

THE RIVIERA REPORTER

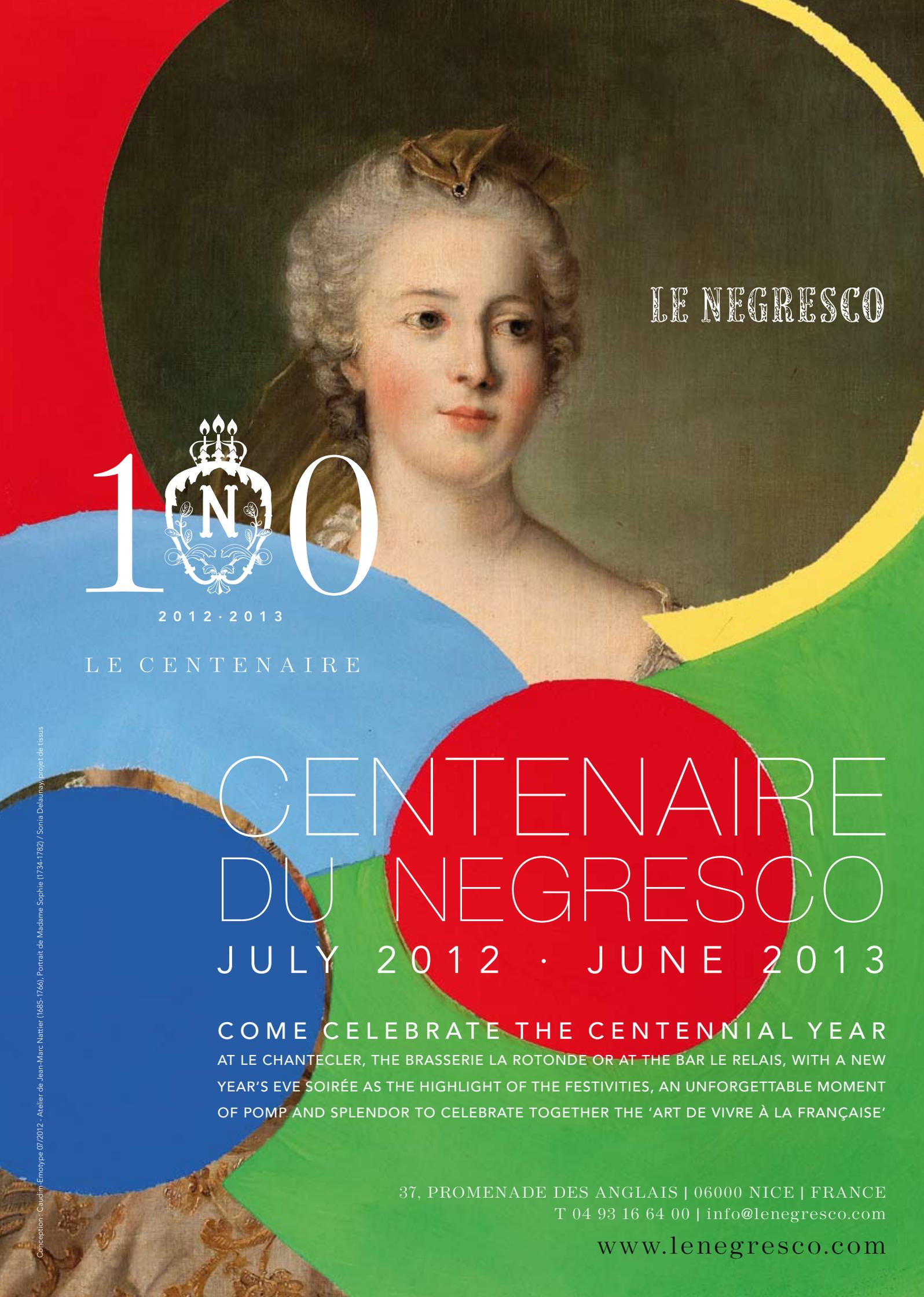
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LE CENTENAIRE

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DU NEGRESCO
JULY 2012 · JUNE 2013

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Since our last issue we've been on rather a roll with French media. The *Reporter* was featured in a two-page piece in *Nice-Matin* and then again on Radio Bleu Azur on the last day of the Queen's Jubilee. I've never thought that an Editor-in-Chief should put himself forward and have always shunned the indignity of the in-your-face brown-nosing that some editors seem to revel in. But I suppose it's rather rewarding that my personal role in the *Reporter* has been mentioned for once. The popular French television show, *Thalassa* (*thalassa.france3.fr*), also recognised the *Reporter's* importance to the yachting community on the Riviera and filmed our relations with several of our advertisers in business in Antibes. Even for commerce not specifically related to the nautical sector, yachting remains a vital element of the local economy. We'll let you know when the 2½-hour show will be aired. *Un grand merci* to the professional crew at France Televisions – Laurent, Jean-Pierre and Sophie – as well as to Jean-Michel at *Nice-Matin* and Géraldine at Radio Bleu.

Good luck to our colleagues at *The Hérault Times*, a new free magazine serving the Hérault department including Beziers and Montpellier. Editor Kevin Brennan says that 30,000 English-speaking expats live in the region, which is also very popular with holidaymakers. When I spoke with Kevin following his first issue he was discovering just how work-intensive a local publication can be – every bit as trying as a national monthly but with far fewer resources. Enthusiastic and willing, we hope that he and his team will go as far as the *Reporter* has and we look forward to some mutual cooperation with them in the future.

We've introduced Bon App this issue, a new column looking at Apps that have a specific interest for expats and Riviera residents. We intend to continue this feature regularly so feel free to email us your favourite Apps for review. Direct links for downloading those mentioned on page 12 are on our website.

Over the summer we're preparing a couple of new additions to our website which is growing in popularity at a remarkable rate. The site's Google Page Rank is now 4, and our Twitter feed is refreshed several times a day with items we think Riviera expats will find useful. On our homepage there are news headlines every morning plus spotlighted items of current interest, VO cinema and events on the Riviera and in the anglophone community. We'd like to see more forum participation, however, but that depends on you. A reminder that you can comment (using a pseudo if you wish) about any subject and in any manner within reason on our forum. Freedom of expression is respected and we censor as little as we possibly can.

Next issue in September. Have a great summer holiday. *Mike Meade*

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Cover Photo: *La Napoule*
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FOREWARNED

Thanks for your regular motoring information but there is one thing you haven't yet mentioned. Drivers should know that it's not enough to just pull over and stop to use their mobile phone. The law says that your engine has to be turned off as proof that you are not still driving. Otherwise it could mean a €90 fine and 3 points off your licence. There is another point which should be made about insurance. Even if your car is off the road, on blocks or unused in a corner of your garden, it must be insured. The reason given is that normal household or civil liability insurance will not cover you if the car catches fire and damages your house or a neighbour's. All accidents caused by a car fall under the insurance policy of the car itself, not household insurance.

R. Littlewood, by email

SUN NOT SHINING ON THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Ref page 4 of your June/July issue, I kindly request that you print the following response to a letter from John Westlake, under the heading "It's A Date". As an American I am offended by the clear anti-American attitude expressed by Mr Westlake, when he referred to the recent listing of a date in what he called a "disagreeable Americanism" (placing the month before, rather than after, the day). He needs to get a life, and to use what he may consider to be another disagreeable Americanism, "Mr Westlake: You can put it where the sun don't shine."

C. Levitt, by email

LADY LUCK

Quite interesting that the Var has so many Loto winners and that this indicates a higher percentage of players here than elsewhere in France [issue 150, pg 28]. Surely that must also mean that the UK has even more players than in France. Most of the recent big EuroMillion jackpots went to Britons: £63.8m to an anonymous winner in June, preceded by £38m in Corby in March, £46m to another single ticket holder also in March, £45.2m in Stapleford in February, £40.6m in Mansfield in January. David and Angela Dawes from Cambridgeshire won £101m last October and the biggest jackpot ever (£161m) was won by Colin and Chris Weir in Ayrshire in July 2011. We Var residents are amateurs by comparison!

Nathan Demarle, *Les Arcs*

THE WAY TO GO

Regarding Tips for Travellers "In the Bag or in The Pocket" (Issue 150, pg 12), I travelled Birmingham-Nice with a Rufus Roo jacket. It's made of sturdy but thin plastic and I bought the large although at 1m81, 81kg, and slightly round in the tummy, the medium would have been fine. Not pleased about the Rufus Roo logo in red on jacket – I hate free advertising. (I tried, with moderate success, to black it out!)

I carried 3.5 kg books in the assorted pockets. This is reasonably heavy: they say it can carry up to 10 kg. Have you ever carried 10kg cat litter? The jacket will take it, you won't! I felt a little self-conscious but other passengers didn't notice and were too concerned with their problems, and



the airport staff didn't seem bothered.

You take the jacket off and put it on the tray for security, walk around the departure lounge with it slung over your shoulder, and put it on for embarkation. Once on the plane, it goes under the seat. Rufus Roo is the cheap version (about €40) but should be good for 5-6 trips and so a good buy. Just don't look in the mirror with it on before leaving!

Dr Nigel Gittins, by email

VANDALISM IN MONACO: 40 MILLION REASONS

Congratulations to Molly Brown on her excellent article about the plans to demolish the Sporting d'Hiver in Monaco and to replace it with a glass monstrosity by Roger Stirk Harbour + Partners. According to Jean-Luc Biamenti, Chairman of the SBM, the old building is *fatigué par le temps*. Easy to say and equally true, for example, of the Palace. As a former resident – and still regular visitor – of the Principality I was shocked that no public consultation took place. However, the clue to this official vandalism came with the triumphal statement that the new buildings, to be open by 2020, will generate €40 million in rent. *C'est triste, bien triste ...*

Marco Piga, by email

AN IMPOSTER?

I read the two-page *Nice-Matin* article featuring Mike Meade in June and happened to hear his Radio Bleu Azur interview on my drive to work on the last day of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. I do smell an imposter here because in your pages Mr Meade has sometimes described himself as Canadian. So how can he be (in the words of *Nice-Matin*) "the most British of Riviera residents"?

Jack P., by email

I have both British and Canadian nationalities. M.M

BLATTES A BUGGER

Your account of the *Pieds-noirs* was interesting. You missed out on one aspect of their contribution to Riviera life. It's generally believed that they brought across the sea in their baggage those little brown beetles called *blattes*. I've been assured that they were totally unknown here before the early Sixties.

Mark Groark, by email

SMELLY SECRETS

We have made several French friends who work in the perfume industry in Grasse. What a surprise to learn from them that things aren't what quite they seem. To begin with, perfume isn't the main product of these factories. They mainly produce aromatic extracts, not only for perfumes, soaps, shampoos and other products

**Do you have something to say?
To send a Letter to the Editor see page 46
or go to forum.rivierareporter.com**

that are made elsewhere but much of their business comes from artificial food flavourings. Some chocolate or coffee flavoured products contain no chocolate and no coffee, only chemical flavouring contrived in Grasse. I was especially shocked to learn that some of that cheap booze sold over the border in Italy is in fact nothing more than water, alcohol and flavours. The gin sold at the Ventimiglia market is not always made from juniper berries and the whisky is not made from grain mash. This explains a few very headachy hangovers and why these cheap brands are not available in France, which obeys stricter norms for such things.

The most useful fact I learned is that most soaps, detergents and shampoos are actually based on the same basic ingredient and that the difference between washing up liquid and shampoo is little more than a matter of aroma and a few thickeners. The active ingredient is almost always a product known under Shell's trade name of Teepol. It's a petrochemical and an efficient multiuse detergent, which you can use for almost anything from washing your car to shampooing your hair. You can buy enough to last a family a year in a 5-litre bottle for about €15. It won't smell as nice as the products sold at the store but it'll do just as good a cleaning job. For a lot less money.

Marcus Henson, Grasse

INDIVIDUAL ADVICE

We just love your fantastic new website. Simple and uncluttered but complete, easy to use and so useful for local events, VO cinema, daily news and practical information, but I do have a complaint (sorry!). I have emailed you from the site with specific questions about my problem with a particular French administration but

you didn't even answer me. It would be great if you could provide a consultancy service to your loyal readers.

Janet Maxwell-Holmes, by email

Apologies. We get a great many requests for specific help and simply don't have the time or resources to handle most individual problems personally. However, if we think a local charity or one of our advertisers can help a reader or site visitor, we are happy to pass on the contact information.

The best solution? Post your request (using a pseudo if you wish to remain anonymous) on our web forum. Not only are we more likely to answer it there, but other site visitors might also be able to help you online. Some common requests end up on this letters page if we feel that other readers would benefit from the answer. M.M.

THE VOTE FOR BRITONS ABROAD

We sincerely hope that some statesman will propose an amendment that will grant the vote/representation to all British Citizens Abroad. Could some Peer have the courage to stand and say: "We, who are British Citizens, holding to the principles of honour – should we not respect the lives, the work, and the loyalty of all our fellow citizens abroad? They deserve that their voice be heard in these Houses of Parliament. We cannot preach democracy to the nations at large and let it founder amongst our own people. Our citizens abroad must be heard. We owe it to them." If you will, choose a Peer, or some, and give them your opinion – the above can be used. If you know of a Peer personally or by repute you can seek his/her support. Also see votes-for-expat-brits.com

Graham Richards, by email

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YACHTIES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

It is my pleasure to write to you on behalf of the Antibes Raft Race Association Committee, and the three charities that received the funds generated by the race. With the help of all our sponsors we raised €26,000 which was distributed to the charities. One of the most moving moments, at the cheque presentation, was naturally the reaction of the charity reps, as you can imagine, they were all thrilled to bits. To give you an image of what this means to them I will relate the words of the representative of *Restos du Coeur*, Madame Claude Six, who told me that with the funds received, they could provide 6500 meals for those in need – amazing! Encompass will continue to promote tolerance and understanding amongst youths of difference creeds and cultures, and it was indeed poignant to note that on the night of the event, the Antibes Life Boat was at sea, called out on a distress call. Thank you, your generosity, participation, and dedication to this event made it a rousing success. I hope this letter of thanks, which comes from the heart, also brings you joy, because what we have and can achieve together really does “make a difference.” Until next year!
*Sheena Insull,
 Antibes Raft Race Association*

FOR THE RECORD

I feel obliged to correct a few inaccuracies and misinterpretations regarding a profile piece you ran on me. Firstly, I am in no way reluctant to take on the Presidency of the American Club of the Riviera. I had conveyed that prior to joining the American Women’s Club of Amsterdam (in 2007), I wasn’t inclined to take part in expat clubs. But, because of a very positive experience with that club, and likewise with the American Club of the Riviera, I was and am very enthusiastic about taking on this responsibility and furthermore I am downright thrilled for the way the club has developed this year with all of the new elements I and the board have introduced such as evening activities, a new website, and a much more diverse membership. Secondly, my timeline in France was misstated: I have been living in France for over ten years: I spent eight years in France in the Nineties, then went to LA and Amsterdam before returning to France in 2010.
*Jennie Dallery, (below) President,
 American Club of the Riviera*



Some intending diners at the Radisson Blu 4-star restaurant in Galway were puzzled – or shocked – to find that the highlighted dish of the day was “stuffed roast aborigine in coriander sauce”. Eventually the eatery’s Albanian manager, a Mr Berisha, admitted that sometimes his English lets him down: “Sorry. It should have said stuffed roast aubergine.”



