

French Accent

The Magazine of Learn French at Home

The Bilingual and Audio Online Magazine for Expatriates in France, French Students and Francophiles

Starting a Business in France

The Various Types
of Businesses

SOHO SOLO:
A Unique Project
for Expats
in the Gers



PPDA, Sarkozy and the Media

French Cities Take Steps to Reduce Pollution

From the Editors

France is known for having one of the most far-reaching, equalitarian and humane social protection programmes in Europe. Nearly everyone who lives and works in France is included in the state's universal health coverage, and unemployment and disability plans provide protection from layoffs and incapacitating injuries. Working mothers can also take advantage of the country's network of day-care centres (*crèches*) and nursery schools where their children receive excellent care while parents work. Maternity leaves are among the most generous of any country in Europe. It all sounds pretty utopian, particularly to someone from the United States where the medical insurance industry has pretty much taken over health coverage and left over 40 million Americans without any kind of health insurance. But there is a downside: it costs a lot of money to provide that kind of social protection to its citizens! That is one of the reasons for the high social charges that employers, even self-employed workers, must pay into the system each month, and the seemingly labyrinthine complexity of France's bureaucracy with respect to setting up a business.

Many of the Anglophone newcomers settle in France for the beauty of the countryside, the excellent food and wonderful wines. However, a good number have also set up their own businesses, or have transplanted commercial endeavours they had created elsewhere, and many who are contemplating moving to France have just that goal in mind. We felt it extremely important, therefore, to devote the main series of articles in this issue of *French Accent* to providing as much information as possible about the steps one must take to successfully establish a profitable business enterprise in France. As many of our readers have testified, the administrative aspect alone, while not overwhelming or impossible, is often described as an obstacle course, or as the French would say, "*un parcours du combattant*". We have tried to provide tips on where to go for help, ways to avoid paying more than you really have to in social charges, as well as several interviews with people who have successfully negotiated the bureaucratic boondoggle and have made it work. We hope this will be of some service to those of you who are thinking about starting your own business.

On the political scene, President Sarkozy, or the "*omniprésident*", as he is frequently referred to in the French media, is not just constantly on the move and on our TV screens, he has also, it seems, been very active behind the scenes pulling strings to influence certain aspects of French television. You will also find in this issue our customary features dealing with the language, the scenarios and audio files and other culturally related articles. And, if you haven't yet taken your vacation, the entire staff of *French Accent* wishes you a safe, relaxing and memorable end of summer.

Bonne lecture !

French Accent Magazine

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Cover photo: (by Paul Robinson). A British expatriate in the village of Aignan, in the Gers, who started a small business thanks to the help of SOHO SOLO (see p. 26). © Nancy KRUYVER-CLA d'Aignan

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Sommaire

Interactive French

<i>N'importe quoi...!</i> Plus 2 Scenarios	Page 5
Two <i>dictées</i>	Page 7
<i>Le coin des branchés</i> : A few useful & interesting expressions	Page 8

Interview

Amy Lillard and Matt Kling, wine-makers in the Gard	Page 10
---	---------

Real Life

How to Find a Sports Club?	Page 13
Tips & Traps	Page 16

This is France

Starting a Business in France	Page 18
- The Various Types of Businesses	Page 19
- The <i>portage salarial</i> : an Easy Solution for a Small Business	Page 20
- Interview with the Manager of a <i>société de portage</i>	Page 20
- <i>La maison des artistes</i>	Page 22
- A Helping Hand from Chambers of Commerce	Page 24
- A Few Useful Websites	Page 24
- A Scenario: At an Entrepreneurship Fair	Page 25
- SOHO SOLO: A Unique Project for Expats in the Gers	Page 26
- <i>Brocanthé</i> : a <i>belle histoire</i> of integration	Page 27
- Discover the Gers	Page 28


French Politics

PPDA, Sarkozy and the Media	Page 29
-----------------------------	---------

Our Planet

French Cities Take Steps to Reduce Pollution	Page 32
<i>And What About co-voiturage?</i>	Page 35
A Convenient Earthworm-Driven Composter...	Page 35

The French Scene

 Sylvie Testud	Page 36
A Song: <i>Les mains d'or</i> , by Bernard Lavilliers	Page 38
A Children's Song: <i>Zelda l'araignée</i>	Page 39
A Selection of Books	Page 40
A Literary Text: <i>Aimer c'est agir</i>	Page 41

<i>Mots croisés</i>	Page 9
Oh la la la la!... Unbelievable but True Stories from France	Page 31
<i>Une recette de cuisine: Lasagnes à la ratatouille</i>	Page 42





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Paul, Dordogne, France

"A brilliant concept and one that I am enjoying immensely. The hour long phone call absolutely flies by, before I know it, the teacher is setting my homework, which I can then do at my convenience and e-mail to her for correcting."

Marian, Essex, England

Interactive French — *N'importe quoi...*!



When you have your neighbour over for an *apéro* and you ask him: *Qu'est-ce que tu aimerais boire?* (“What would you like to drink?”), he might reply: *N'importe – ça m'est égal* (“Anything – it doesn't matter.”) This expression and other variations are difficult to translate literally. You have most likely heard them as they are very frequently used, but perhaps you are unsure of their exact meanings. Let's look at a few of them:

The group of *n'importe*: these are tricky as we cannot literally translate all of their different forms:

N'importe = any/anything at all/ it doesn't matter

Example: *Tu veux passer me prendre ou je viens te chercher?*
N'importe – c'est comme tu veux!
= Do you want to come by and pick me up or should I come and get you? It doesn't matter – as you wish!

N'importe quoi! = nonsense/ rubbish!

Examples: *Tu regardes n'importe quoi à la télé!*
= You're watching rubbish on TV!



Elle a dit n'importe quoi! = She said all kinds of stupid things.

(Some people translate *n'importe quoi* as “anything” but it's doesn't work. If you wish to express “anything” such as “You can do anything you wish”, then you will need to say: *Tu peux faire ce que tu veux.*

N'importe comment! = badly done

Example: *Tu fais ce travail n'importe comment!* = You're doing this job badly!

N'importe où = anywhere

N'importe qui = anyone

N'importe quand = anytime

Cont'd page 6

1st Role Play—Beginner Level

Annie : Je suis furieuse avec mon patron !

Robert : Pourquoi ?

Annie : Il m'a dit qu'il ne va pas m'envoyer à la réunion à Paris. C'est n'importe quoi !! C'est moi qui devrais y aller.

Robert : Ah oui, je vois ! Mais tu sais, ton patron, il s'en fiche des autres. J'ai une idée : et si nous on partait quelques jours pendant cette réunion ?

Annie : Bonne idée ! On peut même partir n'importe quand à partir du 20 juin.

Robert : D'accord ! On peut aller n'importe où. C'est toi qui décides...

Annie : Ça m'est égal où on va ! Tu préférerais quelle destination ?

Robert : Vraiment, ça ne me fait rien. N'importe laquelle ! Il faut quand même rester en Europe, on peut peut-être aller en Afrique. On n'a pas le temps d'aller trop loin.

Annie : D'accord, je vais y réfléchir. Merci, tu m'as remonté le moral, Robert !

Robert : Il n'y a pas de quoi. Tant mieux si tu te sens mieux !

Annie : I'm furious with my boss!

Robert : Why?

Annie : He told me that he's not going to send me to the meeting in Paris. It's nonsense!! I'm the one who was supposed to go.

Robert : Ah, I see! But you know your boss, he doesn't care about others. I have an idea: and what if we went away for a few days during this meeting?

Annie : Great idea! We can even go anytime after June 20th.

Robert : OK! We can go anywhere. You decide....

Annie : It doesn't matter to me where we go! Which destination would you prefer?

Robert : Really, I don't mind. Anywhere! But, nevertheless, we have to stay in Europe, or perhaps we can go to Africa. We don't have time to go very far.

Annie : OK, I'm going to have a think about it. Thank you, you've cheered me up, Robert!

Robert : You're welcome. That's all the better if you feel better!



N'importe quoi...! (cont'd)

N'importe lequel/laquelle = anyone of them

A few more useful expressions which cannot be translated literally:

Il n'y a pas de quoi! = You're welcome!

Ça m'est égal! = I don't mind! /

It doesn't matter! / It's all the same to me!

Je m'en fiche/Je m'en fous! = I don't care! / I don't give a damn!

Ça ne fait rien! = It doesn't matter! / No problem!

J'en ai marre! = I'm fed up! / I'm sick and tired (of it)!

J'en ai assez! = I've had enough!

J'en ai ras-le-bol! = I'm fed up (with it)!

Tant pis! = Oh well – too bad!

Tant mieux! = Good for you! / That's all the better!

Ce n'est pas terrible = It's not great!

(One would think that it meant, "It's not terrible," but actually it means the opposite!)

Céline Anthonioz

2nd Role Play—Intermediate Level

Jean-Claude : Dis, tu veux aller au cinéma ce soir ?

Roselyne : Pourquoi pas. J'en ai un peu marre de rester à la maison tous les soirs.

Jean-Claude : Tu préfères voir quel film ?

Roselyne : Oh, n'importe ! Qu'est-ce qu'ils jouent au Central ?

Jean-Claude : Attends, je vais regarder dans le journal. A 21h il y a le nouveau Indiana Jones. J'ai bien envie de le voir.

Roselyne : Moi, pas. On dit qu'il n'est pas terrible, celui-là. Il n'y a rien d'autre ? J'en ai ras le bol de ces blockbusters de Hollywood.

Jean-Claude : Pas vraiment. Mais moi j'adore Harrison Ford. Je veux vraiment aller voir ce film. Pas toi ? Tu aimerais peut-être ?

Roselyne : Comme toujours, tu dis n'importe quoi ! Je m'en fous de ces films américains. Et toi, tu ne veux jamais aller voir un film plus intellectuel et moins violent.

Jean-Claude : Et maintenant, c'est toi qui dis n'importe quoi ! Je déteste tes films intellos. Il ne s'y passe jamais rien !

Roselyne : Oh, j'en ai assez ! Tu n'as qu'à aller voir ton Indiana Jones tout seul. Moi, je reste à la maison. Il y a un très bon Bergman sur Arte ce soir.

Jean-Claude : Eh bien, tant mieux. Au moins nous serons contents tous les deux. A plus tard ! Je ne sais pas à quelle heure je rentre.

Roselyne : Ça m'est complètement égal. Tu peux rentrer à n'importe quelle heure, mais ne me réveille surtout pas !!

Jean-Claude: Hey, would you like to go to the movies tonight?

Roselyne: Why not. I'm kind of fed up with staying home every evening.

Jean-Claude: Which film would you like to see?

Roselyne: It doesn't matter. What's playing at the Central?

Jean-Claude: Just a minute, I'll look in the newspaper. At 9 p.m. there is the new Indiana Jones. I would really like to see it.

Roselyne: Not me. They say it's not very good. Isn't there anything else? I'm sick and tired of these Hollywood blockbusters.

Jean-Claude: Not really. But I adore Harrison Ford. I really want to go see this film. Don't you? You might like it?

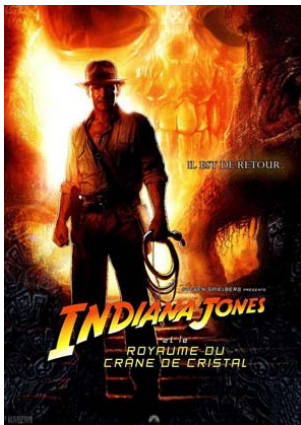
Roselyne: As usual, your talking nonsense! I don't give a damn about these American films. And you never want to go see a more intellectual and less violent film.

Jean-Claude: And now it's you who is talking nonsense! I hate your intellectual films. Nothing ever happens in them!

Roselyne: Oh, I've had it! You can just go see your Indiana Jones by yourself. I'm staying home. There's a really good Bergman film on Arte tonight.

Jean-Claude: Well, that's all the better. At least we'll both be happy. I'll see you later. I don't know what time I'll be home.

Roselyne: I really don't care. You can come home anytime you want. Just don't wake me up!



*N'importe quoi...! (cont'd)***Try this exercise!**

Fill in the blanks with one of the following expressions: *n'importe où, n'importe quand, n'importe quoi, n'importe où, n'importe comment, n'importe; y'en a marre* (contraction of: *il y en a marre*), *tant mieux, j'en ai assez, ça m'est égal.*

Anne : Il travaille comment ton plombier ?

Bill : Honnêtement, ce n'est pas terrible ! Il travaille _____ (1).

Anne : Ça se passe bien ton travail ?

Bill : Oui très bien, je suis très content.

Anne : Ah _____ (2) ! Je suis heureuse pour toi.

Bill : Tu achètes où ton pain

Anne : _____ (3) ! Je n'ai pas d'endroit particulier.

Anne : Je dois immatriculer ma voiture en France et je dois remplir beaucoup de papiers pour l'administration ! J' _____ (4) de l'administration française, c'est toujours trop compliqué !

Bill : Veux-tu du vin rouge ou du vin blanc ?

Anne : _____ (5), j'aime les deux !

Anne : Je te sers encore un peu de cassoulet?

Bill : Ah non merci, j' _____ (6) ! je n'ai plus faim.

Bill : A quelle heure veux-tu aller faire les courses ?

Anne : _____ (7), j'ai beaucoup de temps aujourd'hui.

Anne : Oh la la, il n'était pas très sympa le pâtissier ! En plus je n'ai rien compris à son histoire.

Bill : Il a la réputation de dire _____ (8). Ne l'écoute pas.



(Solutions page 39)

Deux dictées au choix

We provide two *dictées* to choose from, according to your level in French: one for beginners, and another one for intermediate level French.

Click on the link below to listen to each of them. Then try and write it without making any mistakes. You can compare it to the original text on page 39.

N.B.: It would be a good idea to read all the articles of this issue of *French Accent* before doing the dictation, as you will recognize many expressions.

Beginner level:



Intermediate level:

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Le coin des branchés

There are few words in French with so many idiomatic uses as the word *coup* (a blow). Below is just a small sample of the multitude of expressions you can hear all the time.

Du coup = consequently/as a result.

A coup sûr = for sure.

Sur le coup = immediately. *La victime a été tuée sur le coup* = The victim was killed instantly.

Sous le coup de = in the grip of/under the influence of.

Au coup par coup = as the need arises.

Tout à coup = suddenly.

Tout d'un coup = all at once.

Boire un coup = to have a drink.

Valoir le coup = to be worth the effort

Un coup de fil/de téléphone = a phone call.

Faire d'une pierre deux coups = to kill two birds with one stone.

Les 400 coups = youthful mischief.

Le coup du lapin = whip lash.

Un coup de bambou = too expensive. *J'évite d'aller dans ce magasin, c'est toujours le coup de bambou chez eux* = I avoid going to this shop, it's always too expensive there.

Un coup de pied = a kick.

Un coup de poing = a blow with a fist/a punch.

Un coup de tête = on a whim. *Il est parti sur un coup de tête* = he left quickly, without thinking about it beforehand.

Un coup d'œil = a glance.

Un coup de main = a helping hand.

Un coup de pouce = idem.

Un coup de collier = a final effort to finish something quickly.

Un coup d'éclat = a commotion. *Il a fait un coup d'éclat hier soir* = He made a big fuss about things last night.

Un coup de gueule = an argument or expression of discontent.

Un coup de sang = a burst of anger.

Un coup de foudre = love at first sight.

Un coup de soleil = a sunburn.

Un coup d'épée dans l'eau = a useless, ineffective action.

Un coup de barre = a sudden fatigue.

Un coup dur = a hard or difficult blow.

Accuser le coup = to be obviously bothered or effected by something.

Un sale coup = a dirty trick.

Un coup de poignard dans le dos = to stab someone in the back/to betray someone.

Un coup d'Etat = to overthrow the government in power.

Un coup de théâtre = something unexpected that completely changes things.

Un coup de Trafalgar = an event which has serious consequences (in reference to the naval battle in 1805 between the Spanish and French against the English. Napoleon was defeated).

Le coup de grâce = to put someone/something out of his/its misery.

Tenir le coup = to resist, hold out.

Un coup de fouet = to spur someone on/to provide a boost.

Etre dans le coup = to be in on something, to be aware of what's going on.

Un coup de poker = a gamble, a risky venture.

Un coup de feu = two meanings: a gun shot; and the busiest time in a restaurant (expression used by cooks and waiters).

