as I couldn't find the right box to tick, they came straight back, explained the error of my ways and after that it was simple.

I had an appointment to collect the new Titre within 2 weeks from the Préfecture. In the meantime I had my new permis!

French bureaucracy seems to be getting easier – chapeau!

USEFUL VOCAB

perte (de carte de séjour) – loss ...

Afficher (les informations) - post, publish..

demande de duplicata – request for duplicate

je demande ou renouvelle....I'm requesting or renewing....

permis de conduire – driving licence

Chapeau ! – Well done

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 'CARTE DE SÉJOUR' AND A 'TITRE DE SÉJOUR'

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Répétez trois fois
Foie frit froid et fruits
frais frits

Test your FRENCH

See Page 73 for answers

1

M is for Maman

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

- | | | | |
|------------|----|---|-------------------------------|
| mirabelle | 1 | a | outil avec tête et manche |
| ménage | 2 | b | mille millions |
| maussade | 3 | c | contraire de la vérité |
| mordiller | 4 | d | petite prune jaune |
| milliard | 5 | e | agité |
| meute | 6 | f | mélange confus et désordonné. |
| mensonge | 7 | g | sombre, triste |
| méli-mélo | 8 | h | troupe de chiens |
| mouvementé | 9 | i | mordre légèrement |
| marteau | 10 | j | soin d'une maison |

Useful Expression

Avoir un empêchement
to hit a snag/held up
eg Je risque d'être en retard; J'ai eu un empêchement

Buzzword

Fronde (f) - revolt (amongst other meanings)

Not a new word by any means, but turning up a great deal in the media recently.

Useful Expression

Du coup... (fam)

So, you know (donc, alors...)

Eg Du coup, tu peux passer me prendre demain ou non?
So, can you come and pick me up tomorrow or not?

New words and phrases in the French dictionary
(some that even the French haven't heard of!)
Le quiet quitting.... doing the bare minimum at work without actually getting fired.
Le burn-out – exhaustion, usually from over work

Useful expression

Ça tombe bien

That works out well/time is right

2

Call me naughty if you wish, but I think everyone should know a little bit of modern French 'argot' (slang), even if it's sometimes a bit cheeky.

Match up these slang words and phrases with their English meanings

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|---|------------------------|
| Ça ne pisse pas loin | 1 | a | I'm off! |
| C'est un beau salaud | 2 | b | He's a real bast**d |
| Il capte rien | 3 | c | It's no big deal. |
| Elle est bien en chair | 4 | d | He's very drunk |
| Je me casse | 5 | e | She's well padded |
| Il est complètement bourré | 6 | f | He's an oaf |
| Ça schlingue | 7 | g | He's a fibber |
| Il raconte des bobards | 8 | h | It stinks! |
| C'est un bouffon | 9 | i | Stop freaking out |
| Arrête de flipper | 10 | j | He just doesn't get it |

Deuxième or second?

Both are interchangeable (La seconde guerre mondiale, la deuxième guerre mondiale)

However....a guideline not always followed uses second when something is the second in a series of only two, and deuxième when there's a third, fourth...

LANGUAGE TIP

la semaine dernière - last week

la dernière semaine - the final week (in a series)

3

Fill in the blanks with the useful slang words below

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Je suis ----- du chocolat (I'm addicted to chocolate) | 5 Je me ----- (I'm off, leaving) |
| 2 Ça va mon -----? (You OK mate?) | 6 Quel ----- (What a mess) |
| 3 J'ai ----- le Covid (I caught Covid) | 7 J'adore les ----- (I love dogs) |
| 4 Il faut voir le ----- ? (Do I have to see the doctor?) | 8 J'ai trop de ----- (I've got too much work) |

a chopé b toubib c clébards d accro e casse f bordel g boulot h pote

4

Body Language

Match up these useful phrases which all involve body parts

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Ca coûte les yeux de la tête 1 | a He is well connected |
| Il a le bras long 2 | b I give up! |
| J'ai un chat dans la gorge 3 | c She put her foot in it! |
| Je suis bien dans ma peau 4 | d I have a frog in my throat |
| Il a une dent contre quelqu'un 5 | e My foot! |
| Elle a mis les pieds dans le plat 6 | f He has a grudge against someone |
| Elle est arrivée comme un cheveu sur la soupe 7 | g I'm comfortable with myself |
| Mon œil! 8 | h It's very expensive |
| Je donne ma langue au chat 9 | i She turned up at a bad time |
| Les doigts dans le nez 10 | j Easy! |



Un peu bête....