BLUE BADGE GOOD

When we are in our holiday apartment in Ste Maxime we pick up your excellent magazine at the Tourist Office. There is so much useful information in it and we look forward to the day we can retire here and become more regular readers. We have been surprised though at your mentions of inadequate consideration for the disabled in France. Our experiences are exactly the opposite. We find that our English Blue Badge is accepted everywhere and rarely have a problem finding an available disabled bay. In Cannes a policeman even let us double park while he summoned a tow-truck to remove an unauthorised car from a bay. Then he directed us into it. We would like South Yorkshire to be as wheelchair-friendly as the Riviera.
Harold Jenkins, Rotherham

LOST IN SPACE

Yawn, the ages old same misconstrued argument makes its rounds, this time clearly wrongly promoted by *The Riviera Reporter* (June-July issue, pg 7) in “Pot: a hot potato”. Whoever wrote it must have smoked a joint before hallucinating, because right after “you can still come across claims that the drug is an indulgence of a depraved minority. Not so” it is then immediately contradicted with statistics that show exactly that – numbers in the minority, i.e.: one in five French adults

The AA has a helpful site for Blue Badge travellers in Europe at www.theaa.com/public_affairs/reports/blue_badge_abroad.pdf

have tried cannabis and less than 3% are habitual users. Unfortunately your conclusions are also incorrect: in Portugal its legalisation has been proven to have been an abject failure (do your homework) plus other quotes largely in favour of dope. Altogether a biased piece; good media is supposed to present both sides of an issue. The writer’s memory cells went missing and the majority of us factually already know nowadays that with constant use they don’t grow back again. I suppose you also think drinking excessive alcohol is an upper not a downer?
I.S., Villefranche-sur-Mer

NOT “OPEN ALL HOURS”

Many of us, especially from New York and LA, find it difficult to eat at restaurants that open their doors at 8pm. We are used to seeing and meeting our friends straight after work at around 6pm, or before the curtain goes up on Broadway or the West End in London at 7:30pm if we plan to see a show. This is well nigh impossible in the South of France. (Yes, we know Cafe de Paris is there! But it is the only place, and we must be given many choices!) Here the curtain goes up at 8:30 or 9pm! Much too late. We are not all retired. We need to wake up and go to work. Clearly nobody seems to wish to cater to us!
Marc Ross, by email

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20 years ago

Shooting Mayle: BBC Television is currently in the Luberon filming a 12-part series based on Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*. Reaction in the area is mixed. Dozens of locals are catching a few crumbs from the programme's 3 million francs budget as extras (they get 300 francs a day plus lunch) and so seem happy enough; even the bar-keeper in Menerbes, although a National Front voter, says "the English are fine" and only gets worked up over Arabs. Many expats, however, are even angrier than they were before, claiming that the series will draw in even more visitors than the book and its sequel *Toujours Provence*. For Lady Young of Dartington, one of the author's more outspoken neighbours, "The book was a disaster and now this television thing will bring them in hordes."



Peter Mayle, right, with Ridley Scott

One activist living among the expat opposition has set up the AMM – Anti-Mayle Maquis – which targets not so much Mayle himself (an elusive presence these days) but, as a spokesman put it, "those Brits sufficiently crazy to believe the crap he writes". Methods of harassment include laying nails in the likely path of visiting British cars, and buying up bread before their occupants can get to the bakery. The show's script, it seems, sets the right (or wrong) tone from its opening lines. John Thaw as Mayle leaps into a London cab and asks the driver to take him to paradise. "Where's that?" queries the bemused cabbie. Cut to Menerbes.

Reporter Aug/Sept 1992



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French news & views

Fighting French flab: is victory in sight?

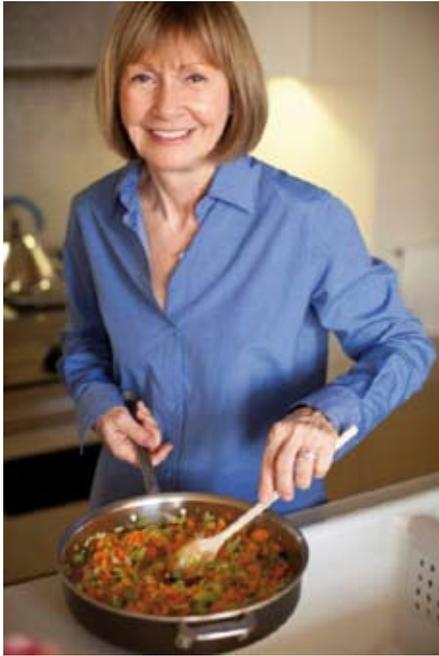


Photo: Tim Knox

A few years ago Mireille Guiliano (above), French but based in New York, published a book called *French Women Don't Get Fat*. This was read with much interest but attracted some criticism in her native country. Claimed nutritionist Dr France Belisle, "French

women are becoming obese – and some massively obese. It's a major public health problem." And now the topic has again aroused discussion in the medical community. Professor Arnaud Basdevant, head of nutrition at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, says that "Madame Guiliano's title was certainly misleading, no doubt about it, but where obesity is concerned I do think we've had a wake-up call and we're determined not to become – as some forecasts had it – as fat as Americans within a few years."

That, of course, was a daunting prospect: around one-third of US citizens are clinically obese, many more are overweight. Currently, only 15% of the French are obese, up to 40% could do with fewer kilos. "I think we can say," insists Dr Basdevant, "that we are reversing the trend." How is this happening? "People are being careful about eating and they're helped by new policies in school and workplace canteens. Then they're taking more exercise – I'm all in favour of those bikes you can pick up in places

like Paris and Nice. It's also helpful that some American habits haven't really taken on here – like snacking between meals and also we still like to eat together which puts a brake on too piggish behaviour. American portions are grotesque – one serving of steak in a Manhattan diner would do for a family in Paris!"

And a paradox: one benign influence on French eating habits has come from the US. Jenny Craig's "diet in a box" is slowly but surely making its way into middle class homes here. Says a company spokeswoman (the brand was bought by Nestlé in 2006): "Americans know our system: you get a healthy pre-packed meal – in France something readily acceptable such as tuna with vegetables and barley, for example – which you can supplement as you wish with dairy products, fruit and vegetables. In the US the plan calls for six food experiences a day while in France meals remain three times daily." Dubious, are you? Well, on the Jenny Craig website Mariah Carey, no less, tells us "I did the Jenny Craig solution. It works!"

They're playing our tune

As any Olympics watcher could confirm, national anthems are a mixed bunch. Some are stirring and memorable: among the less familiar with these qualities we'd mention the Dutch *Wilhelmus* and *A Portuguesa*. Among the best tunes is the old Soviet anthem which, in a smart and very popular decision, V.V. Putin revived as the musical identification of the Russian Federation. Least easy on the ear are anthems written to order – *Advance Australia Fair*, for instance. Why don't they just go for *Waltzing Matilda*?

But there's no argument: the French have got the most stirring national anthem of all time. In mid-July – on and around Bastille Day – it gets played a lot. But where does it come from? One day in 1792 the mayor of Strasbourg asked a young army officer to compose a marching song for the troops. It took him just 24 hours to produce both the words and the music of what was to become the identifying sound of revolutionary France.

But why the name? The contingent of *marseillais* who arrived in Paris in July 220 years ago came belching the song which the people of the city quickly dubbed *la Marseillaise*.

Officially adopted as France's anthem in 1792 it was later banned by Napoleon and yet again under the Third Empire. It was finally restored by the republican government of the 1870s when the familiar orchestration was adopted. Later Presidents tried to tinker with the tune, including Giscard who likes to think of himself as a musician (he plays the accordion), but their versions won no public favour.

In recent decades the politically correct have been having their say, from the late Danielle Mitterrand to bogus peasant José Bové. Such critics object to some of the words as

The Conseil Général has revived the shuttle service linking the two sides of Nice harbour, last operated in the 1960s. From 10h to 19h daily up to 5 passengers can climb aboard the traditional fishing boat *Lou Pasaggin* to make the crossing and so avoid a long trudge around the quays. And it's free! At the moment it's planned to continue the service until September 8th.

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“bloodthirsty and racist” (to quote old Danielle), fingering especially the line urging citizens to march against France’s enemies and to “let an impure blood water our furrows”. Polls have shown that only a small minority of French want any change in either words or music – something, by the way, that would require a two-thirds vote in favour in both houses of the French parliament. Popular opinion shared the rage of Jacques Chirac and other politicians when at some soccer matches young North Africans expressed noisy distaste for the anthem. As government spokesmen were quick to remind them, to publicly insult either the national anthem or the flag can bring a six months’ jail term and/or a fine of €7500.

July 1942: France’s summer of shame

Until less than 20 years ago, the French, schooled by Charles de Gaulle, eagerly believed and repeated a fantasy version of their history during the years of the German Occupation. According to this, the challenge of defeat had revealed the courage and energy of “the eternal France” which (as long as you don’t look



€38 fine

Cannes and Sainte-Maxime are just two local councils cracking down on those showing too much skin away from the beach. Says sociologist Jean-Didier Urbain: “I think this sort of ban is useful. The boundary between what’s appropriate on the beach and on the street has been relaxed too far. This may help re-establish a balance.”

€15,000 fine and/or a year in jail

If you strip off in your garden or on your terrace and you’re visible to a censorious neighbour who dials 17 you could – according to the Code pénal – be charged with exhibitionisme.

too closely at the facts) had allowed them to liberate themselves with some minor walk-on roles played by the British, Americans and Canadians. There’s now an extensive literature in English on these years (by such historians as Julian Jackson) which shows up the Gaullist myth for the wishful thinking it is. In fact, under the Nazis the vast majority of the French were concerned with only one thing: survival. Some collaborated with the enemy (with very little reluctance) while a small minority chose to be active resisters.

That first category – the *attentistes*, as they were called, waiting out the war with their heads down – easily became complicit with Nazi actions. The most shocking example of this, unique by its scale rather than its nature, was the infamous *rafle* – or round-up – of July 1942 not long after the decision had been taken at the Wannsee Conference to exterminate Europe’s Jews. The collaborationist Vichy government in France was worried by this since it would entail a significant increase in the number of German troops on French soil to carry out the work of arrest and deportation. They found the solution: they volunteered the deployment of

the French police to carry out those tasks. And so it was.

In Paris on July 16th, 1942 thousands of Jews were rounded up, both French and foreign, including many children, and crammed into the capital’s cycling stadium, *le Vel d’Hiv*. Conditions were abysmal: fierce heat, no water, little food, and no medical care. Later they were moved to a camp well out of Paris and then deported to Auschwitz – first the adults, then the children. Roselyne Bosch, director of the film *La Rafle* (and whose parents were taken), has said: “With a few exceptions the people of Paris just looked the other way as appalling atrocities were committed.”

For decades after the war this subject was a no go area. De Gaulle ordered that there should be no contradiction of his comforting narrative. Surviving photographs which showed men in French uniforms supervising deportees were carefully doctored to eliminate any evidence of French complicity in Nazi crimes. But slowly but surely the truth began to surface – in 1995 over fifty years after the July round-up – Jacques Chirac, a flawed but basically decent man, decided to come clean and apologised for what had happened in “those black years which will stain

France's "First Girlfriend" Valerie Trierweiler, right, found herself in bitter tweet trouble after supporting Segolene Royal's rival in the legislative elections via Twitter.

François Hollande, left Royal (right middle), who has four children with the President, for Trierweiler. "I'm the one who should bear a grudge," Royal said.



Photo: Jackolant



Photo: Kyro

At the age of 22, Marion Marechal-Le Pen (right) niece of National Front head Marine, has become France's youngest MP since 1971.



Photo: Hégesippe Cormier

our history for ever". Of 75,000 Jews deported during the Occupation – usually with official French connivance – only 25,000 returned.

But a few words of qualification: some French readers may object to the generalising tone of this item's title. As Julian Jackson has written, "The history of the Occupation cannot be written in black and white, only in shades of grey." Even in the face of the most appalling acts, there has to be some humility in our judgement, however harsh. People's behaviour was complex and variable. François Mitterrand got a medal for his service as an official of the Vichy government; he also won recognition as a *résistant*. And then we might wonder if the Germans had been in London how would the inhabitants have behaved in such circumstances?

Raise the red flag!

The night of Sunday June 17th was a grim one for France's former government party, the UMP, as results flashed up a comfortable majority for the socialists and their allies who ended up with 314 seats in the Lower House against the UMP's 229. Along the Coast, though, the mood was happier as voters offered confirmation once more that they are firmly on the Right, those who voted FN in the first round usually switching to the traditional conservative party a week later. In the Alpes-Maritimes every constituency was won by the UMP. In the Var the same story: all eight seats were taken by the UMP, including that of a new constituency created in 2007.

As the socialist triumph became clearer that Sunday evening Jean-Marc Ayrault, now Prime Minister, struck a sober note: "We've got a huge job and it's not going to be easy." After weeks of campaigning most pols will hope for a bit of a rest before the serious business

begins in September. What will the new government mean for us? We'll look at that next time when François Hollande will have had a chance to think through his options. Already he's had to cope with some personal embarrassments. He has to accept that his former live-in (and mother of his four kids) Segolene Royal and his current squeeze Valerie Trierweiler loath each other. Trierweiler did herself no good by tweeting a message of encouragement to a dissident socialist who was standing against Royal in La Rochelle. He took the seat off her ... and much media and public opinion decided that her replacement in Hollande's affections was, as one socialist MP put it, "A nasty piece of work." And then the President drew flak for his chosen style of official photograph ("like a snapshot of dad in the park," said someone on France-Info). Clearly, he was trying to get away from Sarko's flashy style but, as political communication expert Armand Mercier put it, "He's got to be sure that normality doesn't look like banality."

Segolene Royal was only one of several prominent pols who got voted out: these included Jack Lang, supporter of taggers and other trendy causes, François Bayrou (he's the windbag with funny eyes who really should get back to his farm and stay there) and Michele Alliot-Marie, mate of former Tunisian dictator Ben Ali.

And a surprise: there are now two FN members in the Lower House and one's a woman – it's not Marine, though, but Marion Marechal-Le Pen, her niece (Marine lost to a socialist in Henin-Beaumont by just 118 votes). Across the country a number of FN candidates got some very creditable scores. Says former UMP Minister Gerard Longuet, "It's clear that the Front National is now an actor on the political scene we have to take seriously." We'll see in 2017. ■

After two St Laurent du Var beaches were briefly closed mid-July due to traces of E. Coli in water samples, rumours spread across the internet of leaks from a nearby sewage treatment plant, and that swimmers suffered eye and urinary tract infections. These were denied by both the University Hospital of Nice and the President of the Nice Metropolis, Christian Estrosi, who said: "We will file a complaint against the spread of such libelous posts."

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Would you believe it?

On Monaco's ecology of information



Photo: get noticed communications/cc-by-sa-2.0

The morning after the wedding of Prince Albert and Charlene Wittstock in June of last year I had breakfast in Nice with Matthew Campbell of *The Sunday Times*. He had celebrated the event with a long feature published in that day's paper under the title "The Full Filthy Monte". I had been surprised by the article's tone and content but had assumed that its publication had been approved by *The Sunday Times'* lawyers who for reasons I could not guess at must have believed the paper was immune from the Grimaldis' well-known litigiousness. I was confirmed in this assumption when I found Campbell clearly felt no disquiet about any possible adverse response to his piece. As the months passed it seemed that there was indeed to be no reaction from the Rock.

A rich culture of gossip

Then a few weeks ago I was contacted by Mark Scodie, a solicitor at Bates, Wells & Braithwaite, a London law firm acting for *The Sunday Times*. A claim for damages (including aggravated damages) and costs had now been lodged at the High Court on behalf of Prince Albert and Princess Charlene in respect of Campbell's article, in both its print and online forms. Mr Scodie asked for my comments. He could hardly have expected me to confirm the content of the article which I had no competence to do. What I did, though, was to offer him a short course in what I would

call the ecology of information in Monaco. I made two major points.

