

THE RIVIERA REPORTER

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No 173 February/March 2016



The Leading International Magazine in the South of France | RivieraReporter.com

SATURDAY 23
APRIL 2016



SUNDAY 24
APRIL 2016

25th
BIRTHDAY

SEMI-MARATHON **I**NTERNATIONAL **D**E **N**ICE



23rd APRIL
FROM 19:30

3 EVENTS



KID'S RUN
FAMILY RUN

2
KM

LA NICOISE
to help fight
breast cancer

5
KM

24th APRIL
FROM 9:30

2 EVENTS

10 KM / 21.1 KM
HOKA ONE ONE

www.NiceSemiMarathon.com



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VILLE DE NICE



In this issue ...

The Insider

THERE are times when writing The Insider seems futile. I sit at the computer before 7am, coffee within comfortable reach, and my brain at what I believe its most operative time. Writer's block.

I go for a run, consecrating the 90 minutes to my editorial. Instead of structuring any viewpoint or mentally going through the pages of the issue for a hook, I wonder why my legs feel so heavy, followed by envisioning what I'm going to eat when I finish. In between this thought process, I come across a random man urinating, exposing himself wherever he pleases – say, by the Nice airport fence or the middle of the Promenade where schoolchildren are waiting for the bus; he's unapologetic, evident by the smirk he casts my way. Disgust for lack of civility fills every ounce of my being, my pace quickens.

I think about the migrants who come to this country, looking to citizens to set an example: feel free to pull out your zizi anywhere in public to relieve yourself. Need to go Number 2? There's the beach right there. What's that, your child has to go to the bathroom? No problem, the city is your toilet, just pull his or her pants down and let it rip.

I start to compose a letter in my mind to François Hollande:

Monsieur le Président,

I have an idea that may be of interest to you, one that would both solve unemployment and raise money for the State without increasing taxes, not to mention raise the profile of this country that I now proudly call home.

My suggestion is to make public urination a criminal offence and impose a fine of €150 per pipi. You could hire thousands of chômeurs to form a special task unit – the DNFW (Do Not Free Willy) – to enforce the law sept jours sur sept.

By my calculations, Monsieur le Président, (my inner voice slips into a French accent), based on one person per minute – let's lowball it, pardon my French – that's €150 pipi x 60 minutes x 24 hours x 365 days for a total of €X (remember to fill in this figure when I get home from run) revenue generated every year.

What's that? La Légion d'honneur ... Gosh no, I could not accept, Sir. You see, looking to the interests of others is what the Riviera Reporter is all about ...

I am asking you to agree, Monsieur le Président, to please accept my sentiments the most distingués, from yours sincerely, The Insider (the first and the original).

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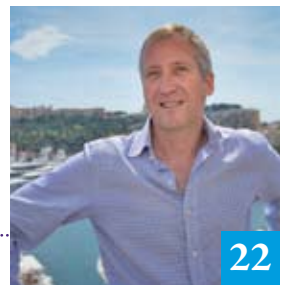
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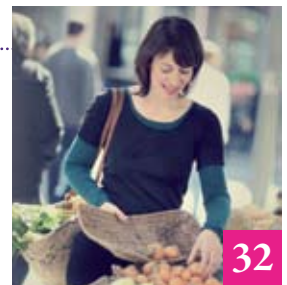
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Cover: Menton Village ©Jilly Bennett/jillybennett.com
Top: Menton Lemon Festival ©Office de Tourisme Menton.
Above: House: Mark Moz



AZUR GAELS HAVE A FIELD DAY PAGE 20

NEW MOSQUITO-BORNE VIRUS COULD HIT RIVIERA



SINCE the Asian tiger mosquito, carrier of dengue fever, first made a buzz in Menton in 2004, its pesky presence has steadily grown in the Var and parts of the Alpes-Maritimes, while cases of Chikungunya were reported in the Hérault in 2014.

Now a new threat could hit our region: the Zika virus, named after the forest in Uganda where it was first isolated, is transmitted by mosquitoes, primarily the

Aedes aegypti (pictured), that bite infected people and then pass it on to others. It's seen mainly in the West Indies but in early January twelve cases were confirmed in Martinique; in 2013, nearly 55,000 people were infected in French Polynesia.

Also in January, the US Centers for Disease Control confirmed a case in Houston,

Texas, to a female traveller from an undisclosed destination. (The CDC has confirmed 22 cases of Zika since 2007.)

Symptoms, which occur within 3 to 12 days after a bite, are often flu-like (fever, headache, joint pain, eye redness), accompanied by a rash although only one in five people infected actually become ill. There is no treatment, only rest and fluids.

Complications can be frightful, mainly

6.32 million
Number of Americans living abroad (not including military) – about the population of Tennessee. Bulk of US expats live in Europe but more and more are based in the Asian financial hubs of Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong. Source: CNBC.com

neurological disorder or birth defects in pregnant women. Specifically, a “crisis” in Brazil where health officials are investigating a possible connection between the Zika virus and babies born with microcephaly, a condition with an abnormally small head size associated with incomplete brain development. The CDC claims that more than 3,500 microcephaly cases were reported in that country between October 2015 and January 2016, a figure far from the 200 per year average.

As a result, the CDC issued a warning on January 15th: “Out of an abundance of caution, pregnant women are advised to consider postponing travel to areas where the Zika virus transmission is ongoing.”

Travellers to Zika virus regions (see cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html) are advised to wear insect repellent, and long sleeves and pants, and keep windows closed while turning on the air-con ...

le FLASH A TRUMPED UP SPANISH BORDER



A NEW TV campaign ad released by frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination Donald Trump deliberately mislead gullible American viewers into believing that archive footage of immigrants climbing a fence was on the Mexican border.

In reality the video is years old footage of migrants storming the Moroccan-Spanish border into Melilla, a small Spanish enclave in North Africa.