Un coup d'épée dans l'eau



Drawing by Lucques Nisset-Raidon-"101 French Idioms" (Passport Books)

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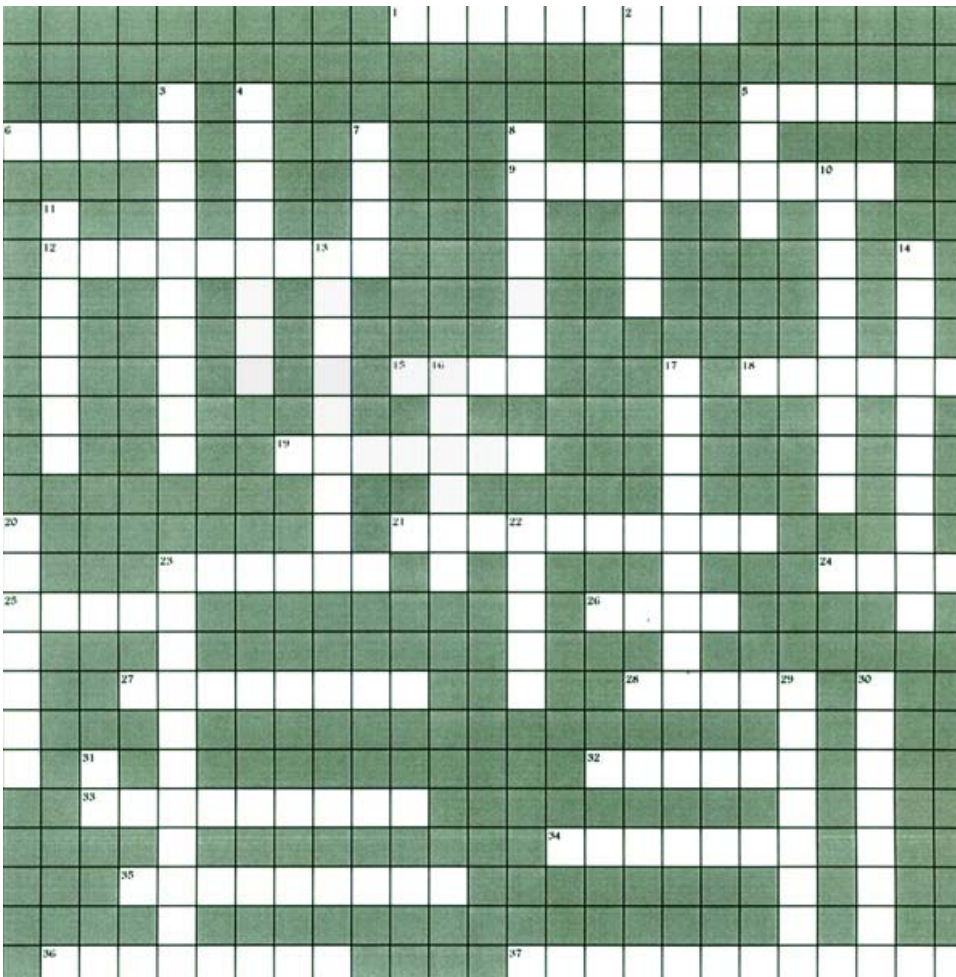




Mots croisés

The words for the Crossword Puzzle are taken from the articles in the current issue.

Click **HERE** for a more readable version:



Created with ElipseCrossword—www.elipsecrossword.com

Vertical

2. sauce blanche
3. une société, compagnie
4. sorte de foire de vieux objets et meubles
5. enfant
7. logement
8. ex-femme du Président
10. contraire d'analogue
11. travailleur manuel à son compte
13. légume vert assez long
14. chanteur rebelle
16. chef d'une entreprise
17. message de promotion d'un produit ou service
20. On paie les _____ sociales à l'URSSAF
22. Ce qu'on est obligé de payer au gouvernement chaque année
23. partage du même véhicule pour un déplacement
29. magasin
30. formidable, très bon
31. les infos à la télé

Horizontal

1. personne qui tient les comptes
5. J'en ai _____. J'en ai vraiment ras-le-bol !
6. auteur de "Bonjour tristesse"
9. action d'un individu qui se met au service d'une cause
12. taxe
15. initiales d'un présentateur de JT
18. siège administratif d'une commune
19. star
21. frais à payer pour s'inscrire à une association ou à l'URSSAF
23. chercher des antiquités
24. département du sud-ouest de la France dont Aignan est un village
25. un petit coup avant de passer à table
26. sigle du salaire minimum en France
27. programme pour ordinateur
28. forme de transport écologique à Paris
32. on paie les impôts sur le _____.
33. fleur qui suit le soleil et dont on obtient de l'huile
34. remplaçante de PPDA
35. récipient dans lequel on fait cuire
36. personne qui a adhéré à une fédération sportive
37. personne qui crée son entreprise

Solution on page 37



Interview — Amy Lillard and Matt Kling

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Amy Lillard and Matt Kling, two Americans with a love of fine wine, have successfully carved out a niche for themselves in the crowded realm of French wines. Their experience in purchasing a vineyard and producing organic wine is an example for those who long for a simpler, more satisfying life far from the noise, pollution and congestion of large cities. One of the secrets of their success: they both speak fluent French!

Céline Anthonioz: Where are you both originally from and how long have you lived in France?

Amy Lillard: I am from Colorado (Colorado Springs to be exact) and Matt is from Minnesota. We have been living in France since 2001 when we moved to Paris. In the fall of 2002 we moved to Saint Quentin-la-Poterie, but we didn't purchase the vineyard until December 2004.

C.A.: You own a winery close to Uzès in the South of France – How big is your vineyard? What motivated you to start a winery? Did you have any prior experience in the wine industry?

A.L.: We own about 15 acres of vineyards which is quite small by local standards. I have been working in the wine business for 15 years, I started out in Burgundy working in the vineyards and doing grape

harvests. Then I moved to California where I worked harvests in Napa Valley and then also in Oregon. After that, I moved to San Francisco where I worked for Kermit Lynch, one of America's premier French wine importers for 3 years.

C.A.: What were some of the challenges you encountered when you set up your business?

A.L.: The challenges are never ending. We bought the vineyards in December 2004, in 9 months we had to learn how to prune the vines, farm them organically, transform part of our house into a winery and learn how to make wine. It was quite an adventure and it still is. On the local front we were very lucky;

The day we bottled our first wine and had the finished product in our hand had to be one of the best days of our lives.





In 9 months we had to learn how to prune the vines, farm them...

Interview (cont'd)

most everyone was very nice, and quite open, offering to help if they could. I think that's because we chose to invest in vineyards at a time when the market for southern French wine and vineyards was not doing so well. That, and I think they were amused at seeing a young blond woman on a tractor!!

C.A.: What are the joys and frustrations of being a wine maker?

A.L.: There are constant challenges, mostly due to the fact that we have no formal training as winemakers or as farmers. Matt's grandfather was a farmer in Indiana, so luckily he knew how to drive a tractor, hook up a plough and he knew what a PTO was! I had some experience making wine, but never by myself, always with other people telling me what to do and when. So, it was pretty tough the first year trying to figure all of that out. But the day we bottled our first wine and had the finished product in our hand had to be one of the best days of our lives.

C.A.: Today, what is your typical day-to-day life as wine producers like?

A.L.: It varies widely. Lately I've been getting up at the crack of dawn and working in the vineyards until about noon. Then I come home to paper work, shipping orders, labelling bottles and all kinds of various tasks. Then there's the spraying and other vineyard work which is done every ten days or so. We farm organically so we only use copper and sulphur as well as some biodynamic preparations such as nettle, horsetail and chamomile teas. That means extra work too! Since we can't use weed killer, we spend more time on the tractor using our new mechanical weeding machine called the "Weed Badger."

C.A.: In France, the grape harvest time is known to be physically difficult but also a fun experience. What is your experience like during that time?

A.L.: Harvest at our winery is lots of fun. We are lucky enough to be able to pick our grapes with only the help of friends and family, so far we haven't had to hire anyone. This makes for a great atmosphere, it's very festive and no one feels over worked – tired yes, but it's a good tired, you feel like you've accomplished something at the end of the

day. Since we have a small operation, it only takes 6 days to pick all of the grapes, so it's not really that hard in the end.

We have lots of fun, great lunches under a tent we set up in the vineyards and everyone keeps coming back, so it must not be that bad!

C.A.: What influenced your decision to produce organic wine? Is the process of production complex and challenging?

A.L.: We farm organically because that's the way we live. We buy organic food and try to drink only organic wine, so it was a natural choice for us. It is more challenging, but we would never consider using chemicals, after all, we're the ones doing the work out there, spraying the products, neither of us wants to jeopardise our personal health!

C.A.: How would you describe your wine? Where can we find it?

A.L.: Our wine is a blend of Grenache, syrah and mourvèdre, it's big and rich with lots of peppery spice followed by black cherry fruit. It's full-bodied and quite powerful with medium tannins which are now starting to round out nicely. It will age for 4-8 more years. Unfortunately, we don't currently have a distributor in Switzerland.

Our wine is imported to the United States by Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant*.

C.A.: Amy, you are a contributor for books specialising in wine. How did you become such a professional and who do you write for?

A.L.: I write for Michel Bettane & Thierry Des-seauve, for their guide *Le Grand Guide*

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Interview (cont'd)

des Vins de France. It is published annually and I am responsible for the southern Rhône. It's quite a big job, and pretty amazing that they trusted an American woman to do it. I have known Michel Bettane for almost 15 years and spent lots of time learning from and tasting with him. Bettane is one of the world's most respected wine tasters and journalists, so I am very lucky to have the job.

C.A.: Have you both acquired any new habits since you've been living in France? Which ones?

A.L.: Our French friends often say that we are more French than they are! We both love to cook, although Matt tends to cook more than I do these days. We do our grocery shopping ONLY at the local markets, preferring to eat locally grown seasonal organic produce. We

did this while living in San Francisco too, but it's even easier now with 3 markets a week.

C.A.: Could you see yourself staying many more years to come in France?

A.L.: Well, since we now own vineyards it won't be easy to leave, but no, we have no plans to return to the US. The lifestyle here has become part of who we are and I can't envision moving back.

C.A.: Amy, you speak impeccable French, how did you learn it?

A.L.: It all started when in elementary school, one of the kids' grandmothers was French and she volunteered to come in after school to teach us the colours, and numbers, and a few songs. After that I always took French in school. In college I had a summer job leading luxury bike tours in France and that helped a lot. I then moved to Burgundy for 3

years and spoke French all the time, which really made the difference. I am very lucky to have a good ear for languages and that helps me with my accent.

C.A.: What suggestions or advice would you give to someone who is contemplating moving to and starting a business in France?

A.L.: First of all, you MUST learn the language; you can't come here and hope to navigate the French bureaucracy without being able to communicate. More and more British and Americans are moving here and they have a very hard time integrating and getting settled in without speaking the language very well. Of course, if you choose to, you can make friends who speak English only, but the experience would be much less fulfilling.

_____ [* www.kermitlynych.com](http://www.kermitlynych.com)



Our wine is a blend of Grenache, syrah and mourvèdre, it's big and rich with lots of peppery spice followed by black cherry fruit.

Contact: www.lagramiere.com



Real Life — How to Find a Sports Club?



Getting involved in your favourite sport is not only great for your well being but also an excellent way to meet new friends and mix with the locals. That is especially the case in France where the possibility of participating in any number of sports activities is really great.

Contrary to what is the case in other Anglophone countries, particularly the United States, participation in almost any sport is not part of the local education programme in France, but is done through the clubs that are all part of the national federation of the sport in question. There is definitely not the same school spirit that develops around a school basketball or football team, where the school's reputation, particularly at the university level, is often based on the victory record of its sports teams. However, the French system has many advantages. In the US, it is really difficult for someone to continue playing at a competitive level once they leave high school or uni-

versity, and the number of young people who are good enough to play at the professional level is really small.

In France, it is possible to participate in the sport of your choice for as long as you want and are physically able through the various sports clubs. To join, you must also register with the national federation and pay yearly dues, but they are quite minimal. As with other aspects of life in France, these clubs are all included under the umbrella of the French Ministry of Sport. And whether it be football, cycling, skiing, badminton or *pétanque*, there will be a local chapter of the federation somewhere close by where you can become a *licencié* and play on a competitive level against other teams. Even if you are not the competitive sort, you can simply practise your preferred sport, such as skiing or tennis or hiking. There are, for example, numerous ski clubs that organize weekly excursions to a variety of different resorts, provide lessons and, most im-

portantly, discount rates for ski lift passes.

Joining a club is usually quite easy, and most clubs welcome new members. For some sports where there is considerable physical exertion involved, such as cycling or judo or karate, you will most often need a medical certificate from your doctor certifying that you are in sufficiently good health to engage in the sport in question. You can get the medical certificate form from the local club and have your doctor fill it out and sign it for you.

1) The Ministry of Sport

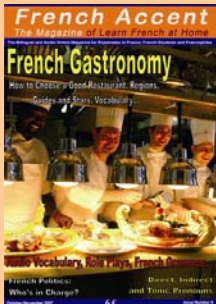
The sport clubs are listed on the website of the *ministère français de la Santé, de la Jeunesse et des Sports* (French Ministry of Sports), under *Fédérations uni-sport non olympiques* (Single Sport Federations for non-Olympic sports).

Note: *Fédérations* are the national umbrella organizations of the local clubs.



L'équipe amateur du Rodez Aveyron Football au stade Paul Lignon contre la réserve du Football Club Nantes Atlantique (CFA). ©Sanguineux

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Sports Club (cont'd)

On the Ministry's webpage¹, Use the first search box and choose your sport among those listed. Then when you have the contact details displayed, you can chose between two ways to find a sports club:

-Click on the website of the *fédération* which appears on the page. On each of the *fédérations* websites you will have to search a little on the home page to find where the list of clubs is. For example, in the website of the *Fédération française de cyclotourisme*², the list of clubs appears on the left column, under *Rechercher*. Click on *Club, département, ligue*, and you will access a map of France with all the departments.

Then, click on your department and you will be directed to the list of all the *clubs de cyclotourisme*, with contact names, phone numbers and websites (when there is one).

-Or click on the website and you will see on the left-hand side a link *trouver le club près de*



Club de cyclotouristes de Grenoble.

chez vous (find the club close to your home). There, you will find the contact number of the regional or departmental chapters that you can visit or where you can telephone to get more precise information about the local clubs.

2) Annuaire sportif

There are several online *annuaires sportifs* (sports directories). One which is rather complete is *Noomba*³.

All the various disciplines are listed in the column on the left. You have to click on the type of discipline covering the sport you are interested in (*sports terrestres*, if you are looking for *cyclotourisme*,

for example). Then, the list of sports appears and you just need to click on one to get all the contacts for the sports clubs.

If you click on *cyclotourisme* you have a list several pages long. It is, however, much less user friendly than the one given by the *Fédération de cyclotourisme*.

3) Local lists

You can also always find a list of the local clubs of every activity at your local *mairie*. Some of them also give these listings on their website, when they have one.

Roger Stevenson

¹ www.inet.jeunesse-sports.gouv.fr/fedes/federations.asp
² www.ffct.org
³ www.noomba-sport.com

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A Scenario: Before Signing Up

To prepare you with some questions that you might need when signing up as a new member for a sports club, listen to and read the following scenario:

Laurent : Bonjour, j'aimerais m'inscrire dans votre club de karaté. Avez-vous encore de la place pour cette année ?

La secrétaire : Bonjour. Avez-vous déjà pratiqué le karaté ?

Laurent : Non, jamais.

La secrétaire : D'accord. Nous avons encore de la place pour les cours débutants.

Laurent : Ah, très bien ! Quels sont les jours et horaires de ces cours ?

La secrétaire : Les cours pour les débutants ont lieu le lundi de 19h à 20h et le mercredi de 18h à 19h.

Laurent : Très bien. Et quelles sont les modalités d'inscription ?

La secrétaire : Vous devez remplir un formulaire et nous fournir un certificat médical et une photo d'identité.

Laurent : Et quel est le prix de la cotisation ?

La secrétaire : Le prix est de 150 euros pour l'année ou 50 euros par trimestre plus 30 euros pour la licence.

Laurent : Est-ce que la licence est obligatoire ?

La secrétaire : Oui, Monsieur.

Laurent : Est-ce qu'il y a des compétitions dans l'année ?

La secrétaire : Oui, mais seulement pour ceux qui sont ceinture jaune. Vous passerez l'examen pour ce niveau après 6 mois.

Laurent : Tout cela m'intéresse bien ; pouvez-vous me donner le formulaire à remplir ?

La secrétaire : Bien sûr, le voici.

Laurent : Est-ce que ça va si je le ramène dans une semaine ?

La secrétaire : Oui, mais n'oubliez pas le certificat médical et la photo !

Laurent : Pas de problème, je vous remercie.