Quand M. et Mme Dupont se sont couchés hier, M Dupont a pris son Viagra liquide. Malheureusement, dans le noir, il s'est trompé de petite bouteille et sans s'en rendre compte, il a bu dans un flacon de Tippex. Le lendemain matin, il s'est réveillé avec une énorme correction.



Se tromper – to *mistake*
Se rendre compte – to *realise*
Le lendemain matin
the next morning

Useful Grammar Tip

Être en train de + infinitive
(nothing to do with taking a train!)
to be in the middle of
(doing something)

Je suis en train de manger
I'm (in the middle of) eating
Il est en train de parler
He's (in the middle of) talking

Language tip

Attention! Dans & Sur

Qu'est-ce qu'il y a À la télé ce soir?
What's on telly tonight?
Qu'est-ce qu'il y a SUR la télé ce soir?
What's on top of the telly tonight?
(A big spider maybe?)

Il aime lire DANS le train
He likes reading on the train
Il aime lire SUR le train
He likes reading on top of the train
(A little dangerous!)



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LE COVID OR LA COVID?

Whilst most French say **LE Covid**, because of **LE virus**, the Académie Française, guardian of French language, informs us that it is actually **LA Covid**. Pourquoi? Because it is a 'maladie', a word that is **feminine**. However, the word **coronavirus** is **masculine**! Confused? And so you should be!



DID YOU KNOW?

If you go to some cities in Spain, watch out for a man in a kilt (amongst other disguises)! **Illegal now, but not entirely disappeared**, El Cobrador Escocès (the Scottish Receiver) used to dress as a Scottish piper, and follow the 'moroso' (bad payer) wherever he went...in the metro, restaurant, street...Apparently, many people paid up rather than suffer the indignity of being shadowed by a Scotsman! This humiliating procedure was nevertheless an improvement on Spanish debt-collection of the Middle Ages, when those in debt would often be paraded through the streets on donkeys, whilst wearing rags and cone-shaped hats!



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Améliorez votre ANGLAIS

See Page 73 for answers

Dangerous Tongue twister (virelangue)

Repeat quickly x
3....(but be careful.
This one could be
rather rude if you get
it wrong!)

I'm not the
pheasant
plucker, I'm
the pheasant
plucker's mate

(pheasant – faisan
to pluck – plumer)

1

R is for Red

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

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| rant 1 | a uneven, not smooth |
| random 2 | b garden tool with prongs |
| rough 3 | c male sheep |
| rainbow 4 | d speak loudly and angrily |
| reindeer 5 | e red edible berries |
| rake 6 | f ready to eat, fully grown |
| ram 7 | g arc of colours in the sky |
| ripe 8 | h payment for lent goods or services |
| rental 9 | i pulls Santa's sledge |
| raspberry 10 | j no clear plan or purpose |

2

English Humour! Remplissez les blancs.

I was walking 1 the road with my dog when a 2 come up to me and 3
"What are you doing with that smelly beast?" "He's not 4 at all" I replied
5. "I wasn't 6 to you" replied the lady. "I was talking to the 7!"

a said b indignantly c down d dog e talking f lady g smelly

MR. CHURCHILL,
YOU ARE DRUNK!!!



YES MADAM, AND
YOU ARE UGLY...

...BUT TOMORROW
I SHALL BE SOBER.

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unbelievably bad joke...

...but good for your French

Un homme arrive à la gendarmerie et demande à parler au cambrioleur en état d'arrestation, qui s'est introduit chez lui pendant la nuit de la semaine précédente.

- C'est impossible, dit le policier, il est en garde à vue.
- Mais j'ai besoin de lui poser une petite question. S'il vous plaît. Ce sera très rapide.
- N'insistez pas monsieur, c'est strictement interdit de voir les détenus. Rentrez chez vous.
- Quel dommage, je voulais tellement savoir comment il a fait pour rentrer dans notre maison à deux heures du matin sans réveiller ma femme. Moi ça fait quinze ans que j'essaie...