The video is the former landlord's

first foray into political television advertising and continues the pattern of rhetoric and exaggeration that has seen him shoot to the top of the polls. A 30-second message that uses the fear factor to focus purely on terrorism and immigration, the film features a typically dramatic male speaker telling viewers what “The Donald” will do.

“He’ll quickly cut off the head of ISIS and take their oil,” the speaker intones. “And he’ll stop illegal immigration by building a wall on our southern border that Mexico will pay for,” over footage showing multiple migrants streaming over a border.

Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski admitted the ploy was deliberate, telling NBC News, “No shit it’s not the Mexican border, but that’s what our country is going to look like. This was 1,000 percent on purpose.”

Ironically, there are now more Mexicans leaving the United States than entering, the first time since the 1940s.

Matthew Elliott, euroweeklynews.com

Acting FAST

AS we wrote last time, the US State Department has ceased issuing 24-page inserts for US passports, so American citizens will now have to buy a new 28 or 52-page document.

On the same subject, as part of a new decree signed on December 4th, the FAST Act (that’s Fixing America’s Surface Transportation) could see Americans having their passport revoked if they owe more than \$50,000 in taxes, an amount considered by law as “seriously delinquent tax debt” – an “unpaid, legally enforceable federal tax liability of an individual”.

According to “USA Today”, the IRS reported “12.4 million delinquent accounts owing nearly \$131 billion in assessed taxes, interest and penalties in 2014.” The IRS and the Treasury Department will henceforth be working with the State Department, which is now “authorized to deny, revoke or limit use of a taxpayer’s US passport”.

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What to expect in France for 2016

FRANCE IN THE NEWS
...in partnership with *The Local*

THE start of the New Year in France brought in a flood of changes, including a complete reworking of France's map and compulsory doggy bags in restaurants. Here's everything you need to know.

Less regions in France

It's 2016 and France now has 13 regions – down from 22 – thanks to a major rework of the regional map.



The new map (above) saw some regions like Brittany unchanged, but the fusion of two or even three regions in some other cases. The move is an effort to streamline regional councils and to run the country more efficiently.

The names of the new regions remain unannounced, and for the moment are just

a combination of the names of the previous regions. (See gouvernement.fr/action/la-reforme-territoriale.)

Paris gets bigger

January 1st saw the official launch of Grand Paris, or "La Métropole du Grand Paris" to give it its full name. Essentially, the project means that the large Parisian suburbs of Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val-de-Marne – as well as a handful of smaller communes – will now become much closer integrated with the capital in the aim of inter-communal cooperation.

Grand Paris will see over 200 councillors working together on issues ranging from environmental to economic development.

Increase in minimum wage

Those on minimum wage in France can expect an ever-so-slightly fatter wallet – with a six-euro increase per month. The minimum hourly wage is now €9.67 an hour, or €1,466.62 a month.

Drop in gas prices

For the fourth consecutive month, France's gas prices have fallen, this time by an average of 2%. The prices have dropped by an average of over 10% since January last year.

Tampon tax drops

The tax on women's sanitary products has dropped from 20% to just 5.5%. This has been a hot topic in France, seeing protests from women's groups around the country who argued that tampons should be taxed like condoms or food.

The government initially opposed changing the rate, saying it would reduce tax receipts in 2016 by €55 million.

Doggy bags introduced

Restaurants now officially need to provide doggy bags for customers who want to take their meal home. The law applies to any eatery that serves over 180 meals per day.



It's a move by the government to cut down on the 7 million tonnes of food wasted in France each year – but it remains to be seen if the French will adopt this typically American custom.

Get paid to cycle to work

Those who cycle to work are now eligible for a little extra pocket money, with a new

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plan rolled out to pay cyclists 25 cents for every kilometre they cycle between their home and their office. Payment is capped at €200 a year. For more information (in French) see “Indemnité kilométrique vélo – Mode d’emploi” at droit-finances.commentcamarche.net

Pay less taxes

France is set to get a simplified tax system this year, which will see income tax (*Impôt sur le revenu*) taken automatically at source rather than the following year after the individual annual declarations.



It is estimated that 8 million people in France will pay less tax this year than they did in 2015, with new “one stop shops” opened around the country to make bill paying easier.

Increase in bank fees

The average fee to have a bank account in France is set to be €16 this year, compared to €12 in 2015.

January saw several jumps in these maintenance fees, notably at the Banque Postale, which will leap from €4.20 to €6.20.

And even though there were no fees in recent years, January brought the implementation of new fees at BNP Paribas, Société Générale, and Caisse d’Epargne Ile-de-France – which will charge an annual €30, €24, and €15 per account.

Extra “terrorism taxes”

Those with home or car insurance will pay a bit more “terrorism tax” – meaning the total jumped from €3.30 to €4.30 from January on.

This money will go towards helping the families of terror victims and those who have been injured in terror attacks. ■

Au revoir plastic bags

Single use plastic bags are set to disappear from French checkouts by the end of March 2016.



The law, part of France’s energy transition bill, was originally due to come into force on January 1st, but its introduction has been delayed due to a hold up in Brussels. The European Commission has called for clarification of the text legislating the ban, for example, making clear the precise size, weight and type of bags affected by the ban.

The bill does not include a ban on those plastic bags that are deemed re-usable or biodegradable.

France’s efforts to reduce the number of plastic bags in distribution – which decreased drastically from 10.5 billion to 700 million between 2002 and 2011 – comes on the back of a call by the EU asking member states to reduce the 100 billion bags handed out by 80 percent.

A second law is planned for January 2017, which will ban all other kinds of disposable plastic bags (unless biodegradable), including those provided for packaging fruit, vegetables or cheese.

Jordan queen hits back at Hebdo cartoon of Syrian boy

Jordan’s Queen Rania has hit back at a cartoon in the French satirical magazine “Charlie Hebdo” depicting drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi as a grown-up committing sexual harassment in Germany.