La secrétaire : Merci à vous et bonne journée !

Laurent : Pareillement, au revoir.

Laurent: Hello, I would like to sign up for your karate club. Do you still have some space open for this year?

The secretary: Hello, Have you already done any karate?

Laurent: No, never.

The secretary: OK. We still have some space in our beginners class.

Laurent: Oh, great! What are the days and times for this class?

The secretary: The classes for the beginners take place on Mondays from 7pm to 8pm and Wednesdays from 6pm to 7pm.

Laurent: Good. And what is the subscription process?

The secretary: You must fill out a form and provide to us with a medical certificate and a photo.

Laurent: And what are the subscription fees?

The secretary: The fees are 150 euros for the year or 50 euros per semester, plus 30 euros for the licence.

Laurent: Is the licence compulsory?

The secretary: Yes, Sir.

Laurent: Is there any competition during the year?

The secretary: Yes, but only for those who have a yellow belt. You will take the exam for that level after 6 months.

Laurent: That interests me a lot; could you give me the form to fill out?

The secretary: Of course, here it is.

Laurent: Is it alright if I bring it back in one week?

The secretary: Yes, but don't forget the medical certificate and the picture!

Laurent: No problem, thank you.

The secretary: Thank you and have a nice day!

Laurent: You too, good-bye.



By Céline and Vincent Antonioz

Tips & Traps

Looking for antiques

The end of summer in France is a very active time, not necessarily in economic terms (as almost everything is closed in July-August, it's a good time to think of other things) but for antique hunters. You can find antique or *brocante* fairs, or other sales of second-hand objects or furniture in almost every season, but September-October is a busy time of the year (like March to May) all over the country. Even in the smallest villages, there are *vide-greniers* (sort of small flea markets) once or twice a year. In our issue Nr 4, March 2007*, we devoted the full main feature to explaining the differences between antique fairs, *brocantes*, *vide-greniers* and other *bric-à-brac*, what you can expect to find at each type of event, the language to use, how to negotiate, etc. *Si vous aimez chiner* (if you like to hunt for antiques and second hand objects) as the French say, you will have a lot of fun at these popular events where you can find nearly anything, and sometimes find a good deal for a very cheap price. Watch out, though, because you may find very expensive objects too!

Information about these events in your region is available in the press or on posters stuck on walls or lampposts. Usually they take place on a week-end (between one to three days), and you usually have to pay a minimal entree

fee, except for the *vide-greniers* held in the street. It is best to get there early in the morning of the first day if you want to find the best pieces, but it is the same in every country...

And there is also information on internet about the best fairs (*brocante*, *foire à la brocante*, *salon de la brocante*, *salon des antiquités*, etc.). Or, you might also find what you are looking

for on several internet sites (see below).



A Few Useful Websites

More and more *brocante* and antique fairs are announced on the web through various websites. But don't totally rely on them, as many events still aren't listed on them, simply because the organizers may not be very familiar with the internet. A few of the most popular websites:

www.info-brocantes.com

The most important listing for such events in France. But still, the list is not complete.

<http://vide-greniers.org>

Another calendar for *brocantes* too and also for smaller events like *vide-greniers* and flea markets.

www.ebay.fr

Almost unknown a few years ago, the ebay auction site has spread rapidly and is now used nearly as much in France as in the UK or the USA. The French website often has a very good selection of antiques. The most difficult, at least for furniture, is to get them delivered, and sometimes you may need to find a vendor who lives not too far from your home so that you can pick up the table or desk you intend to buy. Most sales are by auction, but some are also sold at a fixed price for immediate purchase.

www.vivastreet.fr

A competitor of ebay, but the sales are not by auction.

<http://1001objets.com>

Idem. But the description of items is not as complete as on ebay or vivastreet.

www.la-brocante.info

A blog full of info, advice and tips for *brocante* lovers. Too bad, there is no English version...

* Interested readers can order it, at the price of 4.50 € from *French Accent Magazine's* website: (www.frenchaccentmagazine.com) by clicking on the cover of this issue, left column.

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Tips & Traps (cont'd)

A new type of accommodation: "bedycasa"

Spending the night in hotels and B&Bs while travelling is one way to go. There is another called *tourisme alternatif* (alternative tourism), which consists of staying at someone else's home. This system of renting a *chambre chez l'habitant* (a room in a private residence) for a short stay is becoming very popular among the French. There are possibilities for all the regions in France as well as internationally. The best organized system is Bedycasa*, which has been a real success since its creation just a little more than a year ago, in July 2007, by a young French woman, Magali Boisseau. While it began as a very modest start-up, 5,200 people all over the world have used it already to find a room, and the level of satis-

faction is high. Now, the website covers 144 countries and has been translated into three languages.

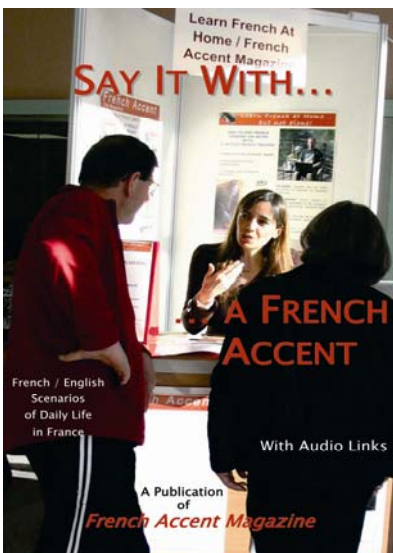
If the idea is principally to stay with a family, there is in fact a total of 45 types of various accommodations, including: homestay guest rooms, B&B, independent room for rent, host families, *chambres d'hôtes* and *gîtes* (in France), *casa rurales* (in Spain and Portugal) guest houses, homestay, farm-inn, pensions, *riads* (in Morocco), *mishukens* and *ryokans* (in Japan), exchange of houses and apartments, etc. And the proposals are classified in 43 different themes: family holidays, unusual places, cycling, hiking, romantic stay, relaxing, humanitarian, safari, health, culinary, linguistic, luxury, environmental, etc.

If this formula is especially attractive for students, it can be used by people of any age who are curious about learning more about the culture of the country through sharing the life of a family for a while, and who wish a more authentic welcome than what a chain of international hotels can offer!

* www.bedycasa.com
(with an English version)



Magali Boisseau, the young founder of bedycasa



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This is France — Starting a Business

Se mettre à son compte en France

In our last issue, we pointed out that in the Department of Dordogne alone, there are no fewer than 600 British expatriates who had created their own business there. Among those who have chosen to live in France, there are increasing numbers of English expatriates who dream of starting their own business by opening a *gîte d'hôte* (sort of B&B) or a shop, starting an organic farm or a winery, breeding dogs, selling the products of their arts or handicraft activity, creating an online sales, graphics or marketing company, etc... The ideas are numerous, and the hopes are great when one realizes how much the small company one wants to create would be beneficial to the village, the city or the department where one has chosen to settle. And most of the time, those who have succeeded say they are very satisfied. But they all say that they would never have imagined how difficult it would be.

Because, unfortunately, starting a business, whatever the chosen activity, is always an unbelievable obstacle course in France. And then there are the expenses involved, especially social charges, not to mention taxes, that are far from insignifi-

cant. In this issue, we offer some information and advice, and we have asked expatriates who have already gone down this path to talk to us about it. We focus more on the means of avoiding excessive social charges, such as joining a *portage salarial*, or, for those who have an artistic activity, the advantages of registering with the *Maison des artistes*. We also provide lists of websites full of useful advice, and that we highly recommend that you consult. We also feature examples of institutions that are willing to help you, such as the superb initiative SOHO SOLO in the Gers, launched especially by the local Chamber of Commerce to help newcomers who plan to settle and be self-employed in the department.

In any case, before you make your final decision, we recommend that you seek as

Dans notre précédent numéro, nous avons vu que non moins de 600 expatriés britanniques avaient créé leur propre entreprise dans le seul département de la Dordogne. De plus en plus d'Anglais, parmi ceux qui ont choisi de vivre en France, envisagent, comme eux, de se mettre à leur compte en ouvrant un *gîte d'hôte* ou une boutique, en créant une ferme bio ou une entreprise de production vinicole, en élevant des chiens de race, en commercialisant les produits de leur activité artistique ou artisanale, en ouvrant un atelier d'art ou d'artisanat, en donnant des cours d'anglais ou autres, en créant une entreprise commerciale, de graphisme ou de marketing par internet, etc... Les idées sont nombreuses, et les espoirs sont grands lorsqu'on réalise à quel point la petite entreprise que l'on envisage de créer serait utile dans le village, la ville

ou le département où l'on a choisi de s'installer. Et ceux qui y sont parvenus se déclarent la plupart du temps très satisfaits. Mais ils disent tous qu'ils n'auraient jamais imaginé au départ combien cela serait difficile.

Car, hélas, se mettre à son compte, quelle que soit l'activité choisie, est toujours un incroyable parcours du combattant en France. Et les dépenses à prévoir, surtout les charges sociales, sans parler des impôts, sont loin d'être négligeables. Dans ce numéro, nous vous offrons quelques informations et conseils, et nous avons demandé à des expatriés qui ont déjà fait cette expérience de nous en parler. Nous mettons plus particulièrement l'accent sur les moyens d'éviter de payer un excès de charges sociales, tels le portage salarial, ou, pour les personnes ayant une activité artistique, l'adhésion à la *Maison des artistes*. Nous vous donnons des listes de sites internet remplis de conseils utiles que nous vous conseillons vivement de consulter, et nous vous présentons des exemples d'organismes prêts à vous aider, tels la superbe initiative SOHO SOLO dans le Gers lancée spécialement par la Chambre de commerce en faveur des nouveaux arrivants dans le département qui souhaitent s'y établir et y travailler à leur compte.

Dans tous les cas, nous vous recommandons, avant de vous décider, de prendre le plus de conseils possibles auprès de professionnels de la



Debbie and Alastair Johnston who have successfully created a *gîte d'hôte* (www.demipiste.com) in Chamonix, where they have joined many other British business people, such as pub owners... © Richard Mouillaud

Starting a Business (cont'd)

much advice as possible from other professionals in your branch, that you speak with other expatriates who have had the same experience, that you do intensive research on the information websites and online forums for expatriates, and especially that you obtain the services of a French accountant who will be able to advise you on the best legal structure to choose for your particular situation. You will also find on the web a few accountants who speak English and who are ready to be at your disposal. Since there are so many different categories of companies, even the

French get confused. In order to eventually understand everything and complete all of the required administrative formalities, which are sometimes unbelievably complicated, you will need lots of patience. And, if possible, it is highly recommended to start by learning the “absolutely vital” minimum French.

With patience, perseverance, and determination, you should make it! Then, you will have the satisfaction of becoming an active member of French society, of being respected by your peers, and of feeling like you belong to a community. So many ways to successfully integrate.

Se mettre à son compte (suite)

branche, de discuter avec d'autres expatriés ayant fait la même expérience, de faire de longues recherches sur les sites internet d'information aux expatriés et sur les forums en ligne, et, surtout, de faire appel aux services d'un comptable français qui pourra vous conseiller sur la meilleure structure juridique à choisir dans votre cas particulier. Vous trouverez aussi sur internet des comptables qui parlent anglais et sont prêts à se mettre à votre disposition. Car les types d'entreprise sont très nombreux, et même les Français s'y perdent. Avant d'espérer avoir tout compris, et d'a-

voir effectué toutes les démarches administratives requises, parfois incroyablement compliquées, il vous faudra beaucoup de patience. Et, si possible, il est aussi vivement conseillé de commencer par apprendre le minimum “absolument vital” de français.

Avec patience, persévérance, et volonté, vous devriez y arriver ! Et vous aurez alors la satisfaction de devenir un membre actif de la société française, d'être respecté par vos pairs, et d'avoir le sentiment d'appartenir à une communauté. Autant de manières de réussir pleinement une intégration.

Annick Stevenson

The Various Types of Businesses

The general categories

Artisan: manual, skilled professions: building trades, but also bakers, mechanics and even hairdressers and handi-crafts creators.

Profession libérale: all legal, medical and paramedical, technical professions, and teaching. Also includes architects, accountants and insurance agents, as well as artists, authors, web designers, illustrators, musicians, painters and interpreters.

Commercial and industrial: more general business activities; if you want to open a shop, a café, a restaurant... but also real estate agents and other types of commercial activities.

Agriculture: self-explanatory...

Which legal structure?

There are various types of structures. The most current for small businesses are:

- *Entreprise individuelle:* a one-person business, self-employed, artisan expecting a modest revenue).

- *Entreprise unipersonnelle à responsabilité limitée* (EURL): single person limited company, a “one shareholder company”, although up to 50 partners are allowed. This is a cheaper and less complex system than the SARL.

- *Société en nom collectif* (SNC): another type of limited liability company, a bit simpler than an SARL, with 2 persons minimum.

- *Société à responsabilité limitée*, better known as a SARL (limited liability company): a common structure for small and medium-sized businesses with between 2-50 shareholders.

- *Société anonyme*, better known as an SA (equivalent of a plc in the UK): The most com-

mon structure for larger businesses, with a minimum of seven shareholders and capital of around 37,000 €

Where to get information?

It is best to visit your local *Chambre de commerce et d'industrie* (CCI) or *Chambre des métiers et de l'artisanat* (CMA). You will find their address at your *mairie*, or the general website of the CCI¹ and the CMA¹.

A few tips for starting a business in France

-Learn as much French as you can before you leave the UK, especially legal and business terms.

-Make sure your UK tax affairs are in order before leaving Britain for France.

-Approach your local *mairie* with your business ideas at an early stage of your plans.

-Find a good French accountant.

-Check the name of your business for uniqueness with the *Institut national de la propriété industrielle* (INPI)³.

-Deposit the initial capital for your business.

-Publish a notice of incorporation of the company in a journal approved for legal announcements. This will cost you around 150 euros.

-Register the company with the tax administration.

-File a request for the company's registration with the *Centre de formalités des entreprises* (CFE)⁴. This will cost you around 40 euros.

-See our articles on pages 20-23 for tips on dealing with URSSAF.

Excerpts from information by French entrée. More on:



¹ www.cci.fr

² www.artisanat.fr

³ www.inpi.fr

⁴ www.cfe.ccip.fr

Portage salarial: An Easy Solution for a Small Business

Have you heard the story about the self-employed person who registered at the URSSAF office and shortly after started receiving invoices for fees even before he had signed a single commercial contract? It happens all the time and can really discourage many of us from becoming self-employed. In order to register your professional activity officially and obtain legal status, you have to fill out a form at the URSSAF, which is easy enough to do, but it can quickly turn into a nightmare when you begin receiving invoices payable almost immediately even though you have not yet earned one euro. Many individuals don't make it through the first year or two because of the high "social charges" which must be paid.

How can one avoid the headaches of such heavy administrative and financial constraints? The *portage salarial* is a simple and viable solution. Someone who would like to work as a free-lance worker or as a consultant, and would like to test the viability of their business field can do so through a *société de portage* or *portage salarial* that will take care of all the administrative, legal and billing aspects of the activity, and pay the social charges!

How does it work?

Let's say you are a translator and that you are not officially employed by anyone and that you wish to accept a translation job which was offered to you. Instead of registering with URSSAF, you could contact a *portage salarial* company that will establish an employment contract for you, the same as if you were an employee of the company. At this point, you're working as an employee of the *portage salarial*, rather than as an official business owner. This

way you can continue to benefit from all the advantages of being employed in France (an overall social coverage, contribution to retirement pension, paid holidays, sick and pregnancy leave, unemployment

A simple and viable solution to avoid the headaches of heavy administrative and financial constraints

and health insurance). Once you have completed a contract for a translation, let's say, the *portage salarial* company will bill your client and will in turn send you a check for the amount equal to from between 48 to 52% of the total of the invoice sent to your client. The *portage salarial* deducts all the social charges from the total amount. Therefore, the cheque you receive as a form of salary is the amount you can actually deposit in your bank account and spend.

Of course, nothing is free, and the *portage salarial* does take a percentage on the benefits of the client's invoicing (depending on the *portage salarial*, it can vary, but it's usually around 7% to 10%). In order to give you an idea of how much you would make from a job, see our interview below with a *portage salarial* company that has an English staff. The main advantage of working through a *portage salarial* is that you can focus on commercialising the product you are creating or reselling without worrying about the administrative, legal and financial sides of the business. With this option,

you have a legal status and you are not taking any risk, you can test the viability of your business. In most cases, you can use the letterhead of the *portage salarial* company as well as their business cards. All you need to do is concentrate on the product you're selling and finding the clients. And above all, you won't be receiving monthly bills from URSSAF for fees payable regardless of your income.