First: the Principality is the world's most densely populated country. Around four-fifths of its inhabitants are expatriates. Many of these are intelligent, educated and articulate. Also, and critically, a significant number – and this is especially true of the women – don't have enough to occupy their time. This creates a fertile context for a rich culture of gossip. As local journalist Frederic Laurent has said, "rumour-mongering is a national sport". Inevitably the Grimaldis are the favoured topic of these *commérages*. Listen out on any day and you're likely to be shocked or simply entertained by some lurid tale concerning the Family.

Second: this situation is aggravated by the information policies practised by both the Palace and the government and which impede the natural reality checks which confront gossip in more open societies. As visiting journalists (often initially well disposed) so often complain, enquiries are turned aside by denial, obfuscation or a simple refusal of discussion. This policy is applied to the past as well as to the present. The official history of wartime Monaco is silent about Louis II's at one time enthusiastic schmoozing of Hitler. An intelligent approach would rather relate his behaviour to the pressures for compromise with the Nazis which were felt by many people in many places at the time. But the sound of silence is a usual response of official Monaco to any treatment of the Principality which is less than obsequious. The outcome is inevitable and damaging:

gossip receives far more credit than it deserves, including from journalists.

Ancient practices

I've made this point previously more than once in these pages. When, a few years ago, I talked to François Chantry, head of the government press centre, he was anxious to assure me that "you can't compare the Principality to your average Western democracy. It's an ancient monarchy with its own customs, traditions and practices." Fair enough, I suppose, but if these "practices" – in the case of news management – have the perverse effect of encouraging damaging gossip it's futile to complain. The PR operation around the marriage was generally regarded as a disaster ... and unnecessarily so. An example: Jenny Crwys-Williams, South Africa's leading broadcast interviewer, told me that when she recorded a long conversation with the future Princess for Talk Radio 702 Johannesburg she found her "stressed" and "brittle". Later she discussed this with Charlene's father who put it down largely to "bride's nerves". Could well be, and likely to evoke sympathy. But such an admission would have been "too negative" for official use.

So what did I say to Mark Scodie? In fact really nothing beyond what I've said in this article. The case is *sub judice* and it would be inappropriate to offer comment on its substance. However, with all respect, I would urge Prince Albert to ponder what I wrote here seven years ago: "A shake-up in media relations should be a priority." **Patrick Middleton** ■

Tips for travellers



Economy class: hard on the legs, hard on the stomach

Last time we wrote in these pages of the late Lindy Runcie's complaint that the seats on an Air UK flight she and her husband had taken (a freebie arranged by the *Reporter*, incidentally) were uncomfortable. In fact, on the one-class aircraft of the now defunct carrier cabins were configured in what is known in the trade as "charter fit". But seat pitch is a regular source of grievance among Economy Class travellers. What is meant by the term is the distance between the back of a seat and that of the seat in front, both being in the upright position. A couple of points are worth mentioning: the thickness of seats can vary and this can affect the real amount of space available, and over the past quarter of a century the average size of travellers has increased. A significant factor, this. Why? In 1986 the UK's Civil Aviation Authority ruled that the minimum acceptable seat pitch was 26 inches and that's not been modified. One final point on seats: retired pilot Ove Jespersen tells us that if you're bothered by turbulence ("it can be unpleasant but usually not dangerous"), get a seat over the wing where the effect is less evident. And don't

For the record, seat pitch in Economy:

- easyJet 29"
- Ryanair 30"
- BA 31"
- Emirates 34"

forget there are websites giving a mass of information about airlines and their seating. See, for example *seatguru.com* and *seatexpert.com*

Airline food – at least as served in Economy – is often dismissed as "awful". Those up the back may feel envious when they know that those Business and First (where that exists) passengers are tucking into gourmet meals conceived by top chefs. Frankly, that envy is misplaced. Once an aircraft reaches its cruising height of 35,000ft your taste buds are becoming progressively numbed and your nose is drying out through changes in air pressure. In other words, your capacity for gustatory appreciation is sharply reduced. As Andrea Watson, wine butler at Delta, has admitted, "Subtlety of taste is not well served by altitude." That foie gras served up front on Air France is likely as insipid as a Ryanair paid-for Snickers bar.

London Calling ...

BBC World Service used this venerable slogan to trail its programming about the capital in the run-up to the Jubilee and the Olympics. Certainly, it's become very easy to get there. This season BA offers no fewer than 7 daily flights to Heathrow with 3 to Gatwick and 1 to London City. The company's MD in France, Patrick Malval, was very upbeat about the presence of rival easyJet: "We've absorbed the impact of that competition and recovered – even increased – our market share."

Maybe saying London's very easy to get in is rather optimistic. There's huge pressure on the capital's airports with UK Border Force (note new name and they've got a new uniform) warning that, on a worst-case scenario, over the Olympic period queues at immigration could last for up to 4 hours (grim news especially if you're not EU) and even before that there could be extended fly-rounds as aircraft await a slot to land. One piece of better news: according

to the Club Sandwich Index used to rate the priceyness of major cities London came tenth out of ten. Six of those destinations higher up the list were in Europe; a surprise in eighth position was ... Canberra. But visitors do find Australia expensive these days.

Away from London, bmibaby has ceased operations, following the purchase of its parent company by IAG which owns BA and Iberia. All British Midland flights (including to Birmingham) will stop before the end of the season.

... and so is New York with Open Skies



Open Skies, which is completely owned by British Airways, connects Paris-Orly to New York-Newark from 9 regional French airports in cooperation with Air France. Flights within France are operated by Air France and the Orly-NY flights by Open Skies (British Airways).

It's a seamless transfer at Orly, the most convenient Paris airport with a minimum flight connection time of only 60 minutes within the same terminal (Orly West). Baggage is checked straight through from your originating airport to Newark.

Departure from Nice at 10h35 puts you in Newark at 16h15. An earlier Marseille departure at 07h25 lands in Newark at 13h20.

Travellers from the Riviera can book flights from Nice or Marseille with a travel agent or British Airways directly. Other regional airports in the Open Skies agreement include Bordeaux, Lyon, Montpellier, Mulhouse, Nantes, Strasbourg and Toulouse. ■

Looking for useful travel Apps? See page 12



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Business

Minding your own business

BY PETER JOHNSON



“Why would anyone set up a business in France or buy a house, or even get out of bed in the morning, when every five years a whole new set of rules are swept in, a whole new ideology emanates from the latest batch of ENA graduates to confound and confuse the French people?”

Peter Johnson

François Hollande is now safely installed at the Elysée and he has a clear electoral majority in Parliament with which to run France. So what happens next? The world is in deep economic gloom, the euro is under threat, the Greeks and the Spanish are teetering, and France could be next.

With 60,000 more *fonctionnaires*, retirement age back to 60 for certain sectors, a 75% tax on the highest earners, a return to the Wealth Tax criteria of pre-Sarkozy, the capping of wages for bosses in the public sector, the end of the Auto-Entreprise: plenty of ideas, lots of rumours ... all adding up to one big word: **INCONSISTENCY**.

In the UK they practice **PRAGMATISM**, not a pretty word but it means getting the job done rather than preaching lofty ideology. Take the example of the cap on the wages of the bosses of France’s state-run businesses.

Henri Proglio, who incidentally was born in Antibes, is a captain of a successful Europe-wide

industry, EDF, that is a flagship business not only in France but also across the world. Mr Proglio is facing the indignity, however, of a 68% pay cut as the new Government denounced his salary as indecently high. The new rule in the public sector is that their executives cannot earn more than 20 times the wages of the lowest-paid worker in the business.

Proglio earns €1.55 million per year whilst the minimum wage at EDF is €24,480 per annum, so he will have to accept a salary of €496,800 ... or cross the Channel on David Cameron’s “red carpet”.

Red carpet? Yes, in early June the British Prime Minister provoked French outrage by saying the UK would roll out the “red carpet” to welcome the likes of the impoverished leaders of French businesses and those likely to be hit by the proposed new 75% income tax on wages of over €1 million a year. No wonder more than 400,000 French people call London “home” and more will be on their way!

Inconsistency: it was a casual chat with a French national that brought up this word. Having lived for the last 20 years in Switzerland, he shudders at what he sees as the political and economic chaos in his native country. And how about foreigners thinking about relocating a business to France, rather than say Slovakia, or a person looking to buy an expensive home in France rather than Croatia? They’re all going to think twice about jumping into the land of “inconsistency”. Why commit to something that will probably cost them extra in social security and taxes, whose rules are still not properly defined and which could change again in another 5 years?

And so, on that dismal note, we head off for the August holidays bracing ourselves for the raft of new legislation that Hollande will introduce for the *rentrée*. *Bonnes vacances!* all the same. ■

Bon App!

A new column on Apps for expats, the Riviera or themes.
This time around we start with summer



Before getting started

- To download these Apps see the links on our website, keyword “ExpatApps”, or use the QR code on page 13.
- “Optimised” Apps can be used on iPad/iPad2 without the low-resolution view you get when upsizing with the “2X” button.
- Presume all Apps mentioned are iOS (iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch) compatible. Those that function also with Android or smartphones are indicated, as are those that require Wi-Fi, 3G and/or GPS connections.
- French = Fr; English = En; Dutch = Du; German = Ge; Italian = It; Spanish = Sp

VISITING THE RIVIERA

- French Riviera Roaming**
Things to see and do: walks, beaches, gardens, restaurants, events, markets. Only worth the €1.59 (hey, that’s a cup of coffee) but it’s usable offline and optimised.
- Guide Michelin Hotels and Restaurants 2012**
The ultimate guide is not cheap at €7.99 but less expensive than the printed red bible, and more portable.

- Monument Trackers for Nice, Cannes or Antibes**
Monuments, sites, gardens and classified facades to see. Can be used offline and expensive at €1.59 as each town must be bought separately. Fr, En, Du, Ge, It, Sp. Also for Android.

- PACA Guide to Provence**
Enormous at 703 Mo but can be used offline. Rich in information with plugs for hotels and restaurants. If you download this one we’d like to know what you think. Fr only. Optimised. Free.

TRAVEL

- AroundMe**
Find the nearest ATM, parking lot, hospital, petrol station or just about anything else anywhere you travel. iOS & Android versions. Interacts with GPS. Requires Wi-Fi or 3G. Free.
- Nice-Côte d’Azur Aeroport**
Arrivals, departures, emergency numbers. For iOS & Smartphones. Requires Wi-Fi (free at the airport) or 3G. Free.

iPlane Nice Airport Flight Info

A paid App (€1.59) but optimised so much easier to consult than the Nice Aeroport App for real-time flight info (same as airport screens). Needs Wi-Fi or 3G.

British Airways

The official BA App, compatible but not yet optimised for iPad. Excellent for T5 “Go to Gate” warning. Paperless check in by QR code, prices, itineraries. Also available for Android. Free.



Ferries to Corsica

Corsica Ferries from Nice. Timetables, reservations, fares. Free.

SNCFDirect

Much better than the SNCF website for timetables, reservations, routes and delays. Even gives track number for your train. You can also email your itinerary and ETA to anyone directly from the App. Requires Wi-Fi or 3G. iOS, Blackberry, Android. Free.

TER (Trains Régionaux)

Local train times. Fr. Free.

Have you found an App worth sharing? Email us via the Reporter website

Lignes d’Azur

Nice buses & route maps. Can be used offline but with internet connection and GPS it will tell you the next bus in your proximity and predicted arrival time. Fr. Free.

DRIVING

Essence pas Cher

Best petrol prices near you. Fr. For Android try ZaGaz. Free.

Find my Car!

Ever wandered around a parking lot or street wondering where you parked? If your device is GPS enabled, this App can be a time saver. There are plenty of “Find My” Apps around but this one not only records where you left your car, it also tells you how far away and in which direction it is, shows you the shortest route there and even can take a picture of the parking place. Does not require Wi-Fi or 3G. (€0.79)

MotoPACA

A CRT App of suggested Riviera itineraries for bikers but very useful for drivers also. Fr. Free.

SPORTS & LEISURE

Scuba Diving in France

A comprehensive guide rated by quality, depth, dive type, visibility, and experience needed. Also indicates diving shops and schools. (€3.99)

• Sun & Moon

Here comes the sun ... but when will it be on my balcony? This App tells you. iPad optimisation coming soon. Free with in-App upgrade for Pro version.



• My Monte-Carlo

Going out Guide in Monaco. Fr, En, It. Free.

• Vélo Bleu

There are bike lanes from Nice Port all the way to Antibes. No bike? Sign up by phone for a Vélo Bleu and use one of 2000 public bicycles in and around Nice. The last westbound station is near the Cagnes Hippodrome. This App tells you in real time where bikes are available from 175 stations or free places to park the one you're using. Fr, En. Requires Wi-Fi or 3G. Free.



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• Find a defibrillator

France counts 50,000 deaths a year from heart attacks. A defibrillator reduces the risk by 30%. *Défibrillateurs en France* could be a lifesaver. Fr. Free.

• Appportunity

We have a soft spot for this one. The brainchild of IUM student Alex Kern, it looks like a "let's meet" social App but it's not. If you have something to offer (like a job or a used car for sale) you can find someone near you who is looking for just that, or vice-versa. Needs a larger user-generated base to be really effective but it's growing daily, mostly around Monaco. Exists also for Android. Free.

• Vocal translation

These are almost beyond belief. Speak into your iPhone or iPad in English and it will translate back in French, Italian, German – or the reverse. We use SayHi and its accuracy is remarkable. Google Translate exists also for Android and claims to do the same as SayHi but we haven't tested it. These require Wi-Fi or 3G. SayHi is paid (€0.79), Google Translate is free.

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Victorian values: two years on

Patrick Middleton pays a return visit to an exceptional retirement home



Fanny Lazare is Accommodation Manager at Victoria.



Volunteer Henny Loerts: "You learn from being around older people."



"Coming to Victoria has been a liberation," says Jacqueline Goury-Laffont, 95.

SOS Help, the Paris-based hotline, inspired by the British Samaritans and linked to the French *SOS Amitié*, is open daily from 15h-23h to listen to the troubled and offer advice. Brit Miranda, now a single mother in the Var, is full of praise for their service: "I was lonely, in a real mess, feeling desperate. They really helped me turn things round." See soshelpline.org

"We had two problems to start with," admitted Fabien Huchot, Director of Victoria, the retirement home in Mouans-Sartoux which welcomes both French and English speakers. He's an experienced administrator from EMERA, the company that runs the home with the collaboration of the Sunny Bank Association. "First of all the idea of a bilingual establishment of this kind was very unusual and we had no experience to draw on. Over these last couple of years we've been on a learning curve and we're now much more confident about what we should be doing for our English-speaking residents and what we have to explain to them.

"I'll give you a couple of examples. In France *maisons de retraite* have smaller staffs than, say, their British equivalents but they are more highly qualified and more readily able to be reactive to people's needs. Then there's the issue of medical confidentiality which is taken much more seriously in France than in Britain and this means that medical matters aren't discussed in any detail with non-medical staff. We have to explain this. With food we expected more demand for traditional English fare – you know, Yorkshire pudding, trifle and so on – but a lot of people seem happy to eat French although some still want their ketchup and English-style tea is a staple at breakfast.

"Our second problem is universal for places like this. Many older people, even as they grow more dependent, remain reluctant to give up their existing way of life, fearing a loss of freedom. We approach this in two ways. Anyone who's interested can come in for lunch, see the place, and meet the residents. And then those who think seriously about coming here can spend a trial period with us to really get the feel of the place."

Everyone is impressed by the building; Victoria is in a purpose-designed premises in Mediterranean

style with an attractive landscaped setting. Those in residence are usually delighted to talk to visitors. Victoria's most impressive ambassador is 95-year-old Jacqueline Goury-Laffont, a Brit, widow of a Frenchman, who looks and sounds decades younger than her age: "I can't listen to that talk about loss of freedom. For me – and others here – coming to Mouans-Sartoux has been a liberation. No more cleaning, cooking, and those other boring things. Everything's done for you. And you also know that your family doesn't need to worry about you."