USEFUL VOCAB

cambrioleur - burglar
qui s'est introduit - who entered
en état d'arrestation/en garde à vue - under arrest
interdit - forbidden
Rentrez chez vous - go home
rentrer - enter (also return)
ça fait X ans que... - to have been (doing something) for X years

3

Many proverbs and idioms tell you what NOT to do. Can you find their equivalents?

- | | | | |
|--|----|---|--|
| ...count your chickens before they hatch | 1 | a | T'as pas intérêt |
| ...you dare! | 2 | b | Ne te fie aux apparences |
| ...kid yourself | 3 | c | Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué |
| ...mention it | 4 | d | Ne te fais pas d'illusions |
| ...judge a book by its cover | 5 | e | À cheval donné on ne regarde pas les dents |
| ...look a gift horse in the mouth | 6 | f | N'abuse pas |
| ...give me that! | 7 | g | De rien |
| ...push it | 8 | h | Ne me laisse pas tomber |
| ...you (don't) say | 9 | i | Arrête tes excuses |
| ...give up on me | 10 | j | T'affole pas ! |



4

Giddy up horsey !

Pour les amateurs de l'équitation, voici des mots et expressions avec le mot 'horse' dedans. Pouvez-vous trouver leur équivalent en français ?

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| rocking horse | 1 | a | bled paumé |
| clothes horse | 2 | b | enfoncer une porte ouverte |
| to horse around | 3 | c | chahuter |
| horse sense | 4 | d | bon sens |
| horse-chestnut | 5 | e | étendoir à linge |
| one-horse town | 6 | f | cheval à bascule |
| straight from the horse's mouth | 7 | g | de source sûre |
| to flog a dead horse | 8 | h | marron |

Mot récent dans le dictionnaire.

Bestie – meilleur ami
Eg, Rosy is my bestie



Ouch! English Humour

What did the cucumber say to the pickle?

You mean a great dill to me.

What's the difference between a hippo and a zippo?

One's pretty heavy and the other's a little lighter.

(Demande à un ami anglais!)

British Humour

Two clairvoyants meet. One says to the other: "You are fine. How am I?"



TGV PARIS TO PERPIGNAN VIA facebook??



Facebook is like marmite.

We either love it or we hate it! However, a well monitored local FB group can be such a mine of information and an amazing opportunity to bring people together.

Here at P-O Life, many firm friendships have been forged over the years, first via our forum, then Facebook. The group is peopled by knowledgeable, generous-minded locals and regular visitors who often go out of their way to provide answers to questions, lend or give away items needed, support those in trouble or in need....

In each edition of P-O Life, we'll take a question and publish some of the answers. Come and join us at www.facebook.com/groups/polifemag to find out more.

the question

Has anyone taken the TGV from Paris to Perpignan? What our Facebook group say



Philip

When the system works it is a very good service. About five hours and very comfortable. However, we have about a 50% "failure rate" (including travelling back) due to strikes or late arrivals. First class offers more space and sometimes hardly any more cost than 2nd.



Harbeer

Yes, numerous times. Get first class if you can, sometimes the pricing is good. Not all trains have phone charging ports. My experience has been favorable overall.



Eleanor

I've taken it loads of times. When it works, it's brilliant. Make sure you choose a direct train with no changes. Avoid the start of the school holidays as that's when there are often strikes.



Jan

Many times. Go first class, not a lot dearer. Quieter, more comfortable seat, more luggage space. Some lovely scenery. Sit back and relax.....obviously avoid strikes!



Petra

I love it! Wonderful views



Rhona

It's a fantastic service. We just came off the Paris to Perpignan TGV, an hour ago.



Jean

Well. That takes me back. We did this. Mind you, it was in 1992.



Nuno

C'est un train rapide qui met 5h....et 15 minutes! What else ?



Carolyn

Book it on sncf - nowadays if it is "supprimé" for whatever reason they are very effective at reimbursing and if you book early enough, go for first class at roughly the same price as second - if by any chance you are over 60 a senior railcard might come in handy.



Hilary

We did this in the summer (2022) for our wedding anniversary. Upgraded to first class for very little (as others mentioned) - think it about £5 more each! We bought lunch items from shops near Gare de Lyon and had a super picnic onboard, watching the countryside roll by. The train left and arrived on time. We left late morning (11am?) and it was busy but not full. We are looking forward to doing it again.