The *portage salarial* concept began in the 1980's but remained rather low key until 2000. Today, about 10,000 salaried workers are using them mainly in the communication, teaching/training and marketing fields. The typical profile of someone who uses a *portage salarial* is either a man or woman, 35-45 years of age, who uses it as a



spring-board before officially launching their business, or a senior manager older than 50 who wishes to take on a few odd jobs.

Again, if you have an interesting business idea but feel discouraged by the burdensome bureaucratic paperwork and the heavy financial commitment, then you should seriously consider going through a *portage salarial*.

Céline Anthonioz

Interview With a Manager of a société de portage

Helena Fenn-Summers is the Manager of Challenge and Co, a *Société de portage salarial* in Saint-André-des-Eaux, Loire-Atlantique. She has kindly agreed to give us this interview.

Céline Anthonioz: Can you tell us the benefits of choosing the *portage salarial* option?

Helena Fenn-Summers: Perhaps the main benefit of the *portage salarial* is that it allows workers to concentrate on their activity without the stress that can accompany being self-employed in France. Since it acts as the employer for administrative purposes, the *portage* takes on the bulk of the administrative tasks and there is

no need for them to set up an official and independent business (or to close one down when they stop work) which is a considerable responsibility, especially in a country where one may not be fluent in the language. Of equal importance, is the fact that consultants don't have to worry about calculating social charges (*cotisations*) or receiving an unexpected bill, as these charges are "pay as you go". Each time a client settles an invoice, social charges are calculated by the *portage* in its role as employer and paid to the appropriate authorities before the consultant's wage is calculated. With regard to taxes, in France, all employees are responsible for signing their own tax declarations once a year and paying their

Portage salarial (cont'd)

own *impôt sur le revenu*, but declarations for employed persons (which is the status held by *portage* workers) tend to be much simpler than for those running their own business. In essence, the *portage salarial* allows a great deal of freedom to workers – both a freedom to work legally in France and freedom from admin worries.

C.A.: Can you describe a typical case of a person who chooses the *portage salarial* option?

H.F-S.: First of all, the work activity the consultant plans to undertake should fall under the category of “intellectual services” (for example, a design consultant, translator, software engineer, editor or copywriter). Work such as gardening or other similar services are actually far better suited to the *chèque emploi* scheme. We have consultants working across a broad range of services from wedding planners to writers. However, a “typical” consultant might be a software engineer working on a contract through a recruitment agency or a design consultant working remotely from a home office in France, perhaps visiting sites in the UK from time to time. Sometimes clients include previous employers or clients from the UK. The *portage* is also an attractive option for clients, as they are able to engage the services of outside consultants like a

freelancer without taking on the responsibilities of acting as an employer.

C.A.: What is the minimum amount they should be making in order to be legible to sign up for your *portage salarial*?

H.F-S.: We don't insist on a minimum amount, but we do prefer that consultants have confirmed economic activity before we employ them. For example, if you are considering offering translation services or hope to offer interior design consultation, it's best to wait until you have a definite offer of a contract before actually signing up with us. The *portage salarial* can assist once you are ready to start work, usually it takes just 24 hours to sign up, so once you are ready to go – we're here to assist!

C.A.: If the person signs up with the *portage salarial*, are they automatically covered with the French health insurance system?

H.F-S.: If you don't currently have a *carte vitale*, then you will need to work a certain number of hours per week or earn a certain amount before a *carte* will be issued as a result of paying into the system. At present, CPAM [*Caisse primaire d'assurance maladie*] requires workers to do 60 hours of paid work in one month or 120 hours over a three month period and the wage must be equal to or higher than SMIC (which is the minimum wage in France). With regard to professional insurance, our workers are insured from the minute they sign up.

C.A.: How can a person calculate how much they will actually earn once they've given you an invoice for one of their clients?

H.F-S.: In order to predict a wage, consultants need to have an idea of what they will be charging for their services and also what their costs will be (for example, hotel, fuel, portion of home internet used for business etc.); these figures can then be input into our salary simulation programme which can be found on our website* and this will calculate the approximate wage. Additional expenses can sometimes be deducted by consultants working from home offices, for example, and this would increase the amount earned.

C.A.: What is the process from the time a person signs up for your *portage salarial* to the time they actually receive the cheque in their hands?

H.F-S.: Wages are paid either at the end of the month or at the beginning of the next month following payment by the consultant's client depending on when the client settles their invoice.

C.A.: If someone wishes to sign up for your *portage salarial*, how does it work?

H.F-S.: The process is very easy – if you have EU citizenship and therefore the right to work in France, you must fill out a short enrolment form which asks for date of birth, address, social security number in France etc.; bank details are also required so that your wages can be deposited directly into your bank account. If you are newly arrived in France and don't yet

have your social security number, then this section is left blank and you can apply for your social security number once you start working through the *portage* via a simple application form. The information you give will be used to declare you as an employee of the *portage* and inform URSSAF that you are working through us. If you have been offered a contract for work at short notice, this isn't a problem. As long as you have the right to work in France, we can usually declare your employment within 24 hours. If you come from outside the EC, you need a visa that would permit you to work before applying.

C.A.: At what point, would you advise someone to actually sign up with the *chambre de commerce* and the URSSAF system?

H.F-S.: URSSAF is a more suitable option for builders and other trades people as they need their own private insurance and they need to invest in special and expensive tools which are not possible to claim for under our system. SARL is a preferable option for companies that sell and buy goods rather than people offering intellectual services. On the other hand, people wanting to offer gardening services or people working for individuals rather than large companies are often better off using the *chèque emploi* scheme rather than a *portage*. The *chèque emploi* service can also have tax benefits for the clients of these workers.



Challenge and Co's English website:

www.freelanceinfrance.com

English language helpline number : 0870 469 811.

* www.freelanceinfrance.com/wage-simulation.htm

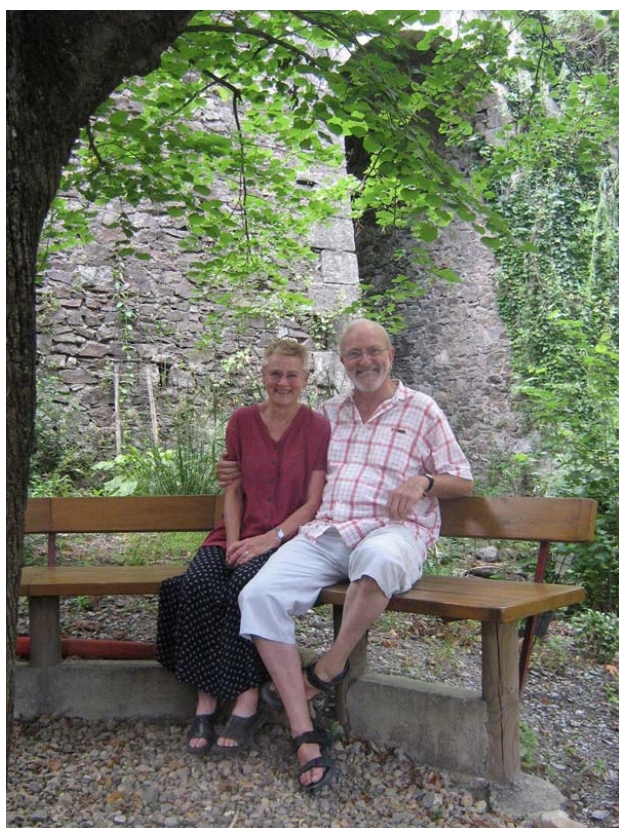
La maison des artistes

For artists or handicraft creators who want to open a gallery in France to sell the products of their art, whatever it is (painting, glass work, knitting, wood sculptures, pottery, etc.), a very good solution to avoid paying the often exorbitant social taxes to URSSAF (to cover disability, retirement, etc.) is to register with the *Maison des artistes*. Doing so can be a very important factor, as the URSSAF is a nightmare for all self-employed people in France, and the *charges sociales* (total amount you may have to pay to URSSAF) are as high, if not more so, than income taxes, a difficult burden to bear for small businesses

owners, especially when their income is still very small.

The *Maison des artistes* was created by artists 50 years ago “in the spirit of solidarity and friendship”, as explained on the front page of its website¹, and is recognized by the French Government as the body responsible for the administration of social security for artists. And it also acts on their behalf in many areas, such as: mutual help, information, training and free advice on legal and accountancy matters.

To benefit from its services, one has to register, receive an official number and then apply to become a member.



Marion and John Stonehouse, who have successfully created their artist gallery in the Cévennes region (see French Accent Nr 8, August-September 2007), have registered with the *Maison des artistes*.

Registration

The first thing to do is to download the registration form (*formulaire*) which is called *Déclaration en vue de l'immatriculation des artistes auteurs*, fill it out, and send it to the *Maison des artistes*. The form is available on another webpage². Of course, it is only in French, but you can certainly find a French person who will be ready to help you fill it out if you can't fully understand.

An important thing to keep in mind is that you can register only after you have started to sell your products. This seems rather strange, because you are supposed to be covered by the French social security as soon as you start a business... Other readers have told us that this has been a real puzzle for a few expatriates.

And finally they have found the solution: all you have to do is sell one piece (a painting, a glass, a piece of pottery, etc...), and to have printed a copy of an invoice, whatever the amount (20 to 30 € should even be enough), to be able to register. You just need to add a copy of the invoice to the form. The sale can be totally informal, to a friend for example. You don't need to have actually opened the gallery to the public.

Once you are registered (be patient, it may take from one to two months), you will receive a registration number (*numéro d'ordre*) from the *Maison des artistes*, that you will have to use on all your administrative documentation and correspondence (invoices, contracts, etc.).

Next steps

A list of all the steps to follow is available on another webpage³. Click on *Les 4 étapes d'inscription* to get it. They are basically:

-Taxes: Once you are registered and before you actually start your business, you have to declare your activity to the Tax Office (*Administration fiscale*) of the city where you live, or if you live in a village the office is probably in a larger city near by. The *mairie* should be able to give you the address. As an artist, you will be in the fiscal category of BNC (*bénéfices non commerciaux*, such as other members of *professions libérales*) – as opposed to BIC (*bénéfices industriels et commerciaux*, that concerns *commerçants* and *artisans*). Don't worry if this seems confusing or unclear to you, it is exactly the same for all French people who start a business. The best is, always, to ask advice from a specialist, and, preferably someone who can speak English. See the contacts lists on the websites listed on page 24.

-Complementary retirement: It is also compulsory to register with a *Caisse de retraite complémentaire*: IRCEC. Only a telephone number is given on the web. Here is their address: 21 rue de Berri, 75403 Paris CEDEX 08.

-Becoming a full-fledged member of the *Maison des artistes* association, which is different than simply registering with them: this is not compulsory, but it might be useful if you want to benefit from legal or financial advice,

Artists (cont'd)

for example. The membership is only 25 € a year. To become a member, you have to fill out the *bulletin d'adhésion*, which you can download on the same webpage³. This is the easiest part.

Fire and safety control

Once you open a gallery which will be open to the public, you will have a few more constraints, such as fire protection, for example.

The regulation is rather strict for fire protection of spaces open to the public (*protection*

contre l'incendie des établissements ouverts au public). A few indications are provided on Wikipedia⁴. The type of regulation depends on the type of business and setting. Going through the legal documentation (*Code de la construction et de l'habitation* + a lot of *décrets d'application*) would be much too fastidious and won't probably tell us more!

The most interesting thing on this page is that the inspections are made by the Safety Commissions of each department (*Commission consultative départementale de sécurité et d'accessibilité*) composed of a few officials, including a designated fireman (*pompier*). And

there are also such commissions at the commune level (*Commission communale*). And the Commission also checks the access for the handicapped. The commission will examine your safety plans and will visit the site to determine if it is OK to open it to the public. If you live in a small community, you should start asking your *mairie*, especially as the authorisation to open is given by the mayor by *arrêté municipal* (sort of a local decree).

Can an artist give lessons?

We also recently had the case study of an artist who wanted

to give a few lessons to students or lead workshops.

On the *Maison des artistes* website it is clearly indicated that art teachers cannot be registered with the *Maison des artistes*.

However, we checked with them, and found out that an artist can still *animer des ateliers* (lead a workshop), or even give lessons, on the condition that it is not his or her main professional activity and that revenue earned from such activities doesn't exceed 4000 € per year.

Annick Stevenson

¹ www.lamaisondesartistes.fr

² www.secuartsgraphiquesetplastiques.org/site/documents/formulaires/form01.html

³ http://ns352222.ovh.net/~artistes/component?option=com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,28/Itemid,66/

⁴ http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89tablissement_recevant_du_public

Basic Words and Expressions

Une entreprise = a business, a company.

Les affaires = business.

Une compagnie = usually implies a big business or an industry, much less used in France than "*entreprise*".

Un établissement = another word for company, mainly used in administrative language.

Démarrer une entreprise/créer une entreprise = to start/create a business.

Se mettre à son compte = to start one own's business/ to become self-employed

Etre à son compte = to be self-employed

Se lancer dans les affaires = to start doing business.

Un créateur d'entreprise = someone who starts/creates a business.

Un entrepreneur = someone who has created his/her own business. It can also mean someone who always has a lot of ideas and puts them into practise.

Un travailleur indépendant = someone who owns a small one-person private business, generally working from home, not registered as a SARL or any other type of private company.

Un travailleur freelance = a freelance worker. In France you can work freelance as the owner of a one-person business or as a *salarié* (salaried employee); this is often the case for journalists, writers, designers, etc.

Une entreprise individuelle = a single person company.

Une entreprise unipersonnelle à responsabilité limitée (EURL) = a one-shareholder company.

Une société en nom collectif (SNC) = a two-person minimum company, a bit simpler than the SARL.

Une société à responsabilité limitée (SARL) = a small business with at least two associates/partners.

Une société anonyme (SA) = the equivalent of a plc in the UK, the most common structure for larger businesses.

Une petite et moyenne entreprise (PME) = a small and medium sized business.

Une micro-entreprise = a very small one-person business.

Un artisan = an independent worker, usually doing skilled, manual work, such as plumber, electrician, carpenter, baker...

Un commerçant = someone who owns a commercial business, such as a shop, a café, a restaurant.

Un industriel = someone who owns an industrial business.

Une profession libérale = independent workers in certain domains, generally in the law, education and medical fields.

Un magasin = a shop.

Une boutique = a shop. Used more to designate clothing or decoration shops than food.

URSSAF (*Union de recouvrement des cotisations de sécurité sociale et d'allocations familiales*) = the organization which collects the *charges sociales* from business owners.

Les charges sociales/les cotisations sociales = the fees paid to URSSAF to cover disability and retirement, and family social benefits (*allocations familiales*).

Le portage salarial = a good way to reduce the social charges by going through an intermediary company (see articles page 20-21).

Les impôts sur le revenu = income taxes.

Un comptable = an accountant.



A Helping Hand from Chambers of Commerce

Not all of them are quite as welcoming for English-speaking entrepreneurs as the Chamber of Commerce of the Gers (see page 26), but it is important to know that most *Chambres de commerce et d'industrie* (CCI) organize meetings or even training sessions for people who intend to start a business, whether they are French or foreigners. Such initiatives are called: *5 jours pour entreprendre* (5 days to start a business), *mardi de la création* (Tuesday of creation), etc. These events are announced on a specific website : *Entreprendre en France**

Currently on the agenda:

8-10 September: *3 jours pour tout entreprendre*, Lille (Nord), the second *Créer* fair, the annual entrepreneurship event, which will take place in the Grand Palais. As explained on the fair's webpage (in English too), this fair, which is open to all, welcomes all project initiators. Visitors will find a real network of professionals to assist them, guide them and help them turn "even their most highly-developed ideas into reality."

www.saloncreer.com/en

16-17 October: *Journées régionales de la création* in Bretagne, Rennes (Ille-et-Vilaine). The website is in French only, but among the 300 experts present at this fair, there will certainly be English-speaking persons present who will be able



Journées régionales de la création en Bretagne. Photo DR

to assist British visitors. It is a major event in Brittany for anyone who wants to start any kind of business. More than 7,500 visitors are expected, and there will be many conferences and workshops — in French only, unfortunately.

www.jrce.org

Note: don't forget to regularly consult the website of *Entreprendre en France* as more events will be announced all throughout the year.

* www.entreprendre-en-france.fr

A Few Useful Websites

There are many more websites for expatriates than those listed below. They are not only full of practical and specific information on starting a business, but they have links to other sites offering more specialized advice.

www.frenchentree.com

The guide to property, holidays and life in France gives a lot of concrete information, in English, on the various types of businesses and legal structures, the registration, all the other the formalities involved, taxes, social security, banking and insurance systems, etc.