Friendly – with no trace of condescension

When I asked Fabien Huchot to sum up life at Victoria in a couple of words he answered "comfort and conviviality". To explore this further I talked to Fanny Lazare, her official title is "Accommodation Manager", but she clearly takes a close interest in the overall well-being of the residents. "As you've seen we've got a very attractive building and surroundings. The individual rooms are very comfortable and we encourage residents to personalise them as they wish, so that while living in a community they also have a private space which is entirely theirs. I'm glad to say, by the way, that the French and English speakers get on very well most of the time and share their enjoyment in our in-house activities. At the same time, we realise that the English do like to get together and there's an informal teatime session almost every day."

Fabien Huchot also spoke to me of Victoria's "family atmosphere". The family has three components: first the residence, of course, and the staff. I was impressed by their friendly style – with no trace of condescension – and their easy relationship with those they look after, helped by their enthusiasm to use their English. Also part of the family are the local Sunny Bank anglophone volunteers



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who help out both practically and socially. Dutch Henny Loerts told me, "It's satisfying to be doing something useful but it's not a one-way street – you learn from being around older people." Brit Brian Woolf agreed: "I'd go along with that. Coming here you begin to think seriously about how you'll cope in your own senior years." Added Jacqueline Goury-Laffont, "That's another plus for Victoria. You don't feel isolated – with the volunteers coming in and everything that goes on at the Grange next door."

After my visit I spoke to Brian Loveless in Antibes. He and his wife Joyce are "imminent Victorians". "That's right. We're both eighty and this looked like a very attractive place to live. Joyce has limited mobility and she's just going in. I'm following shortly. Our only regret is that we didn't make the decision earlier." ■

To find out more see emera.fr/residences/residence-retraite-victoria and sunny-bank.org or call 04 92 99 98 00.

"Hell is other people"

So famously said Jean-Paul Sartre and his words get repeated with wearisome frequency. Some of us might vary his judgement to "hell is neighbours". So how can you live without having any – or at least the bare minimum? Well, the recent census results for the Alpes-Maritimes can offer an answer. Of the department's 163 communes, 18 have a population of less than 100. The five least peopled places are Amirat (53), Auvare (52), Sallagriffon (52), Les Mujouls (49) and Marie (40). But what's it really like to live in a tiny village in the *arrière-pays*? In Marie (pictured) – the smallest of the communes – I talked to Elizabeth Adams, a Brit who's lived there for 50 years. "I came here with my *niçois* husband – he died three years ago – and we used to spend a large part of the year here. We were both painters – I still am – and it was a great place to work. What about neighbours, you say? Well, at first we were regarded as *étrangers* but very gradually we began to be seen as adoptive *marioles*. I'm alone now and it's comforting that they all know me and I can count on their help if I need it. At the same time, people here aren't on top of each other and aren't in each other's faces. In that way living in a place like Marie is ideal." P.M.



Photo: Dacoutou

The 740 or 750 bus from Nice takes about an hour and 40 minutes to reach Marie.

We noted recently that "a nutty vicar" in England had urged his congregation to swear more – because, he claimed, "Our Lord did a lot of it"! But at the UK's Keele University research has shown that sounding off with a few expletives does relieve pain – or, rather, its perceived severity. But, it should be noted, this is most effective in the case of those who don't habitually use "bad language".

Kennel club

In an occasional column for dog owners, this issue vet Dr Nigel Gittins talks Puppy 101, we look at doggie diet pills and taking Fido to sea



Dr Gittins checks a pup's microchip.

For a profile of Dr Gittins, see "In the Trade" on our website.

Bulle Bleue (bullebleue.fr) is the only pet insurance group in France run and managed by vets, and it's non-profit.

Looking for more information about where to find a puppy? See French Riviera Puppy, a new dog blog about bringing up pooch on the Coast. See riviera-reporter.com

Dr Nigel Gittins is no stranger to *Reporter* readers. The Antibes-based vet wrote "Four Legs Good", a column in this magazine, some years back. Dr Gittins, a Brit, decided after high school to travel the world but made it no further than Paris, where he graduated from France's top vet school, Maisons-Alfort. We asked him what to consider when buying a dog.

Where is the best place to get a dog?
A reputable breeder is the best place, as they'll also take care of microchipping and registration.

Does a dog have to be chipped and registered?
It is obligatory in France that your dog be registered through a microchip with the *Societe d'identification electronique veterinaire* (SIEV). Once again, a reputable breeder will do this for you when the pup is born. There is a machine (pictured) that can read the chip, so if you are buying a dog not directly from a breeder, but from a private sale, say, you should ask to have it verified by a vet.

Mutt vs purebred?
Tricky to answer: depends on what the individual is looking for and also your purchasing power, as

pedigree certainly affects the price. If there is a certain breed you're interested in or you think you would enjoy then get that breed. If your funds are limited then a mutt at the SPA is a great choice. Keep in mind that the larger the dog, the shorter the lifespan. As well, dogs that are bred for northern climates such as Huskies are going to be miserable in the warmer weather found in the South of France.

Male or female?
There is no difference. Plus the dog usually chooses you.

Housetraining: DIY or get a dog already housebroken?
Doesn't matter. Depends on whether or not you want to put in the time and work to housetrain. Remember with dog training regular routine and structure are essential, and that you *should be* the boss.

Is medical insurance necessary?
Like any service offered there are good and bad pet insurance companies. Ask your vet for advice.

Is civil responsibility insurance necessary, if the dog damages others' property or bites someone?
Yes. This type of insurance normally includes most dogs. However, for larger dogs contact your insurance company to make sure your breed is covered.

What about vaccinations?
When you get your dog, you'll be given a *Carte de santé* listing which vaccinations have already been administered (as well as worming treatments); a pet passport is issued with the first rabies shot (not before six months). All dogs need to be vaccinated for distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, leptospirosis and rabies. Other vaccinations may be

particular to your geographic area. For example, it's advisable that dogs here be vaccinated against leishmaniasis, a potentially deadly mosquito borne virus that can be found in the South of France. There are products available and now a vaccination as well for preventative treatment.

Biggest mistake people make when getting a dog?
Many people don't think it through when they get a dog. They see a cute puppy in the store and then they buy it without thinking about the financial or time commitment. Do not buy a dog on a whim. Think about what type of dog is good for your lifestyle and budget. A simple thing like purchasing dog food can be a very costly if you have a big dog. If you are not a physically active person and have a small apartment then a dog that needs a lot of exercise is not for you.

How do you choose the dog?
Consider this a little like buying a second-hand car, remembering it's a 15-year adventure. Firstly, use your own common sense.

Is the dog:

- apparently in good health
- lively, fun, but good natured and not aggressive
- clean (shows responsible owner)

Check:

- teeth: bite – make sure the lower teeth are not overlapping
- eyes, ears, genital area (yes, I'm afraid!)
- ask about breathing, digestion

Finally but equally important, would the breeder/owner object to a vet checking the pup? He could also confirm the chip and papers. If there is hesitation on any of this: think carefully. Concerning expenses, ask to see bills.

And if you have any doubts, walk away and don't feel guilty. ■

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Love that kills

Dr Gittins once remarked to us that there are people whose love for their dog can be lethal ... and the evidence is there to see on any street as overweight and obese dogs waddle behind their owners. Cockers, Labradors, Beagles and poodles are particularly prone to bulging. In the US and the UK it's estimated that over 40% of dogs are too heavy to be healthy; in France the figure is only slightly lower. American vet John Bauer has put his finger on the basic problem: "When we eat too much, they eat too much; when we don't get enough exercise, they don't get enough exercise." As this implies, the solution lies with ensuring the healthy survival of our canine companion and help him avoid such obesity-linked diseases as cardiac malfunction, diabetes and arthritis: one or two regular meals a day; no nibbling between meals – and that means discouraging well-meaning people from slipping titbits to your pooch and also firmly discouraging his tendency to scavenge on the street and elsewhere; make sure he has a healthy diet (ask your vet about this – it's not for the dog to choose!) and make sure your animal gets adequate exercise – swimming is good, if he likes it.

And what about slimming pills? In the US Pfizer has recently launched Sientrol which comes, of course, with FDA

approval after extensive clinical trials. It's likely to come on the EU market fairly soon. It works by blunting the appetite and reducing the absorption of fat. The manufacturers claim that it can cut a dog's weight by 18 to 22 per cent. No serious harmful side effects have been noted but – if you're tempted – it can damage human livers. But what does Dr Gittins think? "I'm not enthusiastic. Slimming pills for a dog are only effective in the short term. Basically, they work by blocking the absorption of fat into the body which then accumulates in the intestine. Not good. The only real solution for an overweight or obese dog is disciplined eating habits and regular exercise. I'd mention also that these particular pills are rather expensive."

A dog's life on the ocean wave

Mick was a restaurant chef in Antibes who a year ago took a job on a yacht. "I love the life," he says, "but for one thing, I miss having a dog around. My old Border Collie died which was one reason I was free to make the change." We put Mick's problem to retired captain Dan Macklin who had his Westie Byng at sea with him for ten years or so. So it's possible, then? "Well, first thing is to have your owner's consent and if you're crew, the

100,000
the number of animals abandoned each year in France (it holds the European record for abandonment).

Incise the neck

France's most cruel owners remove the chip that would show the dog's identity.

See jenabandonne.jamais.org

Captain's. If it's okay you need to choose a suitable dog. Not too big – Byng was ideal. Then you've got to train your four-legged recruit in the ways of marine life. Especially if you're on a charter boat he's got to know his territory. Byng was mainly restricted to the bridge and crew quarters. He'd visit other areas if the passengers obviously liked him – as they usually did. And that's a point – life at sea is a bit artificial and both passengers and crew seem to appreciate the normality of seeing a dog walking around." Any problems? "Well, the canine sailor needs boat training, of course. I quickly discovered Wee-Wee Pads and he had his own discreet corner. One thing: Byng was never seasick and a vet told me it's rare in dogs. Remember, though – when you put into some ports if you want to walk a dog ashore there'll be paperwork. Looking back, I'd say that having Byng aboard was a very positive addition to our life at sea." ■

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À table: Happy 100 Julia Child

The legendary Master Chef would have turned 100 this August. While the food world celebrates, we take a look at her local connection



Kathie Alex, above, has run Cooking With Friends in France for nearly 20 years

BY NANCY HESLIN

I am no foodie. I take great pleasure in eating but will never be the person at the table sniffing my potatoes or asking “Is that a slight hint of saffron I taste?” A few years back, in an attempt to broaden my culinary horizons, I wrote about various cooking courses offered locally (see our website). And it was through this assignment that I first met American Kathie Alex who runs Cooking with Friends in France (cookingwithfriends.com), a “cul-

inary immersion program” with the opportunity to stay in Julia Child’s former villa *La Pitchoune* in Plascassier and cook in her kitchen, which still bears those famous utensil tracings on the original peg board (pictured).

Julia penned part of Volume 2 of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in 1967 while staying at *La Pitchoune* – “the little one” in Provençal speak – a home she built four years earlier on property belonging to co-author Simone “Simca” Beck, and her husband Jean Fischbacher.

A truly extraordinary experience

“When Simone Beck died in 1991 and Julia Child gave up the Plascassier villa the following year,” Kathie explained, “Simca’s in-laws approached me about starting a cooking school here. Actually, I first met Julia back in 1983 when I was at the Moulin de Mougins. I was the first woman to work at the restaurant and Julia had come over with *Good Morning America* to film a segment. Nothing frazzled her. When she arrived, I was in awe but had to keep working in the kitchen. Amongst all the chaos she suddenly asked me, ‘Kathie, what do you think you’ll do with all you’ve learned? Open a restaurant?’ I replied ‘Yes’, not even thinking.” Instead, in 1993, Kathie would open a cooking school in Julia Child’s home. As one of Kathie’s students explained to me, “Julia Child was the essence of cooking and she translated her passion for French food to America. Cooking in her former kitchen is a truly extraordinary experience.”

Julia Child’s influence in the kitchen has remained unaltered since writing *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which has never been out of print since it was first published in 1961. And, even though she died in 2004 shortly

GET YOUR JC FIX

- PBS: Throughout August, you can share a JC recipe, watch never before seen episodes, read tributes and more. pbs.org/food/julia-child-100-birthday
- JC100: 100 days leading up to Aug. 15 from long-time Child publisher Alfred A Knopf. Fans are urged to share recipes, photos, and stories through the social media site jc100.tumblr.com
- Julia Child Restaurant Week (Aug 7-15): See details on jc100.tumblr.com
- Julia Child Foundation: juliachildfoundation.org



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before her 92nd birthday, she has continued to renew interest with would-be chefs and younger generations, directly and indirectly, through offshoots such as her partly autobiographical *My Life in France* (UK: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd), the 2009 film *Julie & Julia* and social networking like Facebook (facebook.com/JuliaChild). In fact, Google Julia Child, and there are over 54 million entries, the top pages of which discuss Julia Child's 100th birthday

approaching on August 15th. Everyone from her publisher to PBS to A-List restaurants in the US is jumping on the JC bandwagon (see box). Then there are the blogs, YouTube, Twitter ... quite a feat for a pre-internet legend who typed the "edited" 734 page manuscript. And what's a centenary without a biography? *Dearie, The Remarkable Life of Julia Child* by Bob Spitz is due out August 7th. Not bad for a woman who started out as a typist for the OSS in Washington. ■

A Child is born ... hopefully.

Approaching retirement, Kathie Alex is considering setting up a non-profit foundation to preserve the legendary *La Pitchoune*, so that Julia Child fans from around the world can continue to share its rich epicurean history. Kathie would be interested in hearing from anyone interested in this project.

Food for thought



The Gourmet by Muriel Barbery (UK: Gallic) From the author of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* ("the publishing phenomenon of the decade" *Le Figaro*), France's most famous food critic is on his deathbed and trying to remember the most delectable food he ever ate, a search that takes him back to tables of his childhood.



Freedom Fries and Café Crème: Transatlantic Tales of Food and Love by Jocelyne Rapinac (UK: Gallic): a twist on the food genre, as each of the twelve seasonal stories blending American-Franco relationships give recipes of what the characters shared. *Gougères* (savory buns), carrot and blood-orange salad, duck breast with honey and sage ...

You eat it every day but do you know the 5 Herbes de Provence? Savory, Thyme, Oregano, Rosemary & Marjoram (remember **STORM).**



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The invaders

Our region is being targeted by several kinds of migrants we don't want. The only solution is to eliminate them. Cressida van Zyl-Pithey reports



Photo: Hometboy/1970

Asian Hornet and Tiger Mosquito



Dr Pascal Delaunay, a medical entomologist based at l'Archet Hospital in Nice, is an expert on the relation between insects and human health. We last talked to him when we reported not long ago on the return of the bed bug (which, by the way, does not carry disease even if its bites can create discomfort, see *Reporter* website). According to Dr Delaunay there are two inter-related causes of the change in this region's insect population: "One is the ease of long distance travel – an anopheles mosquito, for example, can board an aircraft on the other side of the world and disembark a few hours later in, say, Paris. Insects are often carried in baggage and can survive much more easily these days than in the past when aircraft holds were neither climatized nor pressurised. Global warming also plays its part. An arriving insect is much more likely to adapt to a warmer environment and so go native."

Beware: Asian hornets can kill

So which newcomers are we concerned with? There's quite a bit of choice: four-fifths of all living species are insects and their

number is increasing. The current species census in Parc Mercantour has already reported the discovery of several new varieties, all of them – happily – inoffensive. Unfortunately, that is not the case with the invaders.