“Someone who gropes asses in Germany,” it added, referring to the multiple acts of sexual assault blamed on migrants on New Year’s Eve.

In response, Queen Rania posted a cartoon on Facebook and Twitter by Jordan’s Osama Hajjaj depicting the little boy lying face down on the beach alongside an older child with a backpack and finally a doctor.

The queen added the caption: “Aylan could’ve been a doctor, a teacher, a loving parent.”

The “Charlie Hebdo” drawing has triggered sharp criticism on social networks while Aylan’s relatives in Canada expressed “disgust”.

Aylan’s father Abdullah Kurdi told AFP by telephone, “When I saw the picture, I cried,” adding, “my family is still in shock.”

The magazine, contacted by AFP, declined to comment.

French industry workers cheaper than Germans

Figures released in October 2015 revealed that labour costs (such as salaries, social charges and training) in Germany have risen three times higher than in France since 2012.

The data, produced by national statistics agency, Insee, showed that when it comes to industry French workers are actually 10 cents cheaper per hour to employ than their German counterparts (€37 compared to €37.10).

That stands in contrast to three years ago when French industrial workers cost four euros more than Germans.

The main reason for the shift in labour costs is the rise in labour costs in Germany, which have shot up 10% since 2012, in part thanks to wage rises.

During the same period in France, wages have hardly risen, which is not surprising given the stumbling state of the economy.

But another major factor has been the introduction of the CICE tax credit on competitiveness and employment, which has helped French companies lower costs, as well as the controversial Responsibility Pact, which saw several payroll charges cut in the hope it would boost recruitment.

For example, companies no longer have to pay social security costs for those workers employed on a minimum wage.

However it wasn’t all positive news for France. With other sectors added in, such as the service industry and construction, labour costs remain more expensive in France than much of Europe including their neighbours across the Rhine.

On average per hour, a French worker costs €34.60 compared to €31.40 in Germany.

When it comes to Europe as a whole, France lies in sixth place, far behind table toppers Norway where the average cost to employ someone stands at €54 an hour. Next came Denmark where workers cost €40.30 an hour and then Belgium on €39, before Sweden on €35.49.

Bottom of the ranking came Bulgaria with the average cost of €3.80 per hour.

France is “Europe’s most innovative country”

France can consider itself Europe’s most innovative nation and the third in the world after a new study published in November looked at the number of patents lodged in each country.

The study by Thompson-Reuters looked at the “100 most innovative organisations and enterprises” in the world.

And with 10 French companies making the list, France was the best represented country in Europe and was only outdone by Japan and the United States, which dominated the rankings with 40 and 35 companies included respectively.

The French companies singled out by the study for their innovation were Alcatel-Lucent, Alstom, Arkema, Safran, Saint-Gobain, Thales, Baleo and the organisations CEA, CNRS and IFP.

French news: fast and fresh



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France's news in English

THE LOCAL



In so many words



What language are you speaking?

David Cameron is taking his pitch from Henry Ford's Model-T: you can speak any language, as long as it's English. He has a point but it's hard to introduce linguistic cleansing if you look at things closely.

Britain is by far the most multicultural and multiethnic nation in the EU and while British Eurosceptics criticise how European laws and directives are always translated into all of the Union's 28 languages at considerable cost, they blissfully ignore the fact that most official British documents, even UK housing and child benefits applications, are published in over 60 languages including Urdu, Farsi and Arabic.

David Cameron is threatening deportation to those who haven't learnt English within 32 months. It's a good thing that the government's new A2 English requirement for spousal and family-related immigration is unlikely to be duplicated here. If a similar measure was applied to British expats in France, Italy or Spain, there'd be quite an exodus and potential for some distressing situations where families could be separated when some members couldn't meet the language requirements and others could.

In Spain especially, many Brits have been there for decades and yet still haven't mastered anything more complicated than *Oi matey, una cerveza por favor*. But

when it comes to officialdom, Italy, France and Spain make no linguistic concessions – official documents and forms are in the language of the country. If you want them translated, then you pay a translator or get help from a friendly native.

UK government policy on the A2 language requirement hasn't been helped by a Home Office press release on January 20th. The rather clumsily phrased document outlining the new language proposals even misspelt the word "language". How embarrassing is that?

A seat in upper class

"Downton Abbey" may be dead and buried but the British obsession with class somehow hangs on in a world where aristocratic stately houses are falling into disrepair and where wealth and privilege are more often earned than inherited. This can only be a good thing, as few of the traditional British "upper classes" were as benevolent and compassionate as the fictional Robert Crawley, the 7th Earl of Grantham. In fact, most were more like his toffee-nosed mother, the viperous and opinionated Violet Crawley, the Dowager Countess of Grantham, whose servants were "only allowed to be human on their day off".

Just when we thought attitudes like hers were gone forever along comes a nasty vestige from the past to prove us wrong.

Builder Jamie Loveday was travelling

on the London tube in his working clothes when a "well-spoken smartly-dressed man" in his 40s ordered him to give up his seat, as that is what the working class should always do when asked by someone "who has a better paid job". Jamie held his ground while the toff muttered, "This is outrageous!" before stalking off down the carriage to bark the same order at a young Chinese woman, who did indeed relinquish her seat.

Will the arrogant nob one day meet a rather more aggressive man than Loveday and his toffee-nose be broken once and for all? Tune in for another episode.

"Outrage as EU court rules it's OK for bosses to snoop on their employees' messages"

THE European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled on January 13th against Bogdan Bărbulescu, a Romanian worker fired in 2007 for using his Yahoo account to send personal messages to his fiancée and brother. The account was set up as a work account, to email clients.

The ECHR stated it's "not unreasonable that an employer would want to verify that employees were completing their professional tasks during working hours".