A list of useful organizations is listed there:

www.frenchentree.com/france-employment-work-jobs/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=20545

<http://france.angloinfo.com/>

This website also gives very practical information on starting a business and all the necessary formalities.

For each region there are also lists of English-speaking accountants, auditors and bookkeepers who are ready to provide their services to expatriates. Click on the direct link below:

http://france.angloinfo.com/tax/french_tax_finance_banking.asp

and then, in the box "Financial Advice in France", click on the region of interest. And then, on top of the regional page, you can click on the lists of accountants, banks, etc., to get the full directories.

www.francobritishchambers.com

The website of the British Chamber of Commerce gives you market information in France, and also a very useful list of members who can provide assistance to companies both in the UK and in France. Click here to get the list:

www.francobritishchambers.com/members.asp?id=41



Among excellent initiatives taken by local authorities was the "Success in the Dordogne" exhibit organized by the Chamber of Commerce and the city of Périgueux on April 4th and 5th, 2008. Its objective was to provide information to the many British who face administrative problems when they want to start a business in this department, which has the largest number of expatriates in France.

An event where local administrative offices, banks, notaries, legal, insurance and social security experts, tax services, etc., were present to answer any questions. We were there, too...

A Scenario: At an Entrepreneurship Fair

Jim : Bonjour Monsieur, est-ce que vous pouvez m'aider ?

L'expert : Bonjour. Peut-être, il faut voir, quelle est votre question ?

Jim : Voilà, je vais créer un business en France. Est-ce que...

L'expert : Oh, mais vous êtes étranger ?

Jim : Oui, je suis Américain.

L'expert : Alors là, il faut voir si je peux vous trouver quelqu'un qui parle anglais...

Jim : Ce n'est pas la peine, je parle un petit peu français. J'avais juste une question...

L'expert : Attendez, je vais vous donner une documentation. Je crois qu'on a des documents en anglais. Véronique ?

Véronique : Oui, Monsieur ?

L'expert : Vous auriez une documentation en anglais pour ce monsieur, c'est un Américain qui veut créer une entreprise en France.

Véronique : Quel genre d'entreprise, Monsieur ?

Jim : Un online business.

Véronique : Vous voulez dire une entreprise d'informatique ?

Jim : Oui, quelque chose comme ça. Je crée des logiciels en ligne.

Véronique : Des logiciels ? Et vous les vendez ?

Jim : Oui. Je voulais juste savoir...

Véronique : Attendez, je vais chercher ce que nous avons en anglais.

Jim : Mais non, je voulais juste savoir si je dois m'enregistrer pour la Social Security.

Véronique : La sécurité sociale ? Oh la la, ce n'est pas ici...

L'expert : Non, nous ne faisons que du conseil en gestion d'entreprise ici. Allez voir le stand de l'URSSAF, ils vous renseigneront.

Jim : Le stand de URSS... de quoi vous dites ?

Véronique : L'URSSAF. Je vais vous accompagner, suivez-moi.

Jim : Merci beaucoup, c'est très aimable à vous.

L'expert : Good bye ! Et bonne chance.

Jim : Good morning Sir, could you help me please?

The expert : Good morning. Maybe, but we'll have to see, what is your question?

Jim : Well, I am going to start a business in France. What about...

The expert : Oh, but you are a foreigner?

Jim : Yes, I am American.

The expert : Well, we'll have to see if I can find someone who can speak English...

Jim : Don't bother, I speak a little French. I just had a question...

The expert : Wait, I am going to give you some documentation. I think we have documents in English. Véronique?

Véronique : Yes, Sir?

The expert : Do you have any documentation in English for this man, he is an American who wants to start a business in France.

Véronique : What kind of business, Sir?

Jim : An online business.

Véronique : You mean a computer business?

Jim : Yes, something like that. I create online software.

Véronique : Software? And you sell them?

Jim : Yes. I just wanted to know...

Véronique : Wait, I am going to see what we have in English.

Jim : No, I just wanted to know if I need to register for Social Security.

Véronique : Social Security! Oh dear, it is not here...

The expert : No, we just do company management counselling here. Go to the URSSAF stand, they will give you all the information.

Jim : The URSS... stand of what, did you say?

Véronique : The URSSAF. I'll take you over there, follow me.

Jim : Thanks a lot, this is very kind of you.

The expert : Good bye! And good luck.





SOHO SOLO : A Unique Project for Expats in The Gers

Situated in the heart of Southwest France, near the Pyrenees and not far from the Atlantic Ocean, the Gers is one of those special places where many people dream of living, as you will see from our photo report page 28. Those who settle in this very pleasant department often fall in love with the traditional stone farmhouses that dot the large open fields and gently rolling hills. People come to the Gers in a quest for the “real France” and often encounter leisure and relaxation.

The Gers Chamber of Commerce has recently created a particularly interesting and dynamic initiative designed especially to help new foreign, self-employed entrepreneurs in the Gers Department to start their business through the use of information and communications technology. The project is also geared to-

ward helping the English to feel most welcome in the department.

What does SOHO SOLO mean? As Franck Cazalas, coordinator of the project, explains, “Soho” stands for “Small Office Home Office”, covering a wide category of self-employed people (including free agents, e-lancers, telecommuters, or other independent professionals) who work at least partially from home – or somewhere else. An example is the woman pictured on the cover of this issue of *French Accent*, a British expatriate who lives in the small village of Aignan, in the Gers, and who took advantage of the project. And the English who live in London will also appreciate the allusion to the Soho part of London...

“Solo”, of course, refers to self-employed people of all nationalities. Thus, SOHO SOLO appeals to self-

employed people who can work from home in the country.

The concept

Opting for a better quality of life and greater independence, an increasing number of people are choosing to move to and work in the countryside... Thanks to modern technology, these individual entrepreneurs are able to work partially from their homes. They are SOHO SOLO workers.

SOHO SOLO was a European project co-financed until 2006 by INTERREG IIB ‘Atlantic Area’ whose main objective was to attract new working population to rural areas using information and communications technologies

in their work. Bringing with them new skills and technologies, the SOHO SOLO workers contribute to the wealth of the local economy and help to revitalise rural areas.

With the support of the General Council of the Department of Gers and the Midi-Pyrenees Regional Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the CEEI (European Business and Innovation Centre) of Gers have been directing the project to encourage this new generation of entrepreneurs who run their businesses independently from their customers’ locations to settle in the countryside, and facilitate their integration through support services.

The services provided

All British and other foreigners working in “solo” and who are already established in



The welcome committee of the village of Aignan.

© Franck Cazalas



It is a whole department which mobilizes to welcome SOHO SOLO entrepreneurs. The village of Beaumarchès started by installing ADSL in the whole community.

© CLA Beaumarchès/CEEI Gers Gascogne

SOHO SOLO (cont'd)

the Gers and would like to promote their activity, or who are planning to settle in the Gers and become a SOHO SOLO worker, can benefit from any or all of the following services:

-An experienced team to assist their start-up or help develop their business: consulting, mentoring and information services.

-“Welcome committees” in more than thirty villages to facilitate their relocation and integration in the Gers, where they can find information on

available accommodation and local services.

-Access to the SOHO SOLO intranet: more than 185 people are registered in its network (www.soho-gers.net).

-The SOHO SOLO Passport, providing easy access to a service network.

-Free access to 8 telecentres and their facilities (computers, broadband, telephone, fax, photocopier) – the telecentres can also be used as meeting rooms.

-Free inclusion in the SOHO SOLO online directory tar-

geted at local and national businesses.

-Participation in regular SOHO SOLO meetings (Club SOHO SOLO) and regular newsletters.

“Welcome to Gascony, your new working space!”

If you are interested in relocating to the countryside, in finding a better way to work and a

better quality of life, far from urban stress, don't hesitate to contact the SOHO SOLO team! The Gers really wants to help individual entrepreneurs in their businesses and in their lives. This is not always the case everywhere in France, as some of our readers know. No doubt that the Gers deserves a special “bravo”!

A.S.

More information at: www.soho-solo-gers.com
Contact: Franck Cazalas
Gers Chamber of Commerce:
contact@soho-solo-gers.com
Tel: 05 62 60 16 12 or give us a toll-free call at:
0800 000 132 – and you will be able to talk in English!

“Brocanthé”: a belle histoire of integration

“What do we like here? Everything! The beautiful countryside, the trees, the good food, the fact that life is still not too expensive.” Nancy Kruyver, a Dutch mother of six, decided several years ago to settle in Aignan, Gers. She met her second husband there, a Dutchman too, Inge In't Hout; “It was love at first sight,” she says. Three years ago they opened “*Brocanthe – La belle histoire*”, a coffee and tea shop where they also sell antique objects and furniture, like in any other *brocante* shop. All the teas, coffees and fruit juices that Nancy and Inge serve to their visitors are organic, and/or imported from fair trade producers. “You won't find any alcohol or Coca-Cola here!”, says Nancy. “And more and more French customers are coming, and

they like the idea of drinking tea instead of wine,” while admiring the very nice selection of used and authentic items on display in the little shop.

The family lives in an old house in the countryside, “surrounded by horses and vineyards”, and they grow their own organic fruit and vegetables.

As this is her second shop (the first one was only a *brocante*), Nancy is very much aware of all the necessary formalities required to open a business in France, and after 20 years in the country, she speaks excellent French. But she knows how difficult it is to start one's own business in France, and



Nancy and Inge opened the shop three years ago.

has been helping out a bit with the SOHO SOLO project, as she thinks the idea of “helping expatriates to work from home” is excellent. It offers them “the chance to settle down away from big cities.”

She notices that more and more English and Dutch people are coming to the Gers, and “more and more young

people,” which is encouraging for the future of the region.

If you should happen to travel through the Gers, don't hesitate to stop by! Nancy and Inge are most welcoming, and the quiet and warm atmosphere of the shop in itself is an invitation to visit it. And their example is a *belle histoire* of integration.

A.S.

Brocanthé – La belle histoire, Place du Colonel Parisot, 32290 Aignan. Tél. : 05 62 08 15 26.
brocanthe.bellehistoire@orange.fr



Spectacular nature... and good wines.
 Above: le lac d'Ager
 © CEEI Gers Gascogne, Office de Tourisme



The famous Marciac Jazz Festival, "on" (above) and "off" (right), takes place every summer (August 1-17 this year).
 © Francis Vernbet



Discover the Gers

From a castle (left: château de Lavardens), to a cloister (right: cloître de la Romieu), an amazing architecture.
 © CDTL Gers

Lovely and lively communities: Right: the flower market of Fourcès, one of the 148 most beautiful villages of France, in the north of Gers. Below: the "Maison du tourisme" of Auch.
 © CEEI Gers Gascogne





French Politics — PPDA, Sarkozy & the Media

PPDA, Sarkozy et les médias

To what extent should a sitting president be able to influence the media? That seemed to be the question on nearly everyone's mind as of late in France because of two separate but closely related issues involving French television. The first and potentially most serious was a declaration by Nicolas Sarkozy that there would no longer be ads on public television (France 2, 3, 4, 5, France Ô & RTO); the second and most spectacular in many ways was the replacement of Patrick Poivre d'Arvor as anchor for TF1's nightly news by Laurence Ferrari.

Dans quelle mesure un président en exercice devrait-il influencer les médias ? Il semble que ce soit la question que chacun ait en tête en France depuis peu en raison de deux événements, séparés mais étroitement liés, qui ont frappé la télévision française. Le premier, et potentiellement le plus grave, a été l'annonce par Nicolas Sarkozy de sa décision de supprimer la pub sur les chaînes de télévision publique (France 2, 3, 4, 5, France Ô et RTO) ; le second, et le plus spectaculaire à bien des égards, a été le remplacement de Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, présentateur vedette du JT de 20h sur TF1, par Laurence Ferrari.

In January of this year, Sarkozy announced his intention of creating a public service television in France without advertising and one that would offer a more interesting and culturally varied programming. The rationale given for the change is certainly laudable: more high-quality cultural programmes in prime time rather than programming dictated by audience ratings. And, the tre-

mendous uproar that Sarkozy's announcement triggered was not at all over the proposed improvements to the programming, but rather about how it would all be paid for if there was no longer any revenue from advertising.

On February 19th, Sarkozy formed a commission of so-called experts that was headed by Jean-François Copé, former minister in sev-

En janvier 2008, Sarkozy a rendu publique son intention de créer en France une télévision de service public sans publicité, ce qui permettrait une programmation plus intéressante et plus variée sur le plan culturel. La justification de ce changement est certainement louable : davantage de programmes culturels de qualité aux heures de grande écoute à la place de programmes dictés par les taux d'audience. Le tu-

multe causé par cette annonce de Sarkozy ne porte donc pas du tout sur ces améliorations proposées dans la programmation, mais sur la manière dont elles seraient financées puisqu'il n'y aurait plus de revenus tirés de la publicité.

Le 19 février, Sarkozy a constitué une commission de soi-disant experts dirigée par Jean-François Copé, ancien ministre de plusieurs gouvernements et actuellement dé-

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor has been the undisputed star of the nightly news programs on French television, and his caricature is also the principle figure on the highly popular Les Guignols de l'info on Canal +

Photo Etienne Chognard



PPDA (cont'd)

eral governments and currently a deputy in the National Assembly and president of the UMP group of deputies in the Assembly. The Copé commission was given the task of defining the new public television and identifying sources of funding to fill the gap from the lost advertising revenues. The commission first let it be known that they would recommend an increase in the annual TV taxes paid by all viewers (*la redevance télévision*). To everyone's surprise, President Sarkozy announced, apparently without consulting with his commission, that there was no question of increasing the TV taxes. This seemingly premature intervention on Sarkozy's part sent the commission back to the start to come up with other solutions.

In the meantime, the administrators and employees of France's public television services are up in arms over the entire situation and fear for the very survival of public television as we know it today. How, they ask, can they produce quality services with a severely reduced budget? While nothing has been definitely decided at this point, some compromise proposals have surfaced, such as programming ad-free only after 8 p.m. and levying a tax on internet service providers and mobile phone operators to provide additional income. Whatever is ultimately decided, the wide-spread fear remains that public television will definitely be changed and most likely not for the better.

There is, however, considerable suspicion in all sectors of French society that Sarkozy's real intent is to weaken public



In 2006, glamorous Laurence Ferrari had just done the reverse: leaving TF1 for Canal +, as this people's magazine reminds.

television and thereby strengthen the overall market share for private television channels like TF1, M-6, Canal+ etc., most of which are owned and operated by close friends of Nicolas Sarkozy. The most controversial item to be proposed mid-summer was to give the president the right to personally name the director of public television, thereby ensuring executive influence over not just programming issues, but also over the editorial stance. Seven out of ten people polled on the issue were strongly opposed to the president having such sweeping powers over public television.

A tremendous surprise

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor has been the undisputed star of the nightly news programmes on French television. His newscast had the highest rating of all the evening news broadcasts in France, and televised debates with political candidates during election campaigns and also presidential interviews are almost always conducted by PPDA, as he is affectionately known.

PPDA (suite)

puté à l'Assemblée nationale et président du groupe UMP de l'Assemblée. La commission Copé s'est vue confier la tâche de définir une nouvelle télévision publique et d'identifier des sources de financement pour compenser la perte des revenus tirés de la publicité. Elle a fait d'abord savoir qu'elle recommanderait une augmentation de la redevance télévision payée par tous les téléspectateurs. Puis, à la surprise de tous, le Président Sarkozy a annoncé, apparemment sans consulter la commission, qu'il n'était pas question d'augmenter la redevance. Cette intervention très hâtive de la part de Sarkozy a obligé la commission de retourner à la case départ pour trouver d'autres solutions.

Entre temps, les administrateurs et employés des services de la télévision publique ont exprimé leur vive opposition contre toute cette situation, et leurs craintes que la survie même de cette télévision telle qu'on la connaît aujourd'hui soit mise en question. Comment, demandent-ils, peut-on produire des services de qualité avec un budget sévèrement réduit ? Bien que rien n'ait encore été décidé de manière définitive, plusieurs propositions de compromis ont fait surface, comme des programmes libres de publicité seulement après 20h, ou l'imposition d'une taxe sur les fournisseurs de services internet et les opérateurs de téléphone mobile pour fournir un revenu additionnel. Quelle que soit la décision finale, la crainte largement répandue demeure que la télévision publique changera

radicalement, et probablement pas à son avantage.