Take the Asian Hornet, first recorded in southern France in 2004 and believed to have arrived in a cargo of Chinese pottery. It's now well established with recent sightings in Vence, La Gaude, St Jeannet and elsewhere. This nasty little beast offers a double threat: it could well mean that one day there'll no longer be honey still for tea. It targets bees, ambushing them as they leave the hive, tearing off their heads and gorging on their innards. They then go in and finish off any survivors. But worse: the Asian Hornet can kill humans. Last year there were three deaths: two around Bordeaux, one near Toulouse. Victims can fall into a coma and quickly die. The insects usually have their nests high up in trees – they can hold up to 2000 adults – although they've also been found in hedges and under eaves. Dealing with them is no job for amateurs. Up to 30mm in length, they have a long sting with a powerful thrust that can penetrate a beekeeper's protective clothing and facemask. If you spot a nest leave and report your finding to the gendarmes.

Tiger mosquito: an infectious bite

A more familiar incomer by now is the tiger mosquito or *aedes albopictus* which has been present in this region for some years. Unlike the ten or so indigenous French mosquitoes which attack humans, the tiger doesn't just work an evening shift but is ready to bite at any time of day or night. The real danger, though, lies

in its ability to infect its victims with chikungunya, a disagreeable exotic disease. Until recently cases recorded in France were among travellers returning from tropical areas. Now the disease can sometimes be labelled "made in France". Explains Dr Delaunay: "Someone returns to France with an infection in his blood, he gets bitten by a tiger mosquito who then becomes a vector of the disease and could infect a subject who's never been out of Villeneuve-Loubet. That's why eliminating the species is so important." As we've insisted on more than one occasion in these pages, the basic way to keep down the number of mosquitoes is to make sure there's no stagnant water left around where they can deposit their eggs. It has to be a pitiless exercise in species cleansing, preferably carried out by professionals (see *SOS-Moustik.com* and the *Reporter* website).

Finally, there's the red snout palm beetle (*charançon rouge des palmiers*) which has been with us for close on a decade, first in the Var and then in the Alpes-Maritimes. This invader could radically alter the appearance of many of our towns by destroying palm trees (in Nice alone there are some 10,000). Says agronomist Michel Forty, "There's no time to lose ... there has to be quick and effective action or there'll be a major disaster all along the Coast." The message has been heard. There's now a determined effort – with EU funding – to identify palms under attack by the beetle, treat them or – where necessary – destroy them. There is, however, some divergence of opinion as to the best method to use. The *Conseil Général* of the Var has little patience with this: "Sorry, there's no time for arguing ... we could end up with no palms left." ■

0800 740 606

**Information on
tiger mosquito
(in French)**

04 94 35 22 84

**information
on red snout
palm beetle (in
French) See also
fredonpaca.fr**

In the Alpes-Maritimes the *Conseil Général* offers a free "demozification" service. If you suspect the tiger mosquito is on your property call 0800 740 606.



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Nice shades

There's more to buying sunglasses than you think



Don't think of your sunglasses as primarily a fashion item: that has to be a secondary consideration. Of course, designer shades can be expensive and usually come from reputable manufacturers but they still need careful selection. On the other hand, avoid those cheapie products you find in beachfront souvenir shops and elsewhere. Okay, you say, you picked up a nice-looking pair in Ventimiglia for just €5 ... and they've got the CE mark which means they meet EU standards. Well, maybe, but makers of junk sunglasses don't hesitate to put that mark on the frames. A better guarantee is when there's a clear indication of a manufacturer's name and address. Going for those cheapie products just isn't a good idea: they don't protect and can give you headaches and even double vision.

The colour of lens is critical

Even if you take buying your sunglasses seriously, your choice has to be informed. Sunglasses have two functions (not all perform both): to reduce the absorption of ultra-violet rays and to palliate

the effects of bright light. An important consideration is where you will wear them and here an optician's advice is essential (the guy in the souvenir shop won't be any use). It's important to say if you're going to wear your tinted lenses on the beach, at sea, in the mountains, in town or on the sports field. Lenses are graded on a scale of 0 to 4. Zero is for fantasy specs, the commonest ratings are 2 and 3, and especially the latter, which is estimated to block out around 90% of UV rays. At level 4 the lenses are very dark and are worn in very bright light but are a no-no when driving. The colour of lenses is not a matter of fashion since it affects the perception of light and so is critical. Skiers, for example, are recommended a yellow or orange tint; short-sighted people are better off with brownish lenses, long-sighted with a green or grey colour. Blue is useless since it offers no UV protection. "Polarised" lenses, on the other hand, have the advantage of protecting against both UV rays and glare.

For more articles on sun and summer, see riviera-reporter.com

Frames need to be chosen carefully, too. Thick arms protect against the wind while skiers should certainly opt for a mask. Anyway, here's our advice: if you've bought cheapie shades – even with the CE logo! – throw them in the bin and go and see an optician. ■

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The Love Coach

In a new column, TLC – a sex therapist and expat relationship expert for over 9 years – answers readers' questions



“I feel like a failure, forced to accept a separation I never wanted, and ready to fall from a cliff.”

A new life after divorce: how to accept a separation

After 15 years together, my wife and I have just got divorced. She's French, I'm from London, and we've been living on the Riviera for the past 5 years. She has part custody of our 2 kids. I've decided to stay in France to be with them. I feel like a failure, forced to accept a separation I never wanted, and ready to fall from a cliff. I just don't know what to do with myself or my so-called "new life". Brian

TLC: Divorce can be a sea of hurt, pain, and anger. Added to the grief of losing a loved one, it feels like chaos around and within you at a time when you lose all your points of reference; when the unknown and uncertainty replace stability and familiarity.

The first issue to address is the management of this crisis, getting and asking for all the help and goodwill you can from those around. This helps you to secure your surrounding on a practical, technical, relational level. To find peace it's important you re-create a more stable base and get a new focus in your life; this should be finding a place where you feel comfortable, making it your home, concentrating on your job, scheduling the kids' time with you, planning for holidays, socialising with your friends, doing sports etc. The second point is to acknowledge how you feel, recognising that there is a huge void in your life, an empty space of "things" that you once had but have no more. The question of why it happened, your share of responsibility and how to avoid repeating the same mistake with the lessons to be "learned" from that "experience" will come in their own time. Success is often built on a sequence of events not quite going the way you thought they would but it's what you do with them, how you transform and use those "failures", that allow you achieve your goals. It's the same for relationships that have ended. They help you to be

clearer about what matters to you, a springboard for trying things differently.

Thirdly, in a quiet moment, I would invite you to face your cliff and look around it. What do you see? How do you feel? What does it do to you? Observe these signs – both physical and emotional – closely, and don't run. Welcoming these feelings, rather than suppressing them, will lead you to the path for finding inner calm, similar to meditation.

You're deeply hurt. It takes time to find peace again and if you're alone, you may need to be helped along the way. Don't be afraid of a therapist: a professionally-trained listener can really help you unload and move on.

Is there a future for a couple that have nothing in common?

My boyfriend and I have nothing in common (even my best friend says so) but I love him and we're happy together. We've been together for 8 months now. We both work on a yacht. I can't help wondering if it's worthwhile investing my time in the relationship. I am 22-years-old and he's 23. Do we have a future together? Elisa, Nice

TLC: "Nothing in common", Elisa? For a start, you're already working together. And that's a great deal to share with your boyfriend. You write that you're happy with him. Well that's a strong positive sign if you need one. I believe for a relationship to work you need mutual respect, a dose of admiration and trust in each other, as well as humour. This will help you both communicate with one another. If you both wish to be together and you are both willing to adapt to life's circumstances, making adjustments when necessary, then that's the best base you can have to engage for the present and the future. I think the question really is how else do you need to be reassured or comforted? Is the prospect of settling down daunting you? Or would you prefer to go and see the world like others are doing? Follow your intuition; if you listen, it'll tell you what's right and best for you. What matters is what's happening when you're together as a couple, not what if you aren't. ■

Do you have a question? Write to The Love Coach c/o Riviera Reporter (see page 46) or email TheLoveCoach@rivierareporter.com

HR

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YOUR DAILY FIX ON THE RIVIERA

Gardener's Notes: Grass Master Class

BY JAMES HARTLEY

DIRECTOR, ENGLISH GARDEN GROUP



Pennisetum alopecuroides – or Fountain grass, above – likes full sun and has a flowering period from July to September. It's best in well-drained soil and requires about 2 hours care a year.

Perennial delights

If you're hoping for the lowdown on the art of grass care with an in-depth discussion on tall fescue and thatch density – then please brace for disappointment – that'll be another day. Despite the title to this piece, I'm not going to wax lyrical on the beauty of a well-fed, freshly mown lawn, despite how passionately I also feel about that. Instead, we're talking grass here, not the kind you have to cut every week but grasses as a family of plants used ornamentally in planting – something which has received somewhat of a strong surge in interest of late. With so many amateur garden enthusiasts looking to cast aside the shackles of annual bedding and “blousy” perennials as their tastes become more sophisticated, the demand for plants which are naturally disease resistant, long in interest, low in maintenance and not perpetually thirsty (yes ... you Hydrangeas have good reason to look sheepish) has soared. Enter then, stage left, the ornamental grasses. Stylishly understated, this sprawling family encompasses a multitude of species united by their characteristic growth habits, their ease of cultivation and their deceptively simple beauty. Although they vary in size and shape, they are usually clump

forming and will fill out rapidly each spring, to finally produce a mop of flowers in early summer depending on the species. The flowers will stay on the plants until the end of the year, when in most cases the plants brown off. They do though stay upright and can be retained in this condition right into winter to provide architectural interest to beds and borders, before cropping and allowing them to regrow each spring. Many of them, in particular the medium-sized plants, look best when planted *en masse*. There is something deeply soothing in seeing a swathe of their flower heads moving in unison at the whim of a light breeze. Looking out of my office window I get to gaze down onto a whole border filled with Feathertop grass (*Pennisetum villosum*) and they're stunning. Early in the morning and late in the evening, when the sun is low, there's something magical about the way the light shines through their flowers. I'll admit that when we planted them all around the office I wasn't convinced the scrappy little fellows would be able to hold their own in the design. To my delight, however, they have proven me wrong to have doubted them, having done just that and so much more so that now, five months later, they are out in full flower and simply glorious.

All you need

When I tell people something is easy to grow – this is usually relative to other similar plants. With grasses however this declaration can be taken at face value: they truly are easy to grow, with no ifs, buts or any other nefarious horticultural reservations. Almost everyone has spent time weeding wild sown grass out of an ornamental bed at some point or other – so imagine the pleasure of having the very same plant family deployed ornamentally to great effect – gardening heaven! Perhaps the only real prerequisites are a little patience and owning a pair of shears. I say a little patience because unlike shrubby herbaceous planting, the grasses do have a tendency to look slightly ropey the season that they are planted. Indeed, as I mentioned above, even my faith was a little in doubt when they were first planted – and I'm one of the disciples! Their true glory only really comes to the fore after a season in the ground, when they have had time to drop some roots and settle down. Before this they can look a little tatty, and for this you'll have to forgive them. No matter what state they end up in each year, you can crop them whenever you want, and they'll bounce back in the spring. Hence the need to own a pair of shears. Or a small goat.

Something for everyone

Simply put, the choice can be overwhelming as there are so many families of grasses to choose from and within them, so many more subspecies. It helps to break it down a little and group grasses that you like into three sets. Practically, all the grasses can be fairly easily categorised into three broad classes – small, medium and large. This is probably the most important thing to find out about with grasses before you plant them, as everything

Grasses can be easily categorised into 3 classes – small, medium and large, and only by knowing in advance how high they will get, can you plan the planting.

else you can see for yourself as they grow. Only by knowing in advance how high they will get, can you plan the planting, and unlike many other plants, a small pot of an ornamental grass gives precious little hint to the uninitiated to its eventual size and vigour. Ill-judged plant positioning or a lack of organisation can lead to a highly disorganised appearance as a little pot of a large grass will wildly outstrip its smaller cousins in less than a year. The large ones, such as *Miscanthus* (which masquerades under various guises such as Chinese silver grass, Maiden grass, Zebra grass, Porcupine grass) will grow comfortably over a metre tall, usually settling down at around two metres. The small ones are the species such as the *Festuca*, which will stay low and dense, making small clumps that never stray past 30cm in height.

Pick of the crop

To narrow down the choices and give you a head-start with the grasses that no doubt you are already burning

with enthusiasm to get planting, I'll let you into the secret of a few of my favourite players.

Behind the others, tall (up and occasionally over two metres) and slightly unruly like naughty children at the back of the class, I like to use the *Miscanthus* and the *Panicum* species. *Miscanthus sinensis* is a staple of any planting scheme involving grasses, and provides good no-nonsense, no-frills fill. Incredibly easy to grow it has large open plumes and for more interest it also comes in a well-liked, strongly upright variegated version called "Zebra" grass due to its horizontally striped colours. Personally I am not so keen on the variegation but it is so amazingly popular it gets a mention here. The *Panicum* species, such as *Panicum virgatum* (Switchgrass) are characterised by their more open airy plumes, which contrast the more fluffy versions on many of the other species.

Down in the front, my current favourite in the "small" group is *Festuca glauca* (Blue fescue). A charming silver blue colour and compact habit make it a great controllable ground cover with its little dwarf mounds that re-seed themselves nicely. *Stipa tenuissima* (Feathergrass) is also a graceful and soft addition to the foreground of a bed, with its beautiful plumes that contrast nicely with more rigid forms such as clipped Box.

And last but not least, in the "medium" category, is my all time champion, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* – the classic Fountain grass. This magnificent plant has a wonderful arching habit, will settle in at between one and one and a half metres tall (it has smaller cousins if required) and has stunning feathery plumes that dance in the breeze. Accusations have been made that I have a fetish for this plant. Guilty as charged Your Honour. ■

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The Var Report



Salisbury and Frejus: a common grievance

Both are near exceptional historic monuments that have been blighted by ill-considered nearby development. Anyone who's visited Stonehenge can only be shocked by the proximity of the major road that detracts considerably from the wonder of the site. The situation at the *Arènes de Fréjus* – the Roman amphitheatre built in the first century AD, pictured before restoration – is even

worse. A busy street almost touches the ancient ruins and hideous low-cost housing is directly opposite. So insignificant are the surroundings that many visitors drive right past without realising that they are next to one of the most remarkable vestiges of the Roman occupation of Provence.

It's not only on the outside that the ancient site is up for criticism. The amphitheatre is used for events and music concerts and has recently been revamped with modern convenience – rather than

historic importance – in mind. At a cost of €8 million much of the stone has been replaced by ugly concrete, especially in the seating area. Defenders say that this restores the *arènes* to the initial function as a venue for entertainment. Detractors argue that it isn't justified to deface an ancient monument in order to provide a suitable place for musical and theatrical events that would be better staged elsewhere. Readers that have seen the restored *Arènes* are welcome to share their opinions on our forum.

Toulon Airport: more low-cost offers

When it comes to nearby airports, Var residents have plenty of choice. Nice-Côte d'Azur (*nice.aeroport.fr*) is a major international airport and a quick drive from the Var by autoroute while Marseille-Provence (*marseille.aeroport.fr*) is also an attractive option, especially for domestic and holiday destinations. British Airways includes Marseille in its Open Skies program to NY-Newark (see page 10). But the Var's main

The LGV rail project that many residents worried would cut through some of the Var's most scenic areas has been sidelined for the moment. Mass local protest and austerity measures are responsible for the backtracking but it's not the end quite yet. Watch this space.

Strike Force

If there's a profession we didn't want to see on strike at the height of the fire season, it's the Canadair water bomber crews. Their strike in May was only a symbolic one though, as they did remain on call. The crews are not happy (see last issue) and they have a point that anyone who lives near a forested area can understand. Mothballing part of the fleet for budgetary reasons is a gamble we'd rather they not take so do follow the official advice below to minimise your exposure to danger.