Contrary to reports by leading media such as "The Independent", the case is no precedent for the idea that bosses can now monitor employees' "private messages".

Jules Quinn, at law firm King & Spalding, said the case should serve as a warning: "Woe betide an employee who thinks he or she can use a work system, intermingling personal and business traffic, without their employer monitoring."

ECHR rulings are binding to countries that have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, including the UK and France. See echr.coe.int/Documents/Questions_Answers_ENG.pdf

England's anthem: time for a different tune?

France is a secular nation with no official religion although many French claim to be Catholic, at least in name. England, however, does indeed have an official religion – Christianity as practiced by the Church of England with the monarch as its protector. A few other countries also have official religions – Israel, most

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of the Middle East and Asia, for example. The fact that England has both a monarch and an official religion makes it more similar to Morocco than to France or Germany, which have neither.

Despite staunch republicans like Jeremy Corbyn, most Britons cherish the monarchy, which at least seems likely to survive the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and her successor – especially if that successor is William, rather than his rather dim and hypocritical father.

The survival of Christianity as the official faith is quite another matter. The Pew Research Centre maintains that if current trends continue, the proportion of the UK population identifying themselves as Christians will fall from 64% in 2010 to 45% by 2050. The 2011 UK Census found that those of no religion were the second largest group, about three and a half times as many as all the non-Christian faiths combined. Currently, around 30% of Britons claim to have “no faith” and about 7% claim to be Muslims, Jews, Buddhists or Hindus.

Where does that leave the national anthem? The first word is “God” and the hymn goes on to pray for the

well-being of the monarch. Corbyn's disrespectful refusal to sing it annoyed many but it did raise the question of whether “God Save the Queen” (or King) is still relevant. It is the British anthem and there has been some parliamentary discussion about whether England should have its own as do Scotland and Wales.

National anthems are often anachronistic. The French anthem – “La Marseillaise” – is a bloody war cry to destroy the nation's enemies. The American “Star-Spangled Banner” uses the flag as the main symbol but with victory in battle as a backdrop. “O Canada” is indeed about the nation but perhaps rather dreary. “Viva Italia” is chirpy and uplifting but you need Italian genes to handle that vocal range.

What could a good anthem be? “Land of Hope and Glory” has been put forward (it mentions God three times) and “Jerusalem”, which refers to “England's green and pleasant land”, only mentions God once so should be acceptable to both the religious and the growing number of those with no faith. The lyrics are hopeful but not arrogant or aggressive.

Not bad. Even Jeremy might be tempted to sing along. ■

Climb Mont Blanc from your armchair thanks to Google



mountain runners.

Ascend the mountain through the eyes of climber Kilian Jornet, who holds the speed record for ascending and

GOOGLE has crossed another frontier in mapping out Mont Blanc via its Street View function, meaning you can see the iconic mountain like never before.

The American search engine sent a team of climbers, skiers, and photographers to the summit, equipped with a camera capable of filming 360 degrees.

The result is spectacular. See the final minute of the ascension (and use your mouse to click and drag to see the view in every direction) on YouTube: “Vivez les 100 derniers mètres jusqu'au sommet du Mont Blanc”.

You can also see the splendour of the Mer de Glace glacier, as well as views of the mountain from the perspective of rock climbers, skiers, and

descending Mont Blanc in just 4 hours 57 minutes or ice climb up a serac with record-setting alpine climber Ueli Steck. Why not ski with 14-time ski mountaineering champion Laetitia Roux and guide Patrick Gabarrou?

For the ascent to the summit, it was elite guide Korra Pesce who carried the Street View Trekker up and down the Goûter Route of the mountain.

Google said in a statement that the project “serves as a digital record of Mont Blanc as it appears today, so future outdoor enthusiasts and scientists can look back at this time capsule to see how the mountain has changed.”

Watch “Explore Mont Blanc with Kilian Jornet, Ueli Steck, Candide Thovex, and Google Maps” on YouTube. For more see TheLocal.fr

HOME SWEET HOME ... FINALLY

BY PJ HESLIN



I'M sure readers have been waiting with bated breath, wondering whether we were able to move into our new apartment for Christmas (see Reporter 171). After submitting all of the preliminary paperwork to our broker, and signing an intent to pay the brokerage fee once the loan was finalized, we thought it would be early fall by the time we moved. After all, it was end of July. Well, here's what happened ...

After our meeting with the *courtier* (mortgage broker) at the end of July, he told us it would take three weeks to get loan offers from various banks. Oddly, within 5 days, an email popped up in my Inbox with the subject "Votre Projet Immobilier", outlining one offer with stipulations. It wasn't our dream mortgage by any means and we questioned our broker about it, and inquired about other proposals. Here's where it gets strange, the broker acknowledged he received other offers (remember, this was within 5 days) but instead of sharing that information with us, he distractingly showed us his confirmed registration for Ironman France (knowing that my wife and I have each completed it). Then he

returned to the subject of the impending *vacances*, those nasty but necessary August holidays that bring the country to a standstill. At this point, if we didn't move forward, we jeopardized losing our dream (and within our budget) apartment. On July 27th, with heavy hearts, we agreed to accept this offer and were told that we'd hear directly from the bank soon to set up the initial appointment ... to "get the official paperwork started".

By August 10th we had heard nothing. The realtor was calling us for updates and, uncharacteristically, was losing his patience. We sent an email to our broker and he said: "Everyone is on holiday at the bank. We are trying to book an appointment."

This was followed immediately by an email from his assistant, a PDF document outlining the basic terms of our mortgage, to be signed and sent back ASAP.

We looked at the form and noticed the mandatory life insurance indicated 100% coverage, not 75% as quoted in our offer.

My reply by email: "Please double check this figure."

Broker: "It's correct".

I cut and paste the broker's original email with the offer stating 75% and hit send.