Dans tous les secteurs de la société, on soupçonne surtout que la réelle intention du Président français est d'affaiblir la télévision française et, par là, de renforcer le partage du marché global entre les chaînes de télévision privées telles que TF1, M6, Canal+, etc., qui, pour la plupart, sont dirigées et gérées par des amis très proches de Nicolas Sarkozy. La suggestion la plus controversée émise par le Président au milieu de l'été a été de nommer personnellement le directeur de la télévision publique, affermissant ainsi son influence pas seulement sur les questions de programmation, mais sur la ligne éditoriale. Un sondage a révélé que sept Français sur dix étaient fermement opposés à ce que le Président prenne ainsi radicalement le pouvoir de la télévision publique.

Le choc

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor est la vedette incontestée des programmes d'information télévisés du soir. Son émission a toujours eu les taux d'audience les plus élevés des journaux télévisés français, et les débats politiques entre les candidats lors des campagnes électorales, ainsi que les interviews présidentielles, sont presque toujours animés par PPDA, comme les Français l'appellent affectueusement. Sa caricature est aussi le principal personnage des très populaires Guignols de l'info de Canal+ chaque soir de la semaine. Cela a donc été une surprise considérable lorsque la nouvelle a circulé que la nouvelle direction de TF1 prévoyait de virer le très populaire PPDA et de le rem-

PPDA (cont'd)

His caricature is also the principle figure on the highly popular *Les Guignols de l'info* on Canal+ each weekday evening. It was, therefore, a tremendous surprise when news leaked that the new management of TF1 planned to axe the popular PPDA and replace him with the much younger, and glamorous Laurence Ferrari.

The reason? Ratings for the evening news broadcast had dropped from 31.4% to 27.2% of the audience in the past year, but that was also true for the evening news on France 2. The blame was placed on the new digital TV channels that were introduced in France last year, and not necessarily on Poivre d'Arvor.

However, the reasoning went that he was getting older, had been there for the past twenty-one years and that TF1 needed a new face to improve the ratings and, consequently, income from advertising.

At least that was the official TF1 line. Many astute political and media observers sense very clearly the hand of Nicolas Sarkozy in PPDA's eviction, and it wouldn't have been the first time that the president had meddled in the media. He had earlier succeeded in having the director of *Paris Match* replaced after the magazine published photos of his then wife Cecilia together with her lover Richard Attias. Why was PPDA feeling the president's wrath?

(Cont'd page 32)

PPDA (suite)

placer par la bien plus jeune, et sexy, Laurence Ferrari. La raison ? Le taux d'audience de son journal télévisé est passé de 31,4% à 27,2% l'année dernière. Mais cela a aussi été le cas des informations sur France 2. Et la cause principale en est certainement l'introduction en France en 2007 de nouvelles chaînes numériques de TV, bien davantage que la performance de PPDA. Mais d'autres arguments se sont ajoutés : qu'il prenait de l'âge, qu'il avait été là pendant vingt et un ans, et que TF1 avait besoin d'un nouveau visage pour améliorer les taux d'audience et, par conséquent, les revenus de la publicité.

Telle est du moins la ligne officielle de TF1. De nombreux

observateurs politiques et des médias bien informés ont senti très nettement la main de Nicolas Sarkozy dans l'éviction de PPDA, et ce ne serait pas la première fois que le Président intervienne ainsi dans les médias. Il avait auparavant réussi à faire remplacer le directeur de *Paris Match* après que le magazine ait publié des photos de son épouse d'alors, Cécilia, avec son amant Richard Attias. Mais pourquoi PPDA s'est-il attiré les foudres du Président ? La raison la plus évidente est la question qu'il lui avait posée durant une interview télévisée en juin 2007, lorsqu'il lui a demandé si, durant sa participation au dernier sommet des G8, il n'était pas "excité comme un petit garçon qui est en train de rentrer dans la

(Suite page 32)

Oh la la la la !!!... Unbelievable but True Stories from France...

BEARDS — On July 14th, activists from the feminist group "La barbe" (complaining that men always hold the positions of power) stuck brightly coloured beards on the statues in the place de la République in Paris. They plan to continue doing so until there is a woman president of France. We should point out that "la barbe!" in French means, "How boring!" or "That's enough!"

LONG LIVE THE ARMY! — 128 mayors from Moselle threatened to resign if Nicolas Sarkozy, who wants to eliminate 54,000 positions from the army, confirms his plans to close the military base in Dieuze. And 1,000 people demonstrated in Mourmelon (Marne) for similar reasons. Without their soldiers, these small cities would be almost empty.

LA BARBE ! — Le 14 juillet, les militantes du mouvement féministe "La barbe" (se plaignant que les hommes occupent toujours des postes de pouvoir) ont collé des barbes colorées sur les statues de la place de la République à Paris. Elles recommenceront tant qu'il n'y aura pas de femme présidente de la République. A noter que "la barbe !" en français signifie aussi "quel ennui !" ou "ça suffit !"

VIVE L'ARMÉE ! — 128 maires de Moselle ont menacé de démissionner si Nicolas Sarkozy, qui veut supprimer 54 000 postes dans l'armée, confirme sa décision de fermer la garnison de Dieuze. Et 1000 personnes ont manifesté à Mourmelon, dans la Marne, pour la même raison. Sans leurs militaires, ces bourgs se retrouveront quasiment vides.

A MISTAKE? — *Le Canard enchaîné* reports that whereas traffic on the motorways has risen by only 1.7% over the past year, the profits of the companies that manage them have gone up 7.88%. Where's the mistake?

PHOTO — There was a huge crowd around Ingrid Bétancourt when she was finally liberated after six years as a hostage of the FARC in Colombia. They all wanted to be in the photo. When Sarkozy learned of her liberation, he rushed to the Elysee Palace and called a press conference. But he made the TV cameras and the photographers wait while Bétancourt's two children could be summoned, you know, for a better photo op. We have stopped counting the number of photos in the press with Ingrid in his arms since her return.

ERREUR ? — Si en un an le trafic sur autoroute n'a augmenté que de 1,7%, le chiffre d'affaires des sociétés autoroutières a augmenté de 7,88%, a découvert *Le Canard enchaîné*. Cherchez l'erreur...

PHOTO — Il y avait foule autour d'Ingrid Bétancourt lorsqu'elle a enfin été libérée après avoir été six années otage des FARC en Colombie. Surtout pour figurer sur la photo. Lorsque Sarkozy a appris sa libération, il s'est précipité à l'Elysée et convoqué la télévision et les photographes. Mais il les a fait attendre pour laisser le temps aux enfants de l'ex-otage de le rejoindre pour que cela fasse une meilleure photo. Et on ne compte plus le nombre de photos d'Ingrid dans ses bras depuis qu'elle est de retour...

Our Planet — French Cities Take Steps to Reduce Pollution



It took them some time to realize what was going on. Ten years ago in cities like Lyon, for example, you could hardly breathe in the summer because of the polluted air and your eyes were constantly burning because of the toxic matter in the air emanating from the so-called *vallée de la chimie* (valley of chemicals): the industrial complex south of Lyon with its high concentration of chemical plants.

The huge increase in vacation traffic during the summer months, both in the city, the 3rd largest in France, and on the A7 motorway, which is the main access from the north of France to the Medi-

terranean coast, was (and still is) another major source of air pollution in the area.

But still, ten years ago, if you wanted to travel across the city on your bike, you took your life in your hands, and you looked very much like an oddball. It was difficult to find a bike path in the city, and if by chance there was one, you could be almost certain to find a car parked on it (there was very little enforcement at the time), or else it ended abruptly in the middle of an intersection. Cyclists were among the most neglected and least protected commuters in the city where the car was the king of the street.

Velo'v, Velib, etc.

All this has totally changed. Now the highly successful city-wide bike rental system created by Lyon, *Velo'v*, which was started in 2005 under the Socialist mayor Gérard Collomb, is being imitated by other cities, including Paris where a similar *Velib* system started in 2007. But what is *Velo'v*? It's name is a play on words combining the common French word for bike, *vélo*, and the English word love, of course. The system, which is very well explained on the website¹ (with an English version), is a very successful program providing well-equipped bicycles for rent at computer-controlled

stations. For a minimal fee or subscription, you can take out a bike at any one of the 340 stations spread all over the city, and you can leave it at any other station.

The success of *Velo'v* took the city by surprise. It quickly had to double the number of bikes (4,000 now), and the number of subscribers is more than 60,000. And still, it is sometimes difficult to find a bike close to the place where you want to use it. Of course, the new system necessitated the construction of additional bike paths, and car drivers had to get used to parking elsewhere (they are reminded with high fines so that they don't forget).

PPDA (cont'd)

The most obvious was the question he asked Sarkozy during a televised interview in June 2007 where he asked the newly elected president if, during his participation in his first G8 summit meeting, he didn't feel something like "a little boy playing in the big kids' sandbox". Sarkozy wasn't at all pleased with the question and let it be known.

That, on top of Patrick Poivre d'Arvor's firm opposition to the nomination of one of the president's close friends to the position of director of news at TF1, apparently played a major role in his replacement.

PPDA's final newscast on Thursday, July 10 drew 49% of the audience and was capped with an elegant and

dignified farewell to his faithful viewers and collaborators at TF1, but not before one final jab at the vindictive president: a sequence showing Sarkozy being criticized rather harshly by Daniel Cohn-Bendit before the European Parliament over the president's announcement that he would attend the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in China.

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor had developed a very special relationship with his viewers and will be missed on the nightly news. But, as he concluded his touching farewell to his audience, he promised, "Et je suis sûr qu'on va se revoir très vite."

Roger Stevenson

PPDA (suite)

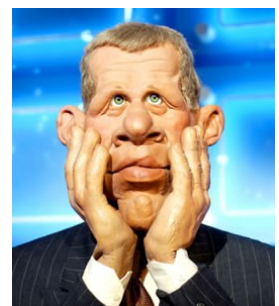
cour des grands". Sarkozy n'avait pas aimé du tout, et l'avait fait savoir.

Ceci, ajouté à la vive opposition de Patrick Poivre d'Arvor après la nomination d'un proche ami du Président au poste de directeur de l'information de TF1, a apparemment joué un rôle majeur dans son remplacement.

Le jeudi 10 juillet, le dernier journal de PPDA, qui fit un très élégant et digne au revoir à ses fidèles auditeurs et à ses collaborateurs de TF1, lui a valu une audience de 49%. Mais il ne s'est pas privé d'un dernier coup de griffe à son rancunier de Président, en passant une séquence montrant Sarkozy durement critiqué par Daniel Cohn-Bendit

devant le Parlement européen après qu'il ait annoncé qu'il participerait à la cérémonie d'ouverture des Jeux olympiques en Chine.

Patrick Poivre d'Arvor avait établi un rapport très étroit avec ses auditeurs, et il leur manquera lors des informations du soir. Mais en concluant son très émouvant adieu à son public, il a promis : "Et je suis sûr qu'on va se revoir très vite."



Pollution (cont'd)

In Paris, *Velib*² (a play on words combining *vélo* and *liberté*) was also an immediate success, far exceeding the Socialist mayor Bertrand Delanoë's expectations. The number of bikes is now over 16,000, and one can rent one at more than 1,200 stations. The average number of rentals per day is 70,000. By the end of 2008, there are plans to increase the number of bikes to 20,000 and 1,450 stations, and the system will also be expanded to include many of the surrounding suburbs of Paris. There is even a Michelin guide for *Velib*.

Other cities followed suit in 2007, such as Aix-en-Provence: *V'hello*³, Marseille: *Le Vélo*⁴, and Toulouse: *Vélo-Toulouse*⁵. And others will undoubtedly follow, especially in light of increased concerns over air pollution and the high cost of petrol.

However, the first city to have started a bike rental programme in France was La Rochelle in 2006 (the same city that inaugurated the country-wide programme of *La journée sans voiture*, which takes place every 22 September in France, but with an uneven success). Called the *agglomération maillot jaune* (in reference to the yellow jersey of the *Tour de France*), it has 350 yellow bikes for rent (the 2 first hours of use are free), and another set of 110 bikes *libre service* (free use), for a modest subscription fee, in 11 different spots around the city. It has also created a total of 2,800 bicycle parking places in the city centre and has established 150 km of bike paths.

And some other cities have started other original alterna-

tives, like Villeurbanne, a suburb of Lyon, that has created a *cyclo-pousse* system, like in Asia: a bike with a little cart attached to it in which one to two persons can sit. The system is for use by the retired and elderly, and one can only hope that the idea will be picked up by many other communities, as the transport of the elderly is so often a major problem.

Electric Car Rentals

La Rochelle in the Charente-Maritime was a pioneer in many other environmental initiatives. For example, cars are banned at certain times along the harbour and downtown section of the city, especially at night and on weekends. And it takes the lead in terms of alternative, collective transport systems. For example, city residents can rent electric cars, *Liselec*, which is also another way of reducing pollution in the city. There are a total of 50 cars available that can be taken from any one of seven different stations, and returned to any of them.

In Lyon, a private association called *La voiture autrement*, has started, with the support of the city, a rental scheme called *Autolib*, which is already a major success in spite of the drawback of having to return the car to the same place you rented it. Renters can reserve their car in advance on the internet⁶. And with your rental fee you are also entitled to a half-hour free use of *Vélo'v*. Contrary to La Rochelle, the cars aren't electric, but they are small and economical, and some are hybrids.

There are also some privately operated programmes of *auto-*



Vélo'v in Lyon... © Frédéric Bonifas



... was followed by *Velib* in Paris. © Resmit

partage where one can rent a car for a short period of time. *Auto-partage* is available in several cities, including Paris, which has the lowest number of cars per capita of any city in France since it is much easier to get around the city by subway or bus than by private car. You can sign up for these new systems on internet. They are called: *Caisse commune*⁷, *Mobizen*⁸, and *Okigo*⁹. The cars are not electric either, but they are supposed to be economical models. And the city of Paris is also looking at Lyon's *Autolib* system and is considering putting in a similar programme by the end of 2009. The city is still hesitating over the choice of cars (electric or hybrids) and over the formula (leaving the car at the same place or in any other

rental spot). In keeping with this trend, several major rental companies like Avis and Hertz are also starting a policy of short-term rentals at a reduced rate.

Other initiatives, in other cities: *Autocomm*¹⁰ in Bordeaux, *Alpes Autopartage*¹¹ in Grenoble, *Lilas*¹² in Lille, *Autopartage Provence*¹³ in Marseille, *Modulauto*¹⁴ in Montpellier, and *Auto'trement*¹⁵ in Strasbourg.

The Return of the tramway

Many of the other large cities in France are also trying to think electric instead of gas when they purchase new equipment for the local public transit systems, and they are adding bike paths along many streets. And the tramways,

Pollution (cont'd)

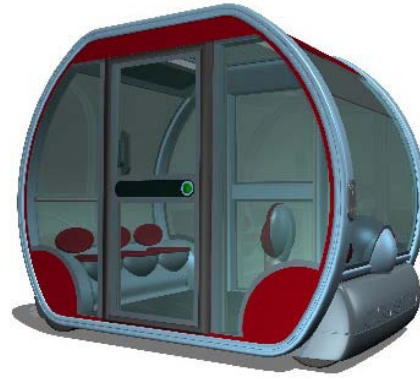
which were an integral part of city life at the end of the 19th century, but dismantled in the 1950s, are experiencing a real renaissance. There are now new and very environmentally friendly, quiet and reliable public transport trams in Strasbourg, Lyon, Bordeaux, Paris, Marseille, Grenoble, Le Mans, Mulhouse, Montpellier, Nice, Nantes, Reims, Valenciennes and Orléans. With more to follow: Angers in 2010, Brest and Le Havre in 2012, Dijon, Tours, Lens and Béthune in 2013, Besançon in 2014...

They are all modern, stylish and colourful. Although in the beginning, many city dwellers were rather sceptical as they feared the tramway would take up too much space on the streets and increase traffic jams, they have now embraced their new trams with pride, and most of them are jam packed during rush hours.

“Cristal” Buses in Strasbourg

Other innovative ideas are constantly coming to light. One such scheme will soon be put in place in Strasbourg, another pioneering city in alternate forms of transportation. Strasbourg has long been considered the most bike-friendly city in France and is at the forefront of what is now called in France *écomobilité*. Through encouraging bicycle use, the city has managed to reduce by an estimated 50,000 the number of cars that criss-cross its centre each day.

As a supplement to the tramway, which has become the most highly used transport system downtown, the mayor (now a Socialist, but his predecessor was from the UMP right-wing majority) is going to initiate a totally new means of transportation, which won't be operational until early 2010. Called “Cristal”, it will be a small



“module”, half bus, half car, totally autonomous and non-polluting, which will be able to carry up to 6 people. Thanks to a GPS system, the vehicle will adapt to traffic density. During rush hour traffic, the modules will be able to couple together to form a single convoy, like a small train, which will be able to carry up to 25 passengers. Riders will be able to use them without reservation but order them on a need basis similar to calling a taxi or the bike rental

systems. “Cristal” should help considerably to reduce pollution, noise, and traffic jams. A few Swiss cities are seriously thinking about adopting the same system. Indeed, we will concentrate on how Switzerland deals

with the environment in our next issue, which will focus almost entirely on “Settling in Switzerland”.