This is the time of year when the likelihood of fire is especially great in the Var. Residents and visitors should consult the online map of forest fire risk in each zone,



Road access is prohibited when there is a circular white sign with a red circle on it, or with the sign shown here.

updated every evening by the prefecture. There is a direct link to the page in English on our homepage throughout the summer.

The Var is divided into nine fire zones: Centre-Var, Estérel, Haut-Var, Iles d'Hyères, Maures Nord, Maures Sud, Préalpes, Sainte Baume Nord, Sainte Baume Sud. The risks in Estérel also apply to the western-forested areas of the Alpes-Maritimes.

Colours indicate the day's level of fire risk for each zone.

YELLOW: moderate. Access is allowed but caution is required in these areas. Smoking and fires are forbidden.

ORANGE: high. It's recommended to refrain from entering these forested areas by motor vehicle.

RED: very high. It is prohibited to gain access by motor vehicle into roads marked with a red circle on a circular white sign or by the sign shown here. Foot access to these forested and brush areas is discouraged. Forestry officials can ask you to leave the zone.

BLACK: the highest and most critical. It's absolutely prohibited to drive or gain access by any motor vehicle to forest paths and roads that are marked with the illustrated signs. Access by foot (walkers, hikers, joggers) is also prohibited in all woods, forests, moors, scrublands, plantations and reforestation areas.

Facing a forest fire in the Var is a terrible experience. See the story and one victim's recommendations on our website, keyword "ForestFires".

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local airport is Toulon-Hyères (toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr). Apart from a few domestic connections, expats especially are served by direct flights to and from Oslo, Rotterdam, London City and Stansted.

Toulon-Hyères – 4km from Hyères, 23km from Toulon centre, and 50km from St Tropez – is a provincial airport with charm, easily accessible from the central Var. Now Toulon-Hyères has entered the low-cost market to compete with Nice and Marseille.

Air France has introduced low-cost fares to Paris starting at €76. Regional carrier Volotéa has summer flights to Bordeaux from €39 and Nantes €49. Jetairfly will take you to the coolness of Brittany for €80. International destinations include Brussels with Jetairfly from €50, London City with Cityjet from €89 and Ryanair to Stansted from €46 or Oslo from an amazing €37 if you book early enough. Transavia flies Toulon to Rotterdam four times a week from €70. Train links to Amsterdam are quick and easy from Holland's second airport. When winter holiday time comes around Nouvelair will link Tunis to Toulon twice a week for 72€.

Var Tourism wanted to know. So do we

Just what do tourists to the Bay of St Tropez think of their stay? Var Tourism and the *Conseil Général* decided to find out by conducting a poll of regular visitors since 2010. The results that have now been compiled make for mixed and incomplete conclusions.

Nine out of ten visitors

say that they are globally content with their stay and most would return. 40% of visitors say they use the internet to plan their stay, book their hotel and refer to transport schedules or event details. The typical family income level of tourists has fallen over the past few years but remains higher than the cheaper holiday destinations to the west as far as the Spanish border. 60% of tourists in the Bay of St Tropez area admit to a family income of €3000 a month or more. So, on the whole, the Saint Tropez area remains an upmarket destination.

Principle complaints were gridlocked traffic, insufficient parking and some rip-off pricing. Surprisingly, the report was rather light on some essential details such as the breakdown of foreign and French visitors. Could do better.

VARIABLES

The mayor of Les Adrets has joined his Montauroux colleague in combating blatant prostitution on the Lac St Cassien road (see our forum). The Montauroux ban merely meant that the "ladies" had moved down the road to Les Adrets where the mayor now proposes a ban from 8 in the morning to 8 at night.

Fabrice Denizet, dubbed as the Var's Bernie Madoff, is accused of robbing 600 residents of €38 million by selling them non-existent investment products. The Société Générale and CIC banks are blamed by some victims of insufficient surveillance but are not suspected of participation in the scams. **Harris Stobbs** ■

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Monaco Murmurs

BY MOLLY BROWN

After celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in swinging London, with its great parks and spring green trees, Monaco seemed even smaller and more congested, entering from Cap d'Ail past cranes and construction even less inviting; but I awoke to sunshine and a sea view and that is what captures the visitors and persuades them to stay ... a room with a view. Hence, the buildings grow higher and higher; even old buildings on the rock can now add two more floors. It is a builders' paradise. However, as I write, there is an entire village in Tuscany for sale on eBay for only €2 million (the price of 2 rooms in Monaco) which could keep them all happy for years.

Horrified by SBM's plan to replace the Sporting d'Hiver with 7 towers, a nearby restaurant owner suggests they knock down the Tourist Bureau instead and link it with the Metropole shopping centre; "or even better, let them build an offshore island and do what they like out there ... and leave us all in peace!" As SBM had an *annus horribilis*, with financial 2011-12 results even worse than 2010-11 and a €28.4 million loss before tax (partly due to their investment in Betclick losing €33.2 million), one hopes rather bleakly for a change of plan, as borrowing money for major development seems risky at this time. Perhaps they are going to concentrate on what they do best: there was a 6% increase in their hotel section last year and their decision to take over the Meridien Beach Plaza hotel seems a much more worthwhile investment.

A lost legacy

The news that Prince Albert is selling a third of his father's unique lifetime collection of 120 classic cars, all in mint condition, has caused consternation among residents. It is a great pity this collection should be broken up so precipitously (the sale is on July 26 at the *Terrasses de Fontvieille* museum, which is to close for redevelopment of the site). These cars are as important a part of Monaco's history as the dresses and memorabilia of Princess Grace, which have toured the world. Prince Rainier III and Princess Grace opened the Grand Prix races in one of them each



In 1297 François Grimaldi, or Francesco Grimaldi, founded the existing Monaco. On the evening of January 8, 1297, Grimaldi disguised himself as a monk ("Monaco" in Italian) and accessed the fort on the rock of Monaco, which was then under rule of Genoa. He killed the guard by his sword and with his soldiers seized power, earning the nickname Malizia, "the cunning".

Dutch sculptor Kees Verkade has lived in Monaco since the Seventies and knew Prince Rainier and Princess Grace.

He was commissioned to commemorate Monaco's 700 years of rule by the Grimaldi family in 1997 and sculpted *Malizia* (pictured), a statue of a monk with a sword under his robe which can be found in the Palace Square.

year in a tradition started by Prince Louis II, who drove around the first Grand Prix circuit in his favourite Voisin, a race won by British driver Williams in a Bugatti 35B. Cars are part of the soul of Monaco, part of the family treasure. The many enthusiastic British participants in the Historic Grand Prix, including British legend, Stirling Moss, will no doubt join avid collectors from around the world at the sale and we may see these lovely cars again in England in the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

Another collection of a lifetime can be seen at Salle des Expositions on Quai Antoine, the life's work of Kees Verkade from art student to world famous sculptor. Born in the Netherlands, but living in Monaco since the 70s when he met the Princely family, he sculpted busts of Sir Winston Churchill, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace and became fascinated by the circus and the ballet; his sculptures are to be found all around the Principality. His latest work, *Circle of Love*, modelled by two dancers from Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo is a celebration of love and the joy of dance. The exhibition will also be shown at the end of summer in Biot.

A collection of the work of another Dutch artist, Kees Van Dongen, one of the group of artists working in Paris in the 20s and 30s, where he was well known for his satirical cartoons, sketches and paintings, is on show at the lovely Villa Sauber. Opposite, in Forum Grimaldi, the Extra Large summer exhibition presents 50 major works of art loaned by the Pompidou Gallery. Paintings from "Impressionism to Pop Art" enliven the Opera Gallery until August 31 and NMNM introduce Thomas Schutte Houses at Villa Paloma. There is lively jazz on the beach and entertainment to suit all ages and tastes at Sporting d'Été. The Orchestra of Saint Petersburg opens the concert season in September and then it is the Monaco Yacht Show, a scintillating event with 100 super yachts in Port Hercule. With 85% of exhibition space already sold, this year's show should contribute quite considerably to the cost of the new Yacht Club, which grows daily higher and higher. ■

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Nautical



PlanetSolar, above, uses her 500sqm of deck to accommodate 38,000 photovoltaic solar cells, while there are large-capacity batteries below decks to stock daylight energy for use at night.

Photo: Dr Karl-Heinz Hochhaus

Harnessing Helios

BY MICHAEL HEALY

As readers know, Helios is the Greek sun god, and many of us live on the Riviera to be nearer to his warmth in winter as in summer. Tolkien fans will recognise the word *Tûranor* ("Power of the Sun" in *The Lord of the Rings*); many of us saw the amazing "yacht" *Tûranor PlanetSolar* when she came into Monaco Harbour on Friday May 4th having completed a circumnavigation of the earth under solar power alone. It was on September 7th, 2010 during the Monaco Yacht Show that this very wide catamaran – the largest solar-powered boat in the world – sailed away westward on her epic voyage, and few expected her to complete it. Catamarans do provide a much bigger surface than a monohull, and I owned three of them kept at the time in Monaco harbour; but that was for maximum bikini space.

Built in Kiel, Germany, to designs of her Swiss founder Raphaël Domjan, *PlanetSolar* claims a maximum speed of 14 knots, but 5-7 knots is more realistic for cruising. So patience was the watchword for her crew of five who brought the boat back to Monaco 584 days later as the first ever solar-electric vehicle to complete a round-the-world voyage,

breaking several other records en-route – but not for speed!

The aim of all this effort and expense (€12.5 million) was to demonstrate the benefits of renewable energy from the sun; we all declare ourselves in favour of electricity and energy from sun, wind, current or tide. *Planetsolar* provided a demonstration both convincing and spectacular – as far as 5 knots is spectacular. The initiators and crew deserve admiration and congratulations.

But is the principle at all viable? Certainly the sun will outlast the fossil energy we mine with oil, gas and coal found both onshore and at sea. Yet a much older invention has been in place for thousands of years: the sail. The most efficient and ecological way to circumnavigate the world is under sail, provided the "downhill" route is chosen, following the Trade Winds all the way. Modern sails are so efficient that sailing yachts can also go the "wrong" way round, bucking the winds in a very uncomfortable way as was shown by Scotsman Sir Chay Blyth CBE who sailed single-handed westabout in 1970 in the yacht *British Steel* taking 292 days. Chay Blyth first made his name while in the Army by rowing across the Atlantic! Other single-handed Brits have since followed, notably Mike Golding OBE (1994) and Dee Caffari MBE, the first woman (2006), but also three French solo *tour-dumondistes*, the latest (June 15th) being Stéphane Narvaez of the Nice Club Nautique who took only 246 days in a smaller yacht without any engine at all. *Chapeau!*

None of these should detract from the very real achievement of *PlanetSolar*. After her triumphant arrival in Monaco, she went on to La Ciotat, Marseille, Barcelona and the Balearics. The vessel will remain in the Mediterranean for several months to be admired by a wider audience. Convinced ecologists could charter her still this season for a very leisurely cruise under the Swiss flag. Apply to info@planetsolar.org ■

EXPATS EVERYWHERE

BY MIKE MEADE



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Reminder for travelling expats

If you're a French resident with a *carte vitale* and travelling within Europe this summer, don't forget to ask for your CEAM card (called EHIC in the UK) before you leave. It's as simple as calling your local CPAM with your social security number at hand (it's on your *carte vitale*). Your card will be sent to the address as recorded in the system's file. They won't send it to any other address so don't ask them to. Anyway, the last thing you want is another person receiving and using your card. My CEAM card saved me a very expensive hospital bill when I was in the UK last year. Full details on our website, keyword "CEAM".

Expat ailments

For those of us from Anglo-Saxon cultures, foreign ailments can be a bit of a mystery.

Shortly after I moved to France I came down with a stomach ache. My newly acquired French in-laws referred to it as a *crise de foie*, which was something I'd never heard of. Even the doctor called it a "liver crisis" but his prescription was for an intestinal infection all the same. A nation of habitual drinkers, the French qualify almost any ailment below the chest and above the hips as having to do with the liver. The way some of them drink, their liver probably occupies most of that bodily space at any rate.

Not all foreigners deal with the CPAM branch of Social Security. Auto-Entrepreneurs, for example, will have to contact RSI. Recently many caisses have asked for documentation from those in the French healthcare system that are not salaried employees in order to renew their prestations (benefits). Usually this means submitting your most recent avis d'impôt. The problem is that they don't ask before they suspend your card, so you could have quite a shock at the doctor's office or pharmacy.

Then there's *mal aux reins*. More often than not "painful kidneys" is in fact backache. We get backache. They get kidney ache. French doctors know very well that the everyday name for a condition is often a vernacular tag for something unrelated to the common name it's often given. If you want to know what you've really got, ask him for a proper explanation or go to an English doctor.

Sometimes the French invent conditions. What exactly are *jambes lourdes*? I hear this ailment referred to all the time but try looking up "heavy legs" in an English medical dictionary and you come up empty. English speakers don't get heavy legs but if you ask a French pharmacist for something to soothe your *jambes lourdes* he'll have just the right cream to sell you at an outrageous price. They even push such potions in television commercials.

When applied by a loving partner these creams do marvels, which perhaps explained their popularity until a couple of years ago when the *Sécu* no longer recognised the condition and stopped reimbursing the creams. Consumption dropped by 90% almost overnight, as did the frequency of the imaginary condition. It seems that heavy legs was all in the head.

What were they thinking?

Almost three million French live outside their home country but France treats them well. Unlike some countries (see Graham Richards' letter on page 3) France never disenfranchises its citizens. They can always vote no matter where they live and in a previous issue we had a look at how that process works. And unlike the US, as an example, France doesn't tax its overseas citizens.

Life is good if you're a French expat. So good that France is unique in setting up 11 overseas constituencies to represent its citizens in various parts of the world. These elected MPs sit in parliament in Paris just like the homegrown *députés* and have the same voting rights and responsibilities.

Now if I may just back step a bit to say that there are all sorts of reasons why the French live overseas. Some are military or diplomat; others have married a foreign national and decided to settle in their spouse's home country. Some have been posted there by French companies with foreign interests: many Britons will know that their municipal services are provided by affiliates of French companies like EDF, Lyonnaise des Eaux or Veolia.

But a common reason many of the French emigrate is to enjoy a much better business climate. Big business does well in France but if you're a little guy on the way up in a competitive sector then you're probably better off setting up somewhere else for a

few years. So what of those 11 constituencies, many of which are populated by French execs who have experienced the opportunities offered by market-lead conservative economies? Well, in the recent legislative election, nine of the eleven (including Britain) voted in the Socialist Party candidate. Go figure.

Like the socialist president he is, Francois Hollande knows just how to thank them. To start with, he's withdrawing the automatic education benefit French expat families receive in cash to help them pay for their children's schooling overseas. Serves them right.

Tax panic

My goodness, can't we all get in a snit about something that not only didn't happen, but never can? I'm talking about that second-home tax decried recently in papers like the *Daily Mail* with headlines such as "Brits face greedy French tax grab on holiday homes" Take it from a more authoritative source than the *Daily Mail*: there is no way that France can slap a tax on second homes or French rental incomes of European Union citizens without also taxing French citizens at the same rate. Sarko had already tried it and was himself slapped down by EU anti-discrimination laws. So don't panic. A second-home tax could possibly happen at some point but it won't target only foreigners. Now aren't you glad we're all in the EU together?

And that 75% tax on annual income over a million euros that Hollande promised stirred up something of a panic also. I even had a couple of emails about it. Panicky ones. I grant you that taxing financial success isn't a brilliant idea but to be honest, I don't make over a million a year and I doubt that you do if you're a French resident. If you did, you'd be living in Monaco or Andorra instead.