Things ^{You} might NEED To KNOW



ON THE ROAD?

French police advise...

Motorway pirates, posing as police, and armed with flashing blue lights, have been stopping and 'searching' cars, and helping themselves to valuables. Foreign cars are particularly targeted.

The real police say they would never search a car on the motorway for safety reasons, that they rarely operate in plain clothes and in unmarked police cars, and that **if you have any doubts, you should not stop. A real policeman will NEVER ask you for money.** Ask to see their card marked "Police" in the centre, and cross-striped in blue, white and red.

LIMIT YOUR MUSHROOMS!

Going mushroom hunting this autumn? Well, obviously you have to be well informed and careful...but did you know that in the many 'forêts domaniales' (belonging to the state) you are allowed to pick no more than 5 litres per person, for personal consumption only? In fact, according to article R163-5 of the French Forestry Code, unauthorised harvesting is punishable by a maximum fine of 750 € (less than 10 litres) and up to 45,000 € and 3 years' imprisonment (less than 10 litres).



TRUCKS TAKE THE TRAIN



In June 2018 Spanish prime minister Socialist Pedro Sanchez made the controversial decision to remove motorway concessions from private companies until 2024.

Since then, many Spanish motorways have been completely free, including the A9/AP-7 Le Boulou to Barcelona which has seen a 40% increase in vehicle traffic and an 80% increase in truck traffic.

The plan now, in order to keep these motorways toll free, is to drastically reduce CO2 emissions by encouraging the thousands of trucks lumbering up and down the motorway to take the train!

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Parking at Perpignan Airport?

Although the TravelCar discount pre-booking system is no longer working, don't just pay at the machines when you get back. **Take your ticket to the reception desk and they are operating a discount scheme similar to the TravelCar one but without the need for pre-booking.** (Thanks to Howard for providing info)

TRICK OR TREAT?



'Des bonbons ou une farce' is one way to beg for sweets on Hallo' eve, 'friandises ou bêtises' is another, but as there is no literal translation, just about anything goes.

End of the 100ml hand luggage ban?

More sophisticated security scanning machinery could mean the end of the ban of taking liquids over 100 ml in plane hand luggage. Nor will you need to pull out all your electrical stuff and put through separately. In theory, this should be the end of the impossibly long queues to get to the other side! The ban has already been lifted on some UK airports and others are expected to follow. This is not necessarily the case in all UK airports, nor airports around the world so check airport website for individual policies.



DID YOU KNOW?

ANYTHING TO DECLARE?

Did you know that visitors to Paulilles bay, next to the former Nobel dynamite factory between Port Vendres and Banyuls, have on occasion been stopped at airport security on their way out of the country, due to the detection of minuscule dynamite particles clinging to their rucksack after a day at the beach!



LANGUAGE EXERCISES ANSWERS

TEST ^{your} FRENCH

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

AMÉLIOREZ ^{your} ANGLAIS

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



EMERGENCY numbers



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(medical emergency)

17 POLICE
emergency

18 Fire service
emergency

112 European
emergency line

114 Emergency number
for the deaf and hard
of hearing by SMS

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Perpignan Hospital 04 68 61 66 33
CPAM (English spk serv) 09 74 75 36 46
Cancer Support France 04 68 69 01 37
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House of Disabled People) 04 68 39 99 00

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International Mastercard 08 00 90 13 87
Local weather forecast 08 99 71 02 66
Electrical emergency 09 72 67 50 66
Gas emergency 08 00 47 33 33

Useful Vocabulary

Help > *Au secours!*
It's an emergency >
C'est un cas d'urgence
I need an ambulance >
J'ai besoin d'une ambulance
I've had an accident >
J'ai eu un accident

The house/car is on fire >
La maison/voiture a pris feu
My husband has had a heart attack/stroke >
Mon mari fait une crise cardiaque/a souffert un AVC
(accident vasculaire cérébral – pronounced ai vai cai)
My child is choking >
Mon enfant s'étouffe.

I'm bleeding (a lot) >
Je saigne (beaucoup).
I'm diabetic, I need insulin >
Je suis diabétique, j'ai besoin d'insuline.
My wife is having the baby, her water has broken >
Ma femme accouche, l'eau du bébé arrive, la poche des eaux a percé.

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