Annick Stevenson

- ¹ www.velov.grandlyon.com
- ² www.velib.paris.fr
- ³ www.vhello.fr
- ⁴ www.levelo-mpm.fr
- ⁵ www.autolib.fr
- ⁶ www.velo.toulouse.fr
- ⁷ www.caisse-commune.com
- ⁸ www.mobizen.fr
- ¹⁰ www.autocomm.org
- ¹¹ <http://alpesautopartage.eileo.org>
- ¹² www.lilas-autopartage.com
- ¹³ www.autopartage-provence.com
- ¹⁴ www.modulauto.net
- ¹⁵ www.autotrement.com



The brand new tram in Bordeaux... © Peter Gugerell

And What About *co-voiturage*?

Another excellent idea to reduce pollution and the high cost of driving is to share the same car for the same trip. While not a very new idea, the French have been very slow in changing their commuting habits. Car sharing initiatives don't usually come from city administrations, but from individuals, private companies and associations – or, of course, from fellow employees at the same company, parents of children in the same school, etc.

Most of the time, information about car sharing is only available locally and, as usual, the *mairie* is the best place to go for information, together with bulletin boards found in many store and shops.

There are, however, several *co-voiturage* web sites where one can check out possibilities and even make a reservation online. Some are more or less visited and not all of them offer many possibilities, but still, it may be worth while to see what they have to offer*

Don't forget that *co-voiturage* is also an excellent way to meet French people and to have a chance to chat with them, to learn more about a part of French society or about a city or region, and to improve one's French!

A.S.



www.covoiturage.fr
 www.covoiturage.com
 www.123envoiture.com
 www.easycovoiturage.com
 www.tribu-covoiturage.com
 http://covoiturage.radiofrance.fr
 www.aide-covoiturage.com
 ... and many more, on a city or region scale, that you can easily find by browsing a little on the web.

Gardening: A Convenient Earthworm-Driven Composter...



For those of you who don't have a compost heap in the garden and have limited space for such things, a relatively new product from Australia may be just the answer. It is called Can-O-Worms, is made from recycled plastic and uses large numbers of earthworms to rapidly digest your kitchen scraps and organic refuse to a readily useable compost for plants or gardens. It's about the same size as a regular family garbage can and has several compartments piled on top of each other where the worms transform any organic material into compost. There is even a small spigot in the very bottom where the liquid produced from the process can be drained off and used as fertilizer for household plants.

It can easily be placed on a balcony or in a garage, is reputed to be odourless and can produce up to a kilo and a half of compost per day. There are several variations that can be purchased from Wiggly Wigglers or Amazon in the UK, as well as from several internet sites in France, and lots of blogs sing the praises of this convenient system.

www.wigglywigglers.co.uk/shop/foundationoption.lasso?findit=Can-O-Worms.com

www.amazon.co.uk/JUST-GREEN-CAN-WORMS-COMPOSTER/dp/B000NKZXMC

www.verslaterre.fr/particuliers

<http://fr.jardins-animes.com/ecologie-environnement/compostage-recyclage/composteur-vivant-le-lombricomposteur-canoworms-p-125.html>

<http://perrone.blogs.com/horticultural/2008/02/can-o-worms-upd.html>

Roger Stevenson

The French Scene —



Sylvie Testud



You may have seen her picture this summer on the cover of numerous magazines or newspapers. Sylvie Testud has been featured because of her outstanding performance in a new film: she took the risk of playing the very challenging role of French writer Françoise Sagan in a movie simply called *Sagan*, by filmmaker Diane Kurys. And she succeeded so well that her performance has been compared to that of Marion Cotillard who played Edith Piaf in *La môme* (*La vie en rose* in the English version) by Olivier Dahan, and who was the first actor/actress ever to win an Oscar for a performance entirely in French. She also won the César award for best actress for the film. Sylvie Testud also appeared in the same Edith Piaf film in the role of Mômone and was nominated for a César for best supporting actress.

Born in 1971 in the Croix-Rousse section of Lyon, Sylvie Testud, who now lives in

Paris (where she studied acting at the *Conservatoire d'art dramatique*), has played in nearly 50 movies since 1991. Her first “important” movie was *Karnaval* by Thomas Vincent (1999). Her mischievous looks and fine acting helped make the film a big hit and was the stepping stone to her own personal success. She was nominated for a César for most promising actress – a prize that she received later, in 2001, for the film *Les blessures assassines*, by Jean-Pierre Denis.

However, Testud’s renown grew considerably after her remarkable performance in the 2003 film *Stupeurs et tremblements* (*Fear and Trembling* in the English version) by Alain Corneau, for which she received the best actress César and several other prizes. The film, based on an autobiographical novel by the celebrated Belgian writer Amélie

Nothomb, is the partially-true story of a young Belgian woman who, after having spent her early childhood in Japan, returns and tries to adapt to Japanese society and the cultural labyrinth of a Japanese corporation.

One of the reasons the French like Sylvie Testud so much is that, in spite of her numerous successes, she remains very humble and down-to-earth. They identify easily with her as she comes from a modest background: her mother is an accountant of Italian origin and her father abandoned her when she was 2 years old. And also because she is close to the public, friendly and has an excellent sense of humour. This past June, she agreed to be the “editor-in-chief” for *Le Progrès*, Lyon’s largest daily newspaper, for one day, and was highly appreciated and warmly received by the staff



Left: © Laurence Malraux. Below: © Charlotte Schouboe-Alexandre films

Sylvie Testud (right) playing Françoise Sagan. The real Sagan (above) in a recently published biography, “*Sagan à toute allure*” by Marie-Dominique Lelièvre (Denoël)



Sylvie Testud (suite)

and the public whom she interviewed. She is a fervent supporter of the candidacy of Lyon as “European Capital of Culture” for 2013.

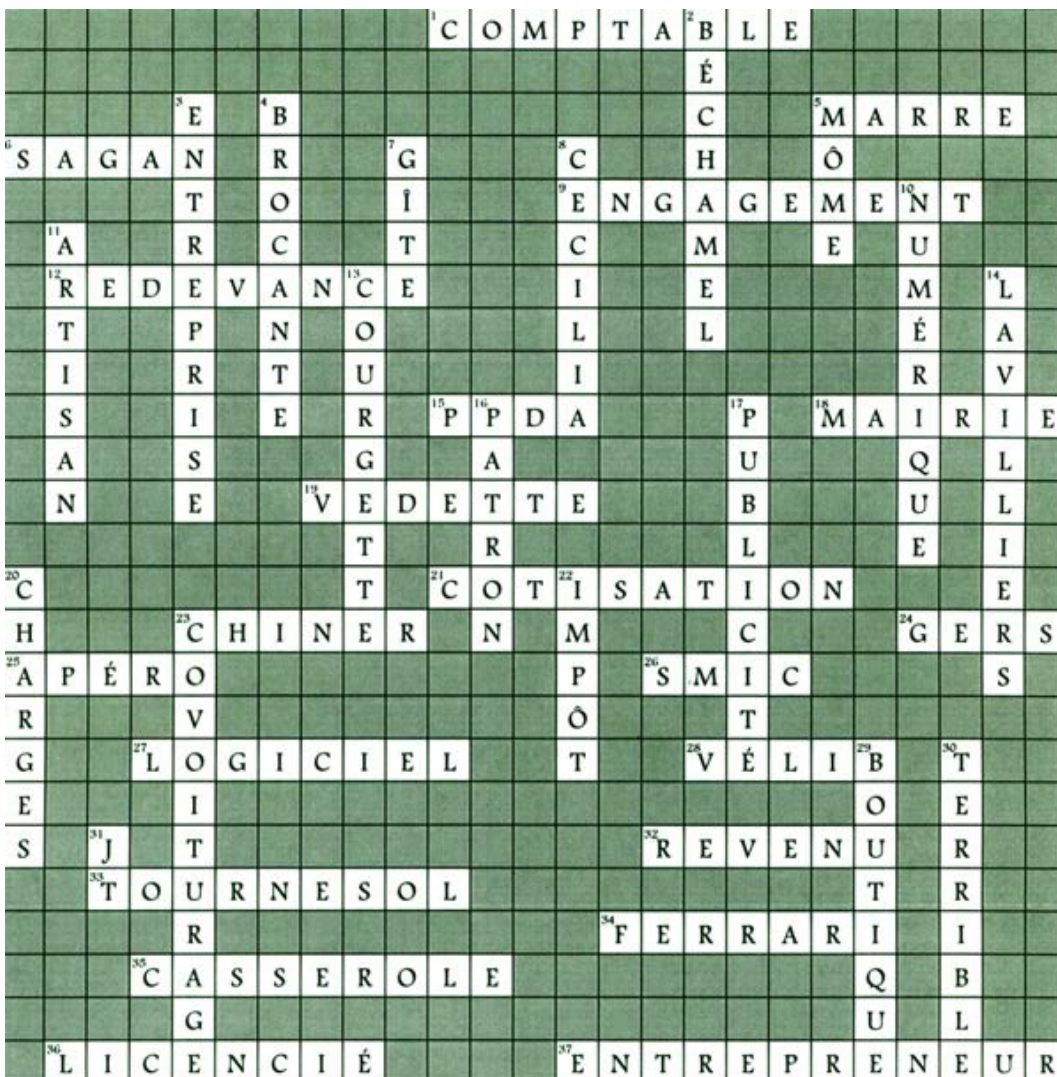
She is also a writer and has published two novels and an autobiography, and she occasionally writes for the theatre. She became the mother of a young boy, Rubin, in 2005 and shares her life with a computer specialist whom she met when she was 15. And she is also politically active and publicly supported Socialist Ségolène Royal during the presidential election campaign of 2007.

Her role in Sagan has been widely recognized by the critics as exceptional. She totally immersed herself in the character of the French “new wave” writer (born in 1935 and who died, almost alone and destitute, in 2004).

Not an easy role, as Françoise Sagan, who became famous after the publication of her first novel, *Bonjour tristesse* in 1954, had a very eccentric personality and lived her life to the fullest, including almost every excess possible (she had a weakness for beautiful cars, alcohol, drugs, mixed sexual relationships, and spending more money than she could earn!).

Sagan, who was a brilliant writer, also had an extraordinary personality: she was very intelligent, literally sparkling, lively, generous, sometimes adorable and sometimes totally insolent, but always sincere, sometimes very moving, and very fast – one could hardly understand her when she spoke. Sylvie Testud succeeded wonderfully in portraying all these various and contradictory aspects of Sagan. One can only assume that this young actress’s career – she is only 37 – will continue to flourish. We just hope she will remain as down-to-earth and lovely as she is now.

Annick Stevenson



Solution from page 9

Great deals on rental cars

auto europe.



A committed protest singer and a rebel with a worthy cause.

Bernard Lavilliers - *Les mains d'or*

*Un grand soleil noir tourne sur la vallée
Cheminée muettes - portails verrouillés
Wagons immobiles - tours abandonnées
Plus de flamme orange dans le ciel mouillé*

*On dirait - la nuit - de vieux châteaux forts
Bouffés par les ronces - le gel et la mort
Un grand vent glacial fait grincer les dents
Monstre de métal qui va dérivant*

*J'voudrais travailler encore - travailler encore
Forger l'acier rouge avec mes mains d'or
Travailler encore - travailler encore
Acier rouge et mains d'or*

*J'ai passé ma vie là - dans ce laminoir
Mes poumons - mon sang et mes colères noires
Horizons barrés là - les soleils très rares
Comme une tranchée rouge saignée rouge saignée sur l'espoir*

*On dirait - le soir - des navires de guerre
Battus par les vagues - rongés par la mer
Tombés sur le flan - giflés des marées
Vaincus par l'argent - les monstres d'acier*

*J'voudrais travailler encore - travailler encore
Forger l'acier rouge avec mes mains d'or*

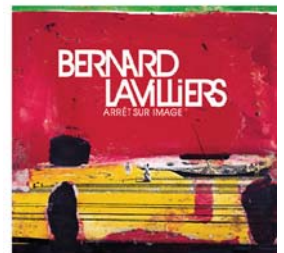
*Travailler encore - travailler encore
Acier rouge et mains d'or*

*J'peux plus exister là
J'peux plus habiter là
Je sers plus à rien - moi
Y a plus rien à faire
Quand je fais plus rien - moi
Je coûte moins cher - moi
Que quand je travaillais - moi
D'après les experts*

*J'me tuais à produire
Pour gagner des clous
C'est moi qui délire
Ou qui devient fou
J'peux plus exister là
J'peux plus habiter là
Je sers plus à rien - moi
Y a plus rien à faire*

*Je voudrais travailler encore - travailler encore
Forger l'acier rouge avec mes mains d'or
Travailler encore - travailler encore
Acier rouge et mains d'or...*

Album "Arrêt sur image". 2001.



This song is about a worker who has spent his entire working life in a steel factory that has just shut down. He feels that he is too young to stop working. The chorus says:

Je voudrais travailler encore - travailler encore = I would like to be still working - still working.

Forger l'acier rouge avec mes mains d'or = Forging the red steel with my golden hands.

Travailler encore - travailler encore = still be working - still be working.

Acier rouge et mains d'or... = Red steel and golden hands...

Bernard Lavilliers, who was born in 1946, comes from a lower-class working family. His father was a steel worker, unionist and his mother was a teacher. Endowed with a

solid body and a strong personality, the young Lavilliers felt that he was born to fight – he picked up boxing as a hobby at age 13. After spending a year in reform school, he joined his father as an apprentice in the steel mill in 1962. Three years later he was fed-up with factory work and flew off to Brazil, working there as a jungle truck driver. Back in France in 1967, he was incarcerated for failing to do his military service.

With his muscular body, his good looks and his low, sensual voice, Bernard Lavilliers rose to stardom in France and in other Francophone countries in the mid-'70s and became an icon of the free-thinking singer-songwriter. He then earned a reputation for being a committed protest

singer, an itinerant rocker and a rebel with a worthy cause.

A passionate traveller and occasional reporter, Lavilliers lived for long periods of time in different South-American (especially Brazil) and African countries, always bringing back songs (and sometimes musicians) with him. He wrote about important social themes such as violence, poverty and social inequity. Lavilliers' songs are accompanied by reggae, Salsa, bossa nova, Latino or African rhythms... He was one of the first French singers to be involved in "world music".

After many successful songs such as *San Salvador*, *La Salsa*, *On the road again*, *Betty*, *Noir et blanc*, *Stand the ghetto*, *Traffic*, *Pigalle la Blanche*, etc., he has become one of France's most

likable singers. Today, he is in his sixties and he continues to travel. His eighteenth album, *Samedi soir à Beyrouth*, was recorded in studios in Kingston, Jamaica and Memphis, Tennessee. He began writing material for this new album in 2006 during a visit to the Lebanese capital, inspired by the strange atmosphere that reigned in the war-torn city. The title track of the album *Samedi soir à Beyrouth* communicates his observations on a typical Saturday night in Beirut.

Vincent Antonioz

Lavilliers is currently touring France until November. Concert details are found on his personal website:

www.bernardlavilliers.com

Deux dictées

Beginner Level

Quand nous sommes venus pour la première fois dans le département du Gers, on a vraiment eu un coup de foudre. On a trouvé les gens tellement sympa et gentils et le paysage si beau qu'on s'est dit tout de suite : « Il faut qu'on s'installe ici. » Et du coup, en l'espace de deux mois, nous avons trouvé une maison à acheter et avons réussi à créer une petite entreprise. Depuis, nous n'avons pas eu un seul regret.



Intermediate Level

Autrefois, les cas de dopage dans le Tour de France étaient dérisoires et les exploits des coureurs énormes. Depuis presque vingt ans, les dopages sont énormes et les exploits dérisoires. Prenons, par exemple, le Tour 2008. Déjà pendant la première moitié de la course, trois cas de dopages et un seul véritable exploit : celui de Ricardo Ricco dimanche 12 juillet. Et on apprend, quatre jours plus tard, que lui aussi est dopé. C'est la désillusion totale !