(... Broker typing): "I have made a mistake. They are asking for 100% and so your monthly mortgage will be €50 more."

Me: "Expletive, expletive, expletive" ...

At this point, we are cornered. We've lost too much time.

Broker: "Wait, I ask for your discretion but another offer has just come in, so let's go with that."

This "sudden" offer was a savings to us of €10,000. One can imagine the total confusion at this point.

Meanwhile our registered envelope from the *notaire* arrived on August 10th and our official 8-day cooling off period had begun. After this point, we could be financially liable by penalty.

My wife had enough of it all. She gave the broker 24 hours to have a concrete offer and meeting arranged with the new bank or we would pull out. My heart sank; I loved that apartment. But without my wife's attention to detail and tenacity, we would have ended up legally tied to an unfavorable mortgage, and I doubt the deal would have gone through in time. If the whole thing had been left to me, I probably would have ended up with a handful of magic beans by this point.

Within 24 hours, the new bank called us and we were set to meet. I thought it would simply be a matter of signing on the dotted line and getting in touch with the buyer to find out when we could get the keys. *Mais non*.

Now we had to go to the bank that was approving our mortgage to start the process for the loan application. Usually this is done at a bank's *habitat conseil* (head office) before you choose your local branch, but as it was *les vacances* and time was of the essence, our first meeting was at the branch that was closest to (hopefully) our new place. This was all about filling out questionnaires for the mandatory insurance. Based on these forms, the insurance company can ask

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you for supplementary information or to have a check-up (keep any medical bills incurred as they should be reimbursed) and, depending on whether either of these actions is necessary, this could hold up the entire procedure.

When we asked if it would take about a month from this point to finalize everything, our new bank manager scrunched his face hesitantly. We still had to wait to receive the official offer by mail, which could take several weeks, then there was another cooling-off period of 11 days before you can accept the loan. From there, an appointment has to be made with a busy *notaire* for the buyer and seller to sign the final *acte*, and this can take another month.

We had a second two-hour bank meeting to move our accounts over to our new bank (standard practice in France) and set up apartment insurance, which was a condition of the offer. Our excellent new bank manager told us that the person in charge of processing our mortgage at the *habitat conseil*, with whom we should have met with from the beginning, returned from her August holidays but broke her toe first day back and was now off on sick leave. But we were assured that the mortgage had been transferred to credit services for *contrôle et édition des offres de prêt*.

Having Googled this term, I came across various forums where some would-be buyers have a three or four month wait just for this portion of the process. Essentially, all loan documents in France are the same text but certain elements are "edited" with your specific sums,

coordinates and, if applicable, conditions.

We received the official offer on September 16th, and taking into account the Sunday within the eleven-day waiting period, we signed off on the 28th. It's worth noting how buyer-protective these documents are, with clauses allowing for limited missed payments and the possibility of renegotiating the terms.

One last hiccup was a typo on the mortgage offer regarding our street address, which meant that there was a potential risk that the entire process would have to go back to square one. Fortunately, a few phone calls seemed to indicate "let's just look the other way".

Everything financially was ratified by mid-September and all we needed was the *notaire* to call us in with the buyer to do a once-over with the paperwork and get the keys. Time wise, it looked like we could move in anywhere between the end of September and Christmas. I wasn't too concerned with how long the final step would take but I was worried about how we were going to coordinate moving out with our landlord without incurring any penalty. Since our landlord had been trying to illegally raise our rent and stick us with mysterious charges that we had never heard of before, I wasn't looking for any favors from her. In fact, I was quite convinced we would end up paying rent and a mortgage for one month (which I have since learned wouldn't happen in this country).

The final meeting with the *notaire* and the buyer took 4 weeks to set up after we received the offer in the

post. Days before the rendezvous, you have the *déblocage de fonds* from your account, whereby the bank puts the entire amount of the loan in your bank account before it is transferred to the *notaire*. I was going to pop off to the casino to play double or nothing but, unfortunately, I don't even know the pin number to our account (you forget a code once and get blocked from your account, and the Missus is unforgiving).

The final signing went off without a hitch. It was really more of a formality. We met at the *notaire's* office with the buyer and the real estate agent. The *notaire* read over all the paperwork to confirm everything and we signed and initialed a whole new batch of papers. Keys were finally exchanged and we officially became homeowners three months after we put in the offer.

In the end, like all comparisons between France and the US, I refuse to say which system is better than the other. The combination of a buyer's market with low interest rates means it's an ideal opportunity to buy in France ... if you have the time to look at lots of properties. I appreciate the advantages in the French system with regards to preventing housing bubbles but, with the strict regulations and different "cooling-off periods", I can also see why sellers find it easier to pass on property to their children rather than sell it. After all, by the time they can actually secure payment, they'll probably be dead. ■

For more see "10 Steps to Getting Your Mortgage" on page 30.