What this country needs is a tax on unjustified panic by expats. That would sort national finances in no time. ■



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News of Britain & the British

BY PATRICK MIDDLETON



EU simplifies inheritance so that the deceased can specify in their wills that they wish the law of their own country to govern the disposal of their estate.



Archdeacon Letts, who announced that he'll be leaving Holy Trinity Nice at the end of the year, installs Hazel Door as a chaplain in Brittany.

According to the latest figures, some 10,000 British expats are picking up around £50 million a year in UK sickness benefit. A spokesman admitted: "We do plan a crack-down on fraud in this country but it'll be harder to do with expats although we know there are some cases out there." So do we.

So your daughter's let you down? Well, soon you'll know what to do

As we've often noted in these pages, an advantage for a newcomer in joining the British Association is that seasoned members can sometimes offer useful advice to those settling in.

But be careful: some of those self-confident wisecracks over the monthly lunch don't know quite as much as they'd like their listeners to believe. Example: Bryan (not his real name) went to just such a lunch recently where the topic of the forthcoming changes in French inheritance law came up. "Two chaps there," he recalls, "claimed to understand what was going to happen – but their versions didn't really agree and we were left rather confused."

I'm not surprised. These kind of issues can be very complicated and if you really want to understand how your own particular circumstances will be affected you need to talk to a local professional adviser, financial and/or legal. If you just listen to old Ted, a retired hotel manager from Ormskirk, that won't be the case.

Anyway, here's a brief outline of what's changing. As most people are aware, currently if you're a resident of France it's French inheritance law that applies when you plan the disposal of your assets after your death. Under the "reserve" system, for example, children – of a first marriage – have preemptive rights: an only child gets half the estate, two children get a third each and three or more share three quarters; these rights pre-empt those of a spouse. These provisions give a lot of grief to some people: "My daughter has behaved very badly," I recall one man saying. "I can't bear her getting her hands on anything." Well, good news for him. France has signed up to a new EU regulation

that will allow residents here from abroad to specify in their wills that they wish the law of their own country to govern the disposal of their estate. This, it's envisaged, will come into force in the summer of 2015. One important point: the UK has not signed up to this agreement and so it will not apply to second homes of those normally resident across the Channel. It does, however, allow for resident citizens from outside the EU – from the US or Australia, for example – to benefit from the new testamentary freedom. Also, the changes apply to whom inheritance can be passed on but they do not affect inheritance tax which, depending on specific tax agreements between countries, may mean that the tax is paid either in the country of residence or in the country where the inherited assets are.

VIPs bow out

VIPs that's right ... Very Important Parsons. First of all, Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, as we foreshadowed a while back, is quitting Lambeth at the end of the year. He says he can't make up his mind for the moment whether his tenure as primate has been any sort of success. Well, a lot of people, including many clergy, seem to have decided for him. He's run the C of E in a difficult time but, wagging his beard and waffling in that actor's voice of his, he's shown little proof of decisive leadership and readiness to offer – as the *Sunday Telegraph* put it – "self-confident proclamation of the Gospel". He's been much too keen on not going against the liberal consensus. Here's his take on the thieving thugs who rampaged through London last August: "Too many of them inhabit a world in which an obsession with clothes and accessories – against a background of economic insecurity or simple deprivation – created a feverish atmosphere where status rises and falls suddenly and destructively." So from this Christian thinker we get the banalities of pop sociology rather

Mougins' Museum of Classical Art opened its doors a year ago. For a profile with museum director, Brit Mark Merrony, see our website.

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than the bracing bluntness of the Decalogue: "thou shalt not steal". It's hardly the Church's loss that this "remote and ineffectual don" has opted for early retirement – ten years early – to the Master's Lodge at Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Then, of course, our own VIP – Archdeacon Kenneth Letts, chaplain at Holy Trinity, Nice has announced that he will be leaving after Christmas – or, as he would prefer, Christmass – on reaching retirement age and returning to Australia. It's no secret to some people, including many in his congregation, that he's always disliked this magazine and refused all contact with us, even when Bishop Hinde tried to mediate in the matter. Frankly, we've never understood what the problem was. Anyway, what's our perforce indirectly impressed of the man? From his parishioners over the years we've heard regularly of his notable qualities as a pastor – his readiness, at whatever inconvenience, to visit the old, the sick, the lonely, indeed any of those in need. I recall, years ago now, one man saying to me "I don't much like him but I have to admit he's always available when it matters."

And what's the downside? Again, over the years I've heard a repeated criticism of his autocratic style. This relates, I'd say, to his adopting a model of priestly

behaviour from the Roman Church of pre-Vatican II days. Father O'Hooligan and his brethren have most of them moved on since then. Not so Father Ken. And yet when I asked a veteran member of his congregation for his verdict he was broadly positive: "He's not perfect – who is? – but he's leaving behind a strong church community housed in a splendidly restored building. It all does him a lot of credit." And even if the *Reporter* is on his personal Index I can't be negative about him: after all, he's an Australian (even if without the dry humour) and, I'm told, he likes dogs.

"Sorry, Old Bean, I don't actually speak the lingo."

Imagine: you're a UK business executive who's called in at one of our embassies seeking help with a difficult meeting. The FCO chap who handles trade matters rolls his eyes and admits the help he can offer is limited: he doesn't know the local language. Unusual for a British diplomat? Actually not. The dismal facts in the case have been uncovered by Stephen Barclay, MP, a member of the Public Accounts Committee. Only one in forty officials currently posted abroad by the FCO is "really fluent in the language of the country where he or she works". Some 90% of our diplomats are not recognised

Nice-Matin recently ran an item on two surveys: one had asked Brits living here what they most liked, the other questioned French who had lived in England what they recalled most favourably. Top of the pops for Brits here were food, health care, weather, the roads ... and the politeness of young people (hmm ...). Across the Channel the French recalled punctuality, helpful shop assistants, pubs, parks and the sense of humour.

as having any effective linguistic ability. Our good linguists are spread very thin: there's only one Arabic speaker in Saudi, one Hindi speaker in Delhi; good to know, though, that a chap in Pyongyang can manage in simple Korean if "his interlocutor speaks slowly". And – *Madre de Dios!* – nobody has any Spanish in our Havana embassy.

How can this be? Under Labour, allowances for linguistic proficiency were reduced and then Gordon Brown as Chancellor shut down the Foreign Office Language Centre. As usual that prize *idiot savant* had his arguments ready (as when he sold our gold, remember?): "You just hire locals, they're cheaper and they all speak the language." Bad thinking, Gordon. Employing locals to work under expat staff who don't know their language is very dangerous. I witnessed a textbook case of this at Marks & Spencer in Nice where they put in a manager from a suburban London branch who knew no French and didn't try to learn. The girls ran rings round him and in a few months he had to be shipped home, leaving quite a mess behind him. But there's a ray of hope at the FCO: William Hague has reopened the Language Centre. And, by the way, Simon Taylor, consul in Marseille (see our website), speaks superb French. ■

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American Notes

BY PJ HESLIN



Tony Paschall, Chair of the Union of Overseas Voters, assists an American expat as she completes a voter registration form in Paris, 2012. (Photo Niki Borofsky/UOV)

New federal law for overseas voters

Those wanting to vote in the upcoming election should note a recent change in federal law that will impact expats.

Tony Paschall, Founder and Chair for the Union of Overseas Voters told me, “It’s now imperative that US citizens residing abroad file a request for absentee ballots every year, even if they have ‘automatically’ received ballots and voted in past elections. Otherwise, they may have no recourse if their ballots do not arrive in time from the US.”

The easiest way to get your absentee ballot is to visit the federal voting assistance program website at fvap.gov. You can download and sign a federal postcard application. You must register to vote in the last state that you voted in. If you haven’t already applied for your absentee ballot do so now because deadlines for registering differ from state to state.

The IRS: help for expats

The IRS intends to make tax filing for American expats easier.

This thanks to three groups – ACA, AARO and FAWCO (see box) – who met with IRS officials in April to express their concerns.

According to an IRS statement, the agency has announced a plan “to help US citizens residing overseas, including dual citizens, catch up with tax filing obligations and provide assistance for people with foreign retirement plan issues”.

Further, the IRS announcement acknowledges that those Americans who were non-compliant due to ignorance of their US tax obligations, and who owe little or no back taxes, will not be subjected to ruinous Foreign Bank Account Reporting (FBAR) penalties. From their worldwide members, ACA and AARO know that many who entered into the Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Program (OVDP) to rectify their situation were assessed fines of 25% up to 50% of the total value of their accounts. This level of penalty was put in place to combat criminals involved in money laundering and drug trafficking but it has often been indiscriminately applied to Americans living overseas who made honest mistakes.

Health care: accessible doesn’t mean free

Earlier this month, the Supreme Court, signifying a historic landmark in American politics, ruled Obamacare constitutional.

William Beachner, Chair of Democrats Abroad France Riviera Chapter, affirmed, “Because of Obamacare, insurance companies can’t deny children coverage due to pre-existing conditions like cancer or asthma. More than 3 million young adults are able to stay on their parents’ health care plans until the age of 26. Obamacare will save middle class families up to \$2300 a year on top of its largest health care tax cut in history, worth an average of \$4800 to about 19 million middle class Americans. And we are making all of this progress while strengthening Medicare and reducing the deficit by more than \$120 billion by 2021.”

Whatever your political affiliation, the spirit of Obamacare is a step in the right direction when it comes to health care ... but who’s going to pay for it?

It looks like most of the costs are to be absorbed by a variety of taxes on individuals and insurance and pharmaceutical companies. Inevitably this will mean higher costs for users as insurance and drug companies will find ways to offset these costs and pass them on to customers. Two years from now, I’m willing to bet that even though more Americans will have health care coverage they will definitely be paying more in health-care costs. I also think it’s wishful thinking combined with creative accounting to believe that the deficit will be reduced over the next decade with this bill.

That being said, I am a staunch supporter of universal health care. Having lived in both the US and France I can say, that as far as I’m concerned, so called socialized medicine works far better than the American model – for me. Is it free? No. Are there flaws in the French system? Of course, but in

Useful websites:
American Citizens Abroad (ACA)
aca.ch

Association of American Residents Overseas (AARO)
aaro.org

Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas (FAWCO)
fawco.org

Union of Overseas Voters
wevote.fr

Democrats Abroad France
democratsabroad.org/group/france

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**Winning strategy:
take the bus or train**

When the June Jobs Report came out on July 6th, the reactions from Obama and Romney spoke volumes about their campaign strategies. Obama responded from a bus where he was on a two-day tour of Ohio and Pennsylvania, while Romney was at a cottage on the beautiful shores of Lake Winnepesaukee.

Nobody travels by bus unless they have to. So being on one when the jobs report came out made Obama look like just a regular guy who's not afraid to get to work by the worst of all means of public transit. Meanwhile, Romney's choice to criticize the current administration from the site of the first Harvard Yale Regatta could have only made him look further removed from the average

American if he had lit a cigar with a hundred dollar bill and said, "Yeah, it's tough for everybody out there right now."

Obama's strategy appears to be one of wooing voters with policy by taking a hard left of center. With his stance on gays in the military and gay marriage, Obama is tactically deciding to steer clear of the center, giving voters a sneak peek at what's on the agenda for the next four years if elected.

An even stronger electoral tool was his executive order of the Dream Act. Despite the fact that the implementation of this act may not be constitutional it effectively gives amnesty for slightly over a million immigrants. It also paints Romney into a corner. If Romney speaks out against it, he loses the Hispanic vote but if he doesn't say anything about it, he also alienates his conservative base.

So far, it appears that Romney's plan is to outspend and attack Obama. However, reacting to your opponent does not win elections as



Photo: Ethan

In case you didn't hear, Joey Chestnut (above) won his sixth straight title at Nathan's Famous 4th of July Hotdog Eating Contest. Nicknamed Jaws, he downed 68 hotdogs in 10 minutes. Doctors say hotdog 68 should pass through his system in time for next year's competition.

Kerry proved in 2004. You have to give the voters something that they like, a reason to vote for you and not just because they don't want to vote for the other guy.

There are two problems that Romney faces right now. One is clearly defining his policy: something even Republicans are criticizing him for. Second, how does he broaden the Republican base to women and Hispanics without alienating traditional GOP supporters?

Whether you agree with his policies or not, I think that's why Hollande won the French election. Sarkozy was seen as more of a Europhile than a Francophile. The message that Hollande (who travelled by train) sent was that he would improve the living standard of the average French person by reversing much of Sarkozy's policies that seemed to cater more to the European Union than France. He was the opposite of Sarkozy in political rhetoric and charisma and that was enough to win. ■

Clubs & Associations



Arthur and Hilary Moore, pictured second and third from right with conversation group, say AVF enabled them to integrate in France.



Le Kids Club in Nice runs themed camps over six weeks in the summer.

Welcome, stranger!

There's an old saying among the French: *étranger, danger!* That means, put simply, any outsider to your community is to be distrusted. You can still find traces of this attitude, but that's not the whole story. When Arthur and Hilary Moore arrived in Antibes in 2008 they weren't exactly overwhelmed by the warmth of the locals (neighbouring is not really a French thing) but luckily they soon came across the Antibes branch of *Accueil des villes françaises* (AVF). As Arthur explains: "It's simple. The aim of the organisation is to help anyone, French or foreign, moving into a region or town in France to settle in quickly, to learn about the district, to make friends, to have access to a wide range of activities and to meet a network of people who can offer help and advice to newcomers." The Moores were soon drawn into AVF's programme – with a choice ranging from bridge to choral singing, from pétanque to painting and, crucially, French classes and conversation groups. They were able to practice what they learned on outings to all kinds of places of interest. As Arthur sums up their experience: "AVF has certainly been the most important element in enabling us to settle into a new life in France. We've gained an enormous amount and have a better ability to speak and understand French. We had practical advice, a good social life and, last but not



Les Guides S'installer à Nice Côte d'Azur (France: Héli-opoles) is part of a series of "anti-tourist guides" in French (also available for Paris, Lyon and Marseille) released in association with AVFs across the country. For more on AVFs see our website.

For Events Calendar see pages 40-41 & our website

least, we've made many friends." Across France AVF has 340 branches. To check out those in the Var and Alpes-Maritimes see: avf.asso.fr

The children's hour

Readers sometimes ask what facilities are available for anglophone kids to get together. These do exist, often with the assumption that parents will also be in attendance. That's obviously the case with the Monaco-based Mother and Baby Group (stpaulsmonaco.com). In fact, a number of child-based initiatives offer a chance for mothers, especially, to get together. That's true of Le Kids' Club in Nice (lekidsclub.com). Founder Raquel Sweeney – now moved on to Hawaii – told us that she realised in France there was little socialisation between young mothers and one of the advantages of Le Kids' Club is that while their offspring are enjoying their activities the moms can get together and share experiences. Something similar is available at Kidooland in Vallauris (kidooland.com). Also to be noted are the story time sessions at the English Book Centre in Valbonne and the Sunday morning children's club at Holy Trinity, Cannes (three groups for ages 3-6, 7-11 and 12+), but these resume in September.

On a sad note, however, the Guides and Brownies troops which were set up a couple of years ago in Mougins have folded owing to lack of volunteer support.

"I've got a question, mate"

Well, it's not so easy to find another Australian to ask since the Australian Club disappeared and the last bottle of VB was quaffed at the Kookaburra. But there's still the Southern Cross Group – an online link for expats from Oz. It offers a mass of information and even an emailing facility where you can order anything from Minties to music videos. Have a look at www.southern-cross-group.org

Alternatively, a site for expats of all backgrounds is InterNations (internations.org). "Get to know like-minded expatriates in your city" – this social networking site "connects expats and their families in over 300 cities worldwide". A recent drinks party at Hi Beach in Nice brought together 200 members from various nationalities, including some French who spoke excellent English. Said one member: "It was the first time I've gone to an event in Nice and met like-minded expats ... under 60!"