Exercise with *n'importe* and other expressions : Solutions from page 7

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. N'importe comment | 5. N'importe OR ça m'est égal |
| 2. tant mieux | 6. j'en ai assez |
| 3. N'importe où | 7. N'importe quand |
| 4. J'en ai marre | 8. N'importe quoi |

Zelda l'araignée

*Zelda l'araignée
Ne va pas à l'école
Elle préfère s'envoler
Sur une feuille d'automne
Emportée par le vent
Qui siffle une chanson
Zelda l'araignée
Ne fait pas ses devoirs
Elle préfère se cacher
Dans une meule de brouillard
Et glisser sur les flaques
Quand la pluie est tombée*



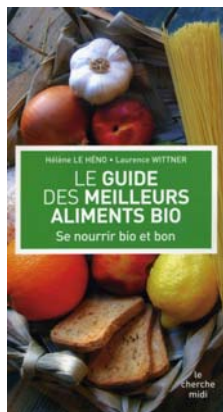
Children's song written by Frédéric, from *Carambole*
Chosen and sung by Alexandra

A Selection of Books



Le Guide des meilleurs aliments bio

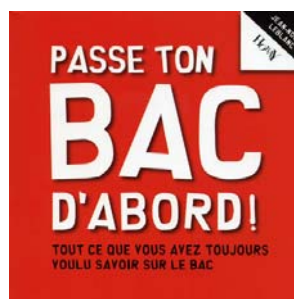
This guide to the “best organic food” is the result of a comparative investigation of 25 categories of products conducted by several experts who tested them and classified them according to a set of criteria. The best ones have been given a grade, the others have been *éliminés* (removed completely as they are not recommended at all). All the products are listed by name. It is very instructive and it might be useful to have a look at it before shopping. Organic food is relatively new in France, as we explained in our issue N° 12 of April-May 2008, and some manufacturers have a tendency to add the word *bio* (organic) to products that don't meet all the requirements.



By Hélène Le Héno and Laurence Wittner, Ed. Le Cherche midi, 2008. 15 €

Passe ton bac d'abord !

The French baccalaureate exam (*baccalauréat*, a.k.a. *le bac*) celebrates its 200th anniversary this year. The *bac* is the diploma which marks the end of secondary school and gives



access to university. It was created by Napoleon I^{er} in order to organize the university and limit access to higher level studies. The first year, 31 students passed it. This year, 517,000 succeeded, a success rate of 83.3%. A high percentage, but for those who don't pass, life will be much more difficult as they won't be able to get into university, unless they try again the following year. This is why *passer le bac* (going through the examination to try get the baccalaureate) is always terribly stressful. The expression used in the title is very significant: *Passe ton bac d'abord!* = Get your *bac* first, and then we can start talking about your future!

On the occasion of this anniversary, a little book has been published, rather easy to read, full of anecdotes, figures, short notes and information, songs, and quotes from famous French writers or intellectuals, some of whom seriously criticize the continued use of this “fossile” diploma. It includes humour, jokes and even a reminder of the best ways to cheat. At the end, there is a little game that French people like to play together: *le petit bac...*

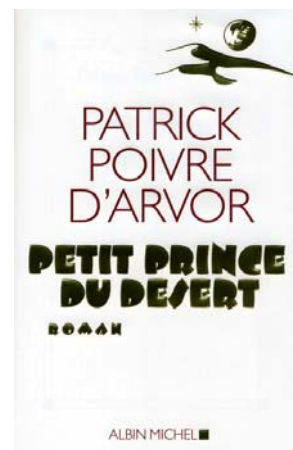
By Jean-Noël Leblanc, Ed. Horay, 2008. 7,50 €

Petit prince du désert

This is the latest novel by TV news anchor Patrick Poivre d'Arvor (PPDA), about whom we have devoted our article on French politics this month (page 29). Not only is he a famous journalist, but he is also a lover of books and an excellent writer himself. He has published some 15 novels, plus several others co-written with his brother Olivier, essays, poems, children's stories, illustrated books... more than 40 books to date.

This new novel is a take-off on the *Petit Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry — one of his great inspirations. It relates the story of a 12-year-old boy, Jacques, the son of a pilot who is a friend and colleague of Saint-Exupéry. Jacques is desperate because his mother has disappeared and he is trying to find her. This moving story, nicely written, would make a good introduction to French for an English-speaking reader. And an intriguing echo of the *Petit Prince* which was written by Saint-Ex while he was living in New York.

By Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, Ed. Albin Michel, 12 €



Aimer c'est agir

Since part of the focus of the article on the political scene in France was about Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, we felt it fitting that we present a brief excerpt from one of his latest books, *Aimer c'est agir : mes engagements*. PPDA writes passionately about his profession as journalist and news anchor, but also about his involvement in many of the causes that he has championed over the years. The following excerpt is from the introduction where he talks about the importance of political activism, of being involved, in short, *ses engagements*, in his personal life.

“J'en suis sûr désormais, notre existence se résume à la somme de nos engagements.

“Engagements politiques, professionnels, déontologiques, vis-à-vis de la société, du pays, engagements sentimentaux, familiaux, engagements intellectuels face à un monde désemparé, en mal de solidarité, de paix, de justice, d'égalité. Livres choisis qui donnent du sens à une vie terrestre, trop terrestre. Qui, plutôt que de nous distinguer façonnent la trame simplement humaine d'années vécues parfois trop vite. Engagements qui nous extraient de nous-mêmes. La volonté parle en eux. Nos engagements de chaque instant. J'aime ces liens légers et essentiels, fragiles mais déterminants. Qui n'engagent que soi, mais qui engagent tellement à travers soi. Le regard d'autrui, amoureux ou fraternel, peut être engageant. Le regard sur soi, dans le miroir, ne ment pas : il dit la qualité de l'engagement, la sortie de soi, ou trahit la tentation de la fuite, le repli sur soi.

“Des années durant, j'ai cherché un sens à cette course que je mène, dans le bonheur et la douleur, l'insatisfaction et la passion. J'ai passé une grande partie de ma vie à poser des questions à d'autres qu'à moi-même. C'est le lot des intervieweurs. Le temps qu'il me restait, je l'ai consacré à explorer le monde : à travers les enquêtes sur le terrain, les dépêches d'agence qui ont défilé si souvent devant mes yeux, les voyages en France comme dans plus de cent cinquante pays, à travers les rencontres, intimes, lointaines, si nombreuses. Accomplissant chaque action de ma vie comme si c'était la dernière. Peu à peu, j'ai compris qu'une existence se construisait, la mienne, autour d'un certain nombre d'engagements qui constituaient ma relation au monde.

“S'engager, c'est d'abord tenter de s'adresser aux autres. C'est se mesurer empiriquement à un peu plus d'humanité... L'engagement des autres me bouleverse toujours : c'est cette qualité

que je recherche dans la conversation, dans le travail, dans l'amour, dans la construction de soi et de la société. Je la trouve chez mon voisin, de l'autre côté de la rue, qui lutte contre son handicap, contre la discrimination, le racisme, comme dans les bidonvilles de Port-au-Prince, Calcutta... Si vivre c'est agir, alors s'engager c'est construire sa vie. Belle vie qu'une vie engagée, engageante. Qu'une vie entreprenante, entreprenante ! Gandhi a raison de dire que nous devons être le changement que nous souhaitons voir dans le monde.”



Patrick Poivre d'Arvor
Aimer c'est agir : Mes engagements. Fayard, 2007.

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Une recette de cuisine : lasagnes à la ratatouille

This dish is one of our own creations. It takes a bit of time to prepare, but it's delicious! It's a great way to use those wonderful summer vegetables.

Ingredients (for six servings)

For the ratatouille:

- 1 large onion
- 5 or 6 ripe tomatoes
- 2 zucchini squash
- 2 medium-sized eggplants
- 1 red pepper
- 1 or 2 branches of rosemary and other dried, crushed herbs (thyme and bay leaves)
- 3 or 4 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

For the lasagna:

- 8 pieces of lasagna pasta (depending on the size of your lasagna dish), preferably a good quality Italian pasta.
- 1 tablespoon sunflower oil
- 2 tablespoons flour (20 gr)
- 2 gobs of butter (40 gr)
- 1 litre of milk
- salt, pepper and ground nutmeg
- grated parmesan cheese

Preparation of the ratatouille

Place the tomatoes in boiling water for 2-3 minutes so you can remove the skins. In the meantime, dice the onions, chop the garlic very fine, cut the pepper in small chunks and slice the zucchinis and eggplants.

Remove the skin from the tomatoes, cut them in small pieces and remove the seeds.

Pour the olive oil into a large saucepan or frying pan, add the onions, then the tomatoes, then the other vegetables in successive layers. Add salt and pepper to each layer. Add the garlic and other herbs. Cover and cook over a low heat (be careful that it doesn't burn) for roughly 45 min. to an hour. When the vegetables are almost fully cooked, remove the lid so that some of the liquid will evaporate. These vegetables give off a lot of liquid.

Note: For those who like spicy dishes, you can add a little paprika or Cayenne pepper, according to taste.

Preparation of the lasagna

Fill a large cooking pot with water, add salt and a tablespoon of oil to prevent the lasagna pasta from sticking together. Bring the water to a boil and then add the lasagna pasta one



Ce plat, de notre invention, est assez long à préparer. Mais il est délicieux ! Et c'est un excellent moyen d'utiliser ces savoureux légumes d'été.

Ingredients (pour 6 personnes)

Pour la ratatouille :

- 1 gros oignon
- 5-6 tomates bien mûres
- 2 courgettes

- 2 aubergines (pas trop grosses)
- 1 poivron rouge
- 1-2 branches de romarin et autres fines herbes broyées (thym et laurier)
- 3-4 gousses d'ail
- 1 cuillère à soupe d'huile d'olive
- sel, poivre

Pour les lasagnes :

- 8 lasagnes (selon leur taille et celle du plat à gratin), de préférence des pâtes italiennes de bonne marque
- 1 cuillère d'huile de tournesol
- 2 cuillères à soupe de farine (20g)
- 2 morceaux de beurre (40g)
- 1 litre de lait
- sel, poivre, noix de muscade en poudre
- parmesan râpé

Préparation de la ratatouille

Faire bouiller 2-3 minutes les tomates dans une casserole d'eau pour pouvoir enlever facilement la peau. Pendant ce temps, couper les oignons en fines tranches, l'ail en toutes petites miettes, le poivron en petits morceaux, et les courgettes et aubergines en morceaux ou en tranches selon leur taille.



Ôter la peau des tomates, les couper en petits morceaux et enlever les graines.

Verser l'huile d'olive dans une large sauteuse, placer d'abord les oignons, puis les tomates, et les autres légumes par couches successives, en salant et poivrant chaque couche. Puis ajouter les fines herbes et l'ail. Faire chauffer à couvert et à feu doux (attention de ne pas laisser brûler). Lorsque les légumes sont presque cuits, retirer le couvercle pour laisser un peu évaporer car les légumes produisent beaucoup de liquide. La cuisson prend environ 45mn-1h.

Note : Les personnes qui aiment les plats assez épicés peuvent rajouter un peu de paprika ou de poivre de Cayenne, à leur goût.

Préparation des lasagnes

Faire bouillir de l'eau salée (additionnée d'une cuillère d'huile pour éviter que les lasagnes collent) dans une grande casserole. Puis verser



Recette de cuisine: lasagnes à la ratatouille (suite)

by one. Cook for about 10 min. (check the cooking time on the packaging). While they are cooking, occasionally separate the pieces with a flat wooden spatula. As soon as the pasta is done, remove them from the boiling water one at a time being careful not to break or tear them. Place them side by side on a dish towel to cool off.

Preparation of the béchamel sauce

Heat a litre of milk in a sauce pan, stirring constantly over a low heat. It should not come to a boil.

Place the butter and flour in a saucepan or non-stick pot. Melt the butter over a low heat and mix it together with the flour. Then, slowly add the heated milk, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or a whisk to avoid any lumps. You have to keep stirring, preferably in the same direction, so the béchamel sauce doesn't burn or stick to the bottom of the pan. The whole process can take as much as 20-30 minutes. Once all the milk has been added, keep stirring until the sauce thickens and forms a smooth coating on the spatula or spoon. Add salt, pepper and ground nutmeg (to taste) and stir it in thoroughly.

Note: While this dish does take a bit of time to prepare, it is fairly easy to make. You should be patient and take your time and proceed step by step (You should count on roughly two hours in all). First of all, prepare the ratatouille, then while it is cooking, boil the lasagna pasta. Then start your béchamel sauce when the other two are ready.

Putting it all together

Butter an oven-proof cooking dish. Put a shallow layer of ratatouille in the bottom (try not to get too much liquid) and then place the first layer of lasagna pasta. Add a thicker layer of ratatouille, followed by some of the béchamel sauce and a second layer of lasagna. Repeat the process. On top of the final layer of ratatouille, add the remainder of the lasagna pasta (the third layer) and pour the remainder of the béchamel sauce over the top. It should cover the entire dish. Sprinkle a thin layer of grated parmesan cheese over the top.

Bake in the oven at 180-200 degrees C for 30 to 40 min. and until it has a nice golden colour to it.

When serving, cut into portions and serve with a large spatula to avoid breaking the lasagna in small pieces. Provide grated parmesan cheese for your guests to add, according to taste...

Bon appétit!

les lasagnes une à une. Faire cuire 10mn environ (vérifier la durée de cuisson sur l'emballage des pâtes). Durant la cuisson enfilez une grande spatule plate en bois entre les lasagnes pour les séparer. Dès qu'elles sont cuites, les sortir une à une avec la spatule en faisant attention de ne pas les casser, et les poser côte à côte sur un torchon posé sur le plan de travail.

Préparation de la sauce béchamel

Faire chauffer à feu très doux un litre de lait dans une casserole en le remuant constamment. Ne pas laisser bouillir.

Mettre le beurre et la farine dans une casserole ou cocotte qui n'attache pas, et faire fondre le beurre à feu doux en le mélangeant à la farine. Puis verser lentement le lait chaud, en mélangeant avec une cuillère en bois ou un fouet pour éviter les grumeaux ; et il est essentiel de tourner constamment la béchamel (de préférence dans le même sens) pour qu'elle n'attache pas à la casserole et ne brûle pas. La cuisson peut prendre 20-30 mn. Une fois versé tout le lait, continuer de tourner jusqu'à ce que la béchamel soit moins liquide et nappe légèrement la spatule ou le fouet. Ajouter le sel (à votre goût), le poivre, et la noix de muscade, et bien mélanger.

Note : Ce plat est très facile à faire mais demande une assez longue préparation. Il est donc conseillé de prendre son temps (compter bien 2h en tout) et de procéder par étapes : préparer d'abord la ratatouille, puis tandis qu'elle mijote, faire cuire les lasagnes. Et attendre que les deux soient prêts pour commencer la sauce béchamel.

Préparation du plat

Beurrer un plat à gratin. Verser un peu de ratatouille (en évitant de mettre trop de liquide) pour couvrir le fond et placer une première couche de lasagnes. Mettre une bonne couche de ratatouille, recouvrir d'un peu de béchamel et d'une seconde couche de lasagnes. Recommencez l'opération. Terminer par une troisième couche de lasagnes, et verser dessous tout le reste de la béchamel, qui doit totalement recouvrir le plat. Verser dessus une fine couche de parmesan râpé.

Mettre au four chaud (180-200 degrés) pendant environ 30-40 mn jusqu'à ce que le plat soit assez doré.

Pour servir, couper chaque part avec une grande spatule plate pour éviter d'abîmer les lasagnes, et présentez du parmesan râpé que les convives peuvent verser sur leur assiette, à leur goût... Bon appétit !

Annick Stevenson





Are You A British Ex-Pat In France Considering A Move Back To The UK? Are You In A Dilemma About Whether To Return?

If so, ITV1 are making a documentary series about expats who are weighing up the merits of returning home.

It is the great British dream to find a place in the sun which offers tranquility and a better quality of life. It is no surprise then that many people turn to France with its stunning weather, cultural heritage and fiscal benefits. Yet despite this, one in three people who leave Britain are returning home every year.

In many cases this has nothing to do with their adopted country but more to do with personal circumstances. Upon making the decision to return, some find they fall back in love with the country and decide to stay for good, but others are surprised about how much has changed since they left and end up ruing their decision to return.

So how can you be sure the Britain you left offers you the opportunities you crave? How can you reconcile so many factors such as career, property and schooling decisions whilst abroad?

We are offering expats the opportunity to be flown back home to see what the UK has to offer them. They will spend a week back in the UK with a relocation expert who will show them some of the things they have missed about Britain whilst also highlighting the reasons why they moved in the first place.

We hope by the end of the week our contributors will have either developed a new appreciation for what their adopted country offers them, or been inspired to return home.

**If you would like to find out more, please contact us on
michael.hanney@fevermedia.co.uk
or call 0044 207 4285752.**