Something for everyone

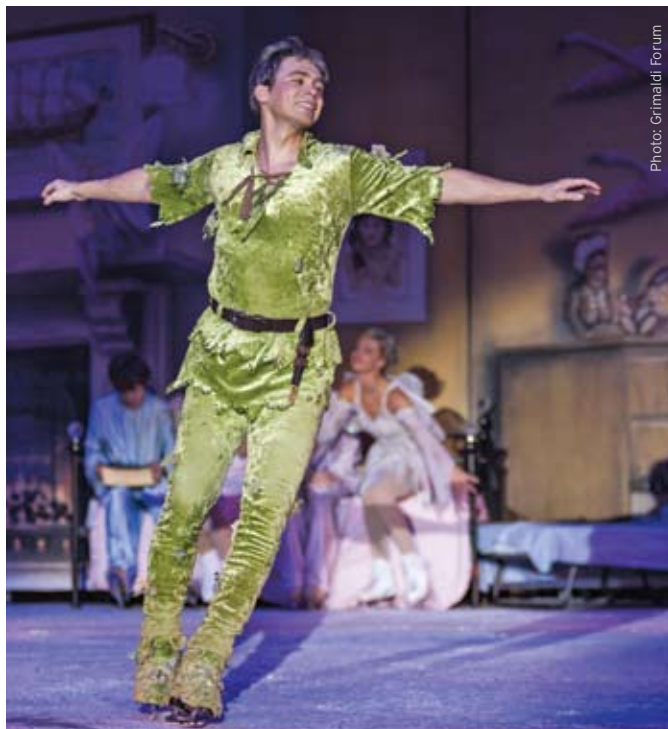


Photo: Grimaldi Forum



Photo: Menton Tourism

BY MOLLY BROWN

WELCOME to another new year. Let's hope it brings health, wealth, peace ... and a little prosperity to us all. The government's preliminary budget of €62,536,800 is 2.4% more than the previous year with expenses 10.8% higher and was unanimously approved by the National Council, an optimistic forecast for the New Year. With a stable economy, full employment, and 300 sunny days a year, Monaco's sovereign Prince Albert II can be justly proud to hail the Principality as a "haven of peace". In step with Paris's defiance, Monaco celebrated the New Year as always, with music, fireworks, and dancing. Les Ballets de Monte Carlo delighted audiences with brilliant performances of Jean-Christophe Maillot's "Casse Noisette Compagnie" in Grimaldi Forum's Salle des Princes, on the 1000-metre stage where Russian ice stars will perform "Peter Pan on Ice" (Mar 2nd-6th). The company is off to New York at the end of February to dance Maillot's "Cendrillon" (Cinderella) as part of a promotion of Monaco's many cultural attractions, which are pretty spectacular this year.

The 40th International Circus Festival celebrated Prince Rainier's favourite circus artists, clowns, as 25 award winning clowns from previous years filled the *Chapiteau* with laughter in January as they competed for this year's prestigious Clown d'Or. One

of the highlights of Opera Monte-Carlo's season this year is Vincenzo Bellini's great dramatic opera, "Norma", to be performed in the illustrious Salle Garnier with Cecilia Bartoli in the title role and the Zurich Opera orchestra (Feb 19th-25th). The Printemps des Arts brings 5 orchestras, 8 ensembles, 2 choirs and 15 soloists to Monte Carlo, with concerts along the coast before the festival begins in Monaco (Mar 9th-Apr 10th).

Flowers are everywhere, especially in the Salle des Étoiles ... for the very special Bal de la Rose on March 19th in aid of the Princess Grace Foundation. Presided over by the Prince and Princess of Monaco and Princess Caroline of Hanover, this glamorous charity event officially opens Monte Carlo's summer season. Easter is early this year (Easter Sunday falls on Daylight Savings Time, so clocks spring forward one hour on March 27th) and chocolate Easter bunnies and decorated eggs appear in the shops weeks beforehand to tempt the faint-hearted.

This year's very mild weather evokes memories of Monte Carlo in photographs taken a century ago, before air travel enabled rich tourists to fly around the world and when wealthy Europeans flocked to the Principality for the mild winter season. The mimosa trees were already in bloom at Christmas and there are more than enough oranges and lemons for the 140 tons needed to create the amazing 10-metre

high citrus sculptures at the 83rd Menton Lemon Festival (above). The orchid festival in the Place de l'Europe provides a feast of colours and expert advice for orchid lovers (Feb 13th-Mar 2nd). The New Year finally brought snow to the ski slopes and season are in full swing, with skating on Port Hercule until February 28th, but the world's tennis stars are busy training in Florida or at the Monte-Carlo Country Club for the beginning of the clay court season. Local school spring holidays luckily coincide with the Monte-Carlo Rolex Masters (Apr 9th-17th) and special discounted prices are given to schools and tennis clubs for groups of 10 or more. Hundreds of workers are hired for this event and work to erect the stands has already begun.

February is always a special month for lovers, the time for Valentine cards and flowers ... a boom time for florists ... but this is also a distinctive year. It is a Leap Year, when by tradition a woman is allowed to propose to a man of her choice. In the Western world, women are emancipated, educated, can vote and choose a career ... although equal pay in the work place is still not universal. Securing a kind and loving partner is not guaranteed, but it could be a possibility this year, even for a shy lady. So gentlemen, spruce yourself up, go out and about and prepare for the 29th day of February. It could be your lucky day. ■



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Youth is wasted on the unemployed

BUSINESS



BY PETER JOHNSON

A VERY Happy New Year to all! As we ended 2015 with more alarming terrorist attacks and waves of immigrants clamouring at Europe's gates, one thing that noticeably did not change in France was the rate of unemployment.

Few can be surprised that there are hotbeds of potential Islamist fundamentalists springing up in French inner city high-rises. The young people are poorly educated and have only the slenderest of job prospects. Their dissatisfaction with Western capitalist society ferments in a hothouse environment that breeds the hatred and anger that finally manifests itself in the evil of destroying the lives of others.

But what if we looked at this situation, not so much as a scab of putrescent ill within society, but as an opportunity for reform. Unemployment in the inner cities runs at 25% amongst the young men, that's a population of 2 million people for the whole of France. Unemployed and without hope.

Emmanuel Macron, the dynamic young Minister of the Economy, has other ideas, firstly by creating 500,000 apprenticeships from the ranks of the unemployed. That's taking 500,000 youngsters out of misery and despair and giving them optimism and aspirations for the future in the workplace.

To date, the government has tried many different ways of encouraging employment, but – as often – these moves were burdened with heavy bureaucracy and “scatter

gun” methodology. Little has improved, but Macron believes that creating the opportunity for young people will not come from government-driven measures, but “through the open gates of audacity, initiative, risks” that everyone wants to take, but – thus far – have been impeded by a “crowd of obstacles and rules”.