"Again from the top..."

In this column, and the next, we'll be looking at some of the "expressive activities" available to anglophone expats. First singing: there are two main choirs. The Riviera International Singers (riviera-international-singers.com). Says President David Sidney: "I'd sum up by saying we do quality popular music – everything from light classical to jazz and gospel and what you might call family

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favourites. That doesn't mean we're not dedicated even if our music making is fun, rehearsals are certainly serious. The highlight of our year is our Christmas concert."

Then there's the Ensemble Vocal Syrnix (*ensemblevocal.syrinx.com*). "Radio Three rather than Radio Two," someone commented, making a BBC comparison which, it seems, both groups accept as valid. For EVS Kate Cobb explains, "We perform the traditional choral repertoire, anything from Palestrina to Parry. We started just twenty years ago and in November we're marking our anniversary with a performance of the *Messiah* at St Paul's Anglican Church in Monaco. We're not recruiting again until after that but in December we'll welcome new members and especially men when we start preparing the Mozart *Requiem*. Anyone interested should call me to have a chat." Kate's colleagues

at RIS would echo her appeal for more men to raise their voices. "We aren't aiming for the Treorchy sound but we do need more tenors and basses."

Bon appétit

One of the more critical duties of a club official, secretary or what have you, is choosing venues for meals. Members are quick to moan, and rightly, if they find they've forked out for duff food and poor service – two things which often go together. Well, if you're planning a lunch with up to 30 covers try the Auberge du Vieux Pont in Sospel (*aubergedupontvieux.fr*). They've got good food (English style, if you prefer that), friendly service and a reasonable price (and dogs welcome!). Sospel, an easy 45 minutes by train from Nice, is an attractive medieval village, a good place for a pre- or post-lunch stroll. To find out more call Tim and Pam Copeman. ■

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..... JULY

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- Mon 9 Cagnes sur Mer (Hippodrome) • Monaco (France)
- Thu 12 Boulouris
- Fri 13 Agay • Antibes • Beaulieu sur Mer
Bormes les Mimosas • Cagnes sur Mer
La Figueirette • Villefranche
- Sat 14 Bandol • Cannes (Italy) • Cavalaire • Cavaliere
Juan les Pins • Menton • Nice • St Laurent du Var
Theoule • Ste Maxime • St Raphael • St Tropez
- Sun 15 La Napoule (Chateau)
- Thu 19 Monaco (Czech Republic)
- Fri 20 Cagnes sur Mer (Hippodrome) • Cavaliere • Port Frejus
- Sat 21 Cannes (China)
- Tue 24 La Napoule (Plage Robinson)
- Fri 27 Cagnes sur Mer (Hippodrome) • Cavaliere
- Sun 29 Cannes (Spain)

..... AUGUST

- Wed 1 Juan les Pins
- Fri 3 Cavaliere • Port Frejus
- Sat 4 Bandol • St Jean Cap Ferrat
- Sun 5 St Raphael
- Tue 7 Cannes (France),
- Wed 8 Juan les Pins • Monaco (Austria),
- Thu 9 La Napoule (Plage Robinson) • Marines de Cogolin
- Fri 10 Cagnes sur Mer • Cavaliere • St Laurent du Var
- Tue 14 Agay • Cagnes sur Mer • Theoule
- Wed 15 Cannes (Germany) • Cavalaire • Juan les Pins,
Menton • Port Grimaud • Ste Maxime • Theoule
St Raphael • St Tropez • San Remo •
- Thu 16 Dramont • Villefranche Bay Cap Ferrat Passable
- Fri 17 Cavaliere • Port Frejus
- Tue 21 Bandol
- Thu 23 La Napoule (Chateau)
- Fri 24 Antibes • Cannes (Argentina) • Cavaliere
St Jean Cap Ferrat
- Sat 25 Cagnes sur Mer (Hippodrome) • Monaco (England)
- Fri 31 Cavaliere

..... SEPTEMBER

- Sat 1 Ste Maxime
- Sat 8 Nice Port

Plus many "private" fireworks whose details are kept secret, notably on Cap Ferrat. Cannes & Monaco listings also on our website.

Errors and Omissions excepted – no liability taken for disappointments; check locally!

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july

FREE CONCERT PITTSBURGH YOUTH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA - pypo.org

Wed July 25, 20h30: Free concert of the Pittsburgh Youth Philharmonic Orchestra (PYPO) at the Basilique Notre Dame in Nice (2, Rue d'Italie). PYPO is a non-profit youth orchestra, comprised of musicians from grades 4 to 12. Its mission is to educate, train, and develop students to excel in music as a career or a lifelong avocation.

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VISIT STATE APARTMENTS palais.mc

Until Wed Oct 31: The State Apartments at the Princes Palace in Monaco are open for public visits from 9h30-18h30 (October 10h-17h30). €7 adults and €3.50 students & children 8-14.

PISCINE COUBERTIN CANNES

04 93 47 12 94
Until Aug 31, 10h30-19h: pool open Mon to Sat. Games for 5 to 10-year-olds, Aqualud'O for parents with small children, swimming lessons and aquagym. 2 ave Pierre Poési in Cannes La Bocca. Adults €2.40 & children €1.50 for locals; for non-Cannois €3 and €2.

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04 93 85 85 58 - astrorama.net
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NICE JAZZ FRINGE FESTIVAL

nicejazzfestival.fr/Festival-Off
Until Aug 31: "Festival Off" with music, exhibitions, parades, films and more. See website for details.

SIESTES PARFUMÉES

04 97 05 58 00 - museesdegrasse.com
Until Aug 31: 11h30-17h at Place du 24 août; 14h-18h at the Musée International de la Parfumerie; 11h30-17h at Villa-Museum Jean-Honoré Fragonard. Enjoy one of the 30 public chairs for a jasmin-scented mist nap or take in the views of Grasse. Entry is free.

HANDICAP BEACH CANNES

04 93 06 31 97 - 04 92 99 84 22
ccas-cannes.fr
July & Aug 9h-19h; Sept, 10h-18h: Bijou Plage in Cannes, the leading beach/water facilities in the region equipped for swimming (buoys, life jackets, floating hammock, etc) with lifeguards. Parking, changing room, toilet facilities, accessible shower. Handi-Voile Aug 12 & 13 (please reserve).

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calendar

SUMMER MIX 2012

carredor-monaco.com
Until Fri Sept 7: Carré Doré Gallery (5 rue Princesse Caroline, Monaco) presents a sampling of the best artists exhibited throughout the year for a surprising, stimulating taste of summer under the banner of contemporary art. See website for details.

NUITS DU SUD MUSIC FESTIVAL

04 93 58 40 17 - nuitsdusud.com
Until Sat Aug 11: Music festival on the Place du Grand Jardin in Vence. See website for programme details & ticket info.

FROM IMPRESSIONISM TO POP ART

+377 97 97 54 24 - operagallery.com
Until Sun Aug 12: Modern art exhibition with Monet, Warhol, Miro, Chagall and Picasso at the Opera Gallery in Monaco.

MODEL BOATS, TRAINS

04 93 76 08 90
Thurs July 26-Sat Aug 4, 14h-19h: Exhibition at Espace Neptune, Port of St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

FREE CONCERT SAINT-RAPHAËL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

ville-saintraphael.fr
Fri July 27 to Thurs Aug 2, 21h: In the Jardin Bonaparte, music from films by composers including Vladimir Cosma, Hans Zimmer and Georges Délerue.

THEATRE WORKSHOP

06 82 42 65 46
Mon July 30-Fri Aug 3: Summer workshop for kids & teens at 46 ave Georges Clémenceau, Vallauris. Either 9h-12h or 14h30-17h30. Cost: €95 + €20 membership fee.

CANNES YACHT CLUB KIDS' SUMMER CAMP

Karine Grené 06 59 42 28 32 - yachtclubdecannes.org
July 30-Aug 3, Aug 6-10, Aug 13-17, Aug 20-24. From age 6+, price €150/week for non-members. Summer 2013 dates also set, contact Karine: grene@yachtclubdecannes.org

august

PROM' PARTIES NICE

08 92 70 74 07 - nicetourisme.com
Aug 1, 11, 15 & 25: A mix of styles from jazz to world to Latin, performing on the Promenade des Anglais, turned into a giant dance floor for the occasion.

ALICE COOPER IN CONCERT

+377 98 06 36 36
<http://en.sportingsummerfestival.com>
Wed Aug 1: Concert at Salle des Etoiles, Monte-Carlo
Tickets (dinner-concert) €160.
Reservations online or by phone.

PALAIS PRINCIER SUMMER CONCERT

+377 98 06 28 28 - opmc.mc/index.php
Thurs Aug 2, 21h30: Fifth of the traditional summer concerts, held in the Cour d'Honneur at the Palace, with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo. Reservations by phone or online.

GOURMET TOUR ROQUEBRUNE-SUR-ARGENS

04 94 19 89 89 - paysmeresterel.com
Thurs Aug 2, 9h30: Guided tour of medieval village (Castrum, Chapel and Chocolate Museum), followed by sampling of some local products. Starts at Office de Tourisme (12 ave Gabriel Péri) and lasts 2.5 hours. Cost: €8, €4 for 8-12 year olds and free for under 8s. Reservations required.

SUMMERY SUMMARIES

04 93 94 54 61 - holyltrinitycannes.org
Starting Aug 2, and every Thursday throughout the month, 20h: Holy Trinity Church Cannes (ave Branly) will be running a course "Summery Summaries" – key ideas from the Bible.

POSH PARAPHERNALIA

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org
Thurs Aug 2, 10h-15h: smart 2nd-hand clothes & accessories at 815 ch des Gourettes Mouans Sartoux.

TRIBUTE TO THE BEATLES

+377 93 15 06 02
Fri Aug 3, 21h: Beatles tribute at Port Hercule, Monaco.

SCORPIONS & BOY GEORGE

+377 98 06 36 36 <http://en.sportingsummerfestival.com/>
Fri Aug 3: Scorpions with Boy George as a DJ at the Gala Soirée in aid of the Croix-Rouge Monégasque. Dinner-concert €1000/person at Salle des Etoiles. reserve online or by phone.

SEA JOUST ST-RAPHAËL

ville-saintraphael.fr
Sun Aug 5, 14h30: Jousting competition for the Challenge Robert Marenco, Port Santa Lucia.

SOIRÉE SALSA

+377 93 15 06 02 - diabloson.com
Fri Aug 10, 21h: Les Diablosos at Port Hercule, Monaco.

FESTIVAL MELOMANIA

06 82 90 30 08 - jennifer@amisbrusc.com
Aug 12-18, 20h30: Festival Melomania at La Chapelle de Notre Dame du Brusco, (chem des Colles, Chateauneuf). Sun 12: Chants Polyphonique des Alpes de Méditerranée. Tues 14: Duo Humoresque: piano & cello playing Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Miakovsky. Thurs 16: Flute & guitar duet, traditional music. Sat 18: baroque music with Kammerensemble from Cologne. Tickets: €15 adult; €7 students under-22; under-16 free. Contact for reservations.

ABBA TRIBUTE MONACO

+377 93 15 06 02
Fri Aug 17, 21h: At Port Hercule.

AMIAC

John Bailey 04 93 65 00 58
Fri Aug 17: Le Relais de la Pinede Mouans Sartoux. To reserve please ring.

OPEN HOUSE AT THE GRANGE

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org
Sat Aug 18, 10h-15h: themed lunch, plus 2nd hand books, clothes & bric-a-brac at 815 ch des Gourettes Mouans Sartoux.

REGATTA

+377 93 10 63 00
Sat Aug 18-Thurs Aug 23: 8th edition of 500 mile regatta from Golf de Mondello to Monaco.

LA NUIT RUSSE IN CANNES

04 92 98 62 77 - palaisdesfestivals.com
Fri Aug 24, 20h: Dinner Gala with the Ballet Beriozka, Moscow Circus School, folklore dancers from Sourgout, Académie des Stars de Russie and fashion show with designer Elena Skakun. Palais des Festivals; tickets €150.

september

POTTERY COURSES

04 89 71 03 34
info@itineraires-ceramique.com
Sept 1-Sept 20: "Itinéraires Céramique" in Callian invites you to discover pottery courses taught by ceramists from Canton de Fayence guaranteeing professionalism and a wide range of techniques to stimulate everyone's creativity. Free workshops & demonstrations Sun Sept 9, from 15h-18h. Please call to reserve.

ST PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Sat Sept 1, 20h: With pianist Denis Matsouïev at Auditorium Rainier III, Monaco. Tickets €32-€89 from usual outlets.

FLAME PERFORMING ARTS ACADEMY "FREE TASTER DAY"

flameperformingartsacademy.com
Sat Sept 1, 10h-11h30: The Flame Performing Arts Academy is an English-speaking organisation offering theatre, dance, music and singing classes for 8-16-year-olds. At Kidooland, 1890 rte de Saint-Bernard, Vallauris.

AT THE GRANGE

04 93 47 94 20 - sunny-bank.org
Thurs Sept 6, 10-15h: smart 2nd hand clothes & accessories, 2nd hand books, bric-a-brac. Sat Sept 15, 10h-15h: Open House with lunch. 815 ch des Gourettes Mouans Sartoux.

GRACE, A SYMBOL OF CHANGE

<http://graceasymbolofchange.org>
Fri Sept 14-Sun Sept 16: A 3-day event celebrating Princess Grace. On Friday, gala dinner at Hôtel de Paris, and "Dress to Change the World" fashion show by American designer Jeff Garner with live music by Robin Lesmesurier. Saturday a mini-film festival with a screening of *To Catch a Thief*. On Sunday Le Deck Restaurant at the Monte-Carlo Beach Hotel hosts the first edition of Ladies & The City international hat contest.

AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE OPEN DAY

Funny Fish French Riviera
Guy & Hélène Leclere 06 85 11 73 75
funnyfish.fr
Sun Sept 16, 14h30-18h30: At Marie Annexe, 99 Chemin du Val Fleuri, Cagnes Sur Mer
Rainbow Diamonds Côte d'Azur
pennyjane@orange.fr
rainbowdiamonds.fr
Sun Sept 23, 14h-19h: At Salle Cinemonde, Rue Marcel Elmo, Vallauris.
These two local American Square Dance clubs would love to welcome you to their clubs. It's fun, energetic, good for your health and there is no complicated fancy footwork! You'll learn the calls in English – "circle left" or the more complex "ferris wheel" – and practice them to music. Once learnt, one can Square Dance at clubs or events all over the world and make new friends.

AMIAC LUNCH

Ann or Dan 04 93 61 87 60
Tues Sept 18: Jardin du Cap, Cap d'Antibes. Please ring to reserve.

VIAC CAR RALLY - viac.fr

Thurs Sept 20: Please see website.

IRONMAN 70.3 AIX EN PROVENCE

ironmanpaysdaix.com
Sun Sept 23: 2nd edition of 1.9km swim, 90km bike and 21.1km run. Register online.

VIAC WALK - viac.fr

Mon Sept 24: Organized walk. Details on website.

Alliance française de Nice
 2, rue de Paris - 06000 Nice - France
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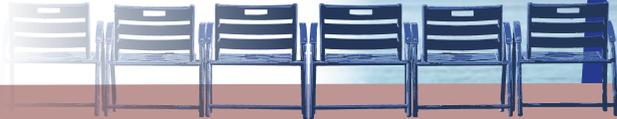
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Credit: Alliance Française de Nice, Ville de Nice (France), Nages Agency, J. Magagnoli, Lucie Bourgeois/2011

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