Growth, says Macron, will not come from without, but within. It's up to everyone to harness his or her imagination and creativity to engage with the future. The priority in France must be productive, private investment rather than State subsidies and handouts. France must “open its economy, create more social mobility, and allow innovation to flourish”. We need to “support those who enter the job market, help them to set up their business”. He continues with breathtaking clarity, “It's often easier to find a client than to find an employer.”

As we speak, France counts 20,000 start-up businesses, employing some 200,000 people, and many international companies are looking to France to tap into the new Silicon Valley. In October 2015, the American giant, Cisco, invested \$100 million in French start-ups. More will follow if Macron's ideas are heeded.

Let's hope that Macron's initiatives create a better economic climate in 2016 and that some of the good measures will infiltrate the inner city ghettos to build a saner society for all of us, with more creation, more tolerance, and less stigmatisation and oppression. ■

BENOIT BURIDANT

Q&A with CEO & Co-Founder of FrenchFounders



RR: *You were born in Brest in 1985 and grew up in Toulon. Can you tell us a how you ended up in the US?*

BB: "I always wanted to start my own business and thought the US would be a great place to do so, especially because I was looking for a greater challenge. I had visited the country often and when I was 23, I finally settled there, starting my first company straight away."

RR: *You launched French Founders in April 28, 2014. What gave you the idea and how does it work?*

BB: "FrenchFounders is a business exchange platform for French-speaking CEOs and entrepreneurs. The idea came about a few months after I moved to the US and realised that this community

was extremely tight and active, but currently underserved by other organisations or platforms. For example, French business clubs were too old school, or LinkedIn too mass and impersonal."

RR: *How do you become a member?*

BB: "We have members all over the world, a little over 1,200 right now, spread across North America (50%), Europe and Africa (25%), Asia & Oceania (15%) and South America (10%). To join FrenchFounders, you must meet at least one of the 3 criteria: You're a CEO or C-Executive of a company with more than 100 persons or \$10M+ in annual revenues, a founder or manager of a start-up with \$1M+ in annual revenues or \$1M+ in funding or an exceptional individual with recognised abilities in a specific field or industry."

RR: *What do you envision in the future for FrenchFounders and the key to its success?*

BB: "FrenchFounders will keep growing selectively and provide greater added value to its members. It could take different forms, such as relevant and personalised introductions between members with strong business affinities, select events with cutting-edge content and prestigious guest speakers and access to local boards of experts, including representatives from the startup and investing community, public institutions, digital specialists, etc. – in each of our major markets (US, UK, China, etc.). We will also continue to expand geographically with the opening of offices in London and Shanghai in early 2016."

RR: *How is the working culture in the US different from France?*

BB: "There are three major differences I would point out to between the two cultures. First, the creative and building process is much more iterative in the US than it is in France. Second, the working style is also more direct in the US, you either succeed or fail fast. And finally, there is also in the US a greater appetite for risk." ■

See frenchfounders.com

Guess that's why they call it the (Gauloises) Bleues

FREELANCE

BY BARTH HULLEY

IT was perhaps an oversight on my part to expect my wife, who spoke almost no French, to take care of all things "family" after our move to the Republic. However, it seemed fair at the time, seeing as I was the one working, that she should deal with paperwork pertaining to the home while I would deal with anything work-wise.

On the face of it, I reckoned that nothing

could be worse than having to understand the workings of French income tax, business law and payroll legislation. I now admit that I was wrong and I apologise to my wife (who still is my wife despite everything) for abandoning her to the quagmire of *paperasse* and *fonctionnaire*-induced stress that she subsequently found herself in.

To fully appreciate the situation, imagine for a moment being pregnant, having a

grumpy 18-month-old, teething toddler permanently at your side, and being unable to express yourself in French much beyond what you like to do in your free time. Throw into the equation that you've not slept for more than four hours straight in about a year ... well, you get the picture. Imagine your spouse then hands you a bunch of official looking letters written entirely in French and asks you to sort out what needs doing – because he doesn't

FREELANCE

have time. And in a world where Web 2.0 doesn't exist, in 2006, when just about anything you can do online these days just wasn't possible.

Ten years ago, websites were largely static pages of information with no interaction possible, meaning you had to physically go to the appropriate office to fill out forms with a thick, black Biro (I know, you're having palpitations, right?).

Being the emotionally sensitive kind of guy that I am, returning home from the office I often sensed a degree of post-traumatic exasperation in my wife's demeanour. Still, with my own workplace problems eating my brain, unenviable in equal measure, I was rarely good at oozing sympathy or listening with much enthusiasm either.

If I knew what I know now, of course I wouldn't have dared put her through it – for any spouse made to endure such bureaucratic torture would surely have filed for divorce or, at the very least, picked up a pack-a-day Gauloises Bleues habit.

And yet it was my wife who dealt with it all, staring down those *fonctionnaires* with a cool threatening smile, and it is thanks to her that we managed to transfer into the French social security and healthcare despite their ridiculous

complexity and opaqueness.

The situation would have been far simpler had either one of us been employed. A “foreign” household comprising of one freelancer, one unemployed mother (as yet unable to claim Jobseekers Allowance) and one baby was far from the typical profile that the institutions were used to dealing with. Indeed, more often than not, in our situation, the duty manager usually had to be called so that the correct forms could be located, if they existed at all.

Indeed the worst case scenario has since become a dinner party staple: the impasse that occurred at the *Mutuelle de l'Est* when, after failing to comprehend our case, the *fonctionnaire* disappeared for 20 minutes seemingly to consult with the higher powers – only to be spotted by the fire exit enjoying an extended *pause clope*.

All this just goes to show that paperwork is not something to be undertaken alone in France – the stress and frustration it causes are simply too much to bear. Why else would there be so many *fonctionnaires* – if not to spread a collective pain? ■

Barth Hulley lives in Strasbourg. His recent book, “Freelance in France 2015”, offers practical advice on working for yourself in France. See freelanceinfrance.fr



Photo: iFavallat

4,900

THE number of city workers who every year clean up 350 tonnes of cigarette butts off the streets in Paris, where, since October 2015, there's a €68 fine if you toss your *mégot* (butt). This is cheap compared to Cannes: €180 for a *procès verbal* (ticket) not paid within 45 days.

Cannes mayor David Lisnard launched a billboard campaign in May 2014,

translated into 5 languages (French, English, Italian, Russian and Arabic) and using the Twitter hashtag #RespectCannes.

“Maybe in terms of perception, people who flick their butts don't feel as though they're committing a wrongful act like someone who litters the street with a beer can,” Lisnard told Europe1, “but the cost is the same for the community. We must take prevention ... This isn't taking away your freedom, it's simply a fight against incivility.”

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French Residence and Taxes

BY ROB KAY, SENIOR PARTNER, BLEVINS FRANKS



IF you own, or are buying, a property in France and spend time here each year, you need to understand the rules about residency in France and the UK, so that you comply fully with the correct tax regime. Getting it wrong could cause problems with the taxman later, or result in you paying more tax than you need to.

French tax residency

YOU will be deemed tax resident in France if you fulfil any of the following four tests. Note that you do not have a choice; you either are, or are not, French tax resident under the rules.

- 1) France is your main residence or home (your *foyer*). This embraces ideas of permanence and stability and is the rule the French authorities most rely on.
- 2) France is your principal place of abode, your *lieu séjour principal*. This usually means you spend more than 183 days in France per calendar year, or you spend more days here than in any other country.
- 3) Your principal activity (for example, your occupation) is in France.
- 4) France is the country of your most substantial assets (centre of economic interests).

You are tax resident from the day after you arrive in France, if you arrived with an intention to reside here indefinitely.

Tax in France

IF you meet any of the above criteria, you are liable to French income tax, capital gains tax and wealth tax on your worldwide income and assets. You have to declare all of this, including income that is taxed elsewhere, such as UK rental income and pensions.

In France, you are taxed on a household, rather than on an individual basis. This means that if you are married or in a civil partnership, your tax liability is based on your combined income.

French income tax rates are progressive up to 45%. In addition to income tax, social charges are levied on most types of income (8% on salaries, 7.4% on pension income and 15.5% on investment income).

UK government service pensions remain taxable in the UK and are not taxed in France, although you need to declare the income as it is taken into account when the rate of tax payable on your other French source income is calculated.

You also have to consider the tax implications on any other types of income such as investment income. It is important to note that what is tax-efficient in the UK (such as ISAs) is not tax-efficient if you become French resident.

Besides income tax, you may be liable to wealth tax. This is an annual tax on the value of a household's worldwide assets as at January 1st. You are liable if your taxable assets are above €1.3 million. Rates range from 0% (for assets under €800,000) to 1.5% (for assets above €10,000,000).

Succession tax is the French equivalent of UK inheritance tax but works quite differently. Tax is not charged on your estate but paid by each beneficiary on the assets they inherit. Rates vary according to

the relationship between the deceased and the beneficiary.

UK tax residency rules

IN the UK, the Statutory Residence Test determines whether you are liable for UK income and capital gains tax on your worldwide income. In summary, it is a combination of day counting and the number of "sufficient ties" you have with the UK. Whether or not you were resident in the UK in the previous tax years also plays a part. This is detailed and complex legislation, so you really need to take professional advice.

You can be resident in both the UK and France simultaneously. In this case, "tie breaker" rules in the UK-France double tax treaty will determine where you are resident for tax purposes. These consider where you have a permanent home available to you, where your centre of vital interest is located, and where you have a habitual abode. If these are indeterminate, it comes down to nationality.

Many people avoid becoming resident in France because they believe they would pay too much tax as a result. However, if you are retired and take specialist, personalised advice, you may find that you can use compliant tax efficient arrangements in France to considerably lower your tax liabilities. You may even find that you could pay less tax in France than you do in the UK.

International tax legislation and cross-border tax planning is complex and you should always seek professional guidance to make sure you are completely up to date across your financial affairs.

Tax rates, scope and reliefs may change. Any statements concerning taxation are based upon our understanding of current taxation laws and practices, which are subject to change. Tax information has been summarised; an individual is advised to seek personalised advice. ■

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THE Anglophone community of the Riviera has lost one of its brightest stars. Avery Glize-Kane passed away on January 8th, at the age of 76, after a long fight against cancer. Avery was such a vital and exuberant presence in our lives; it is difficult to imagine that her light has now been extinguished.

In 1987, Avery founded the French Riviera-Monaco Council of the Navy League, and remained its President for 20 years, after which she became Honorary President. She had long been the Consular

Agent of the United States in Nice, and only retired last year; that office is now closed. In June 1995, she was awarded the Meritorious Public Service Citation by the Secretary of the US Navy, and in the same year, the Gold Medal of the City of Cannes.

The American Club of the Riviera also benefitted from Avery's wisdom for the many years she served as an Officer-Legal Advisor. As the Club's President, I had the privilege of working and playing with her at stimulating meetings and wonderful social events.

OBIT

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Avery first came to France in her very early twenties to perfect her French, went back to the States, and then returned in 1961 to marry Jean Glize, who died in 2004. She also joined the Faculty of Law at the University of Nice, graduating in 1966. In her early career she worked at the office of Maître Pierre Curatti on rue d'Antibes in Cannes, and later opened her own practice nearby in her beautiful residence on Boulevard de la République, at which she remained until her passing.

We all have our personal memories of Avery. Mine is her joy at the piano bar of the Martinez Hotel in Cannes during the years that the buoyant and talented Jimmy McKissic played and sang “The Great American Songbook”. To share with Avery one of these Friday evenings of cocktails and music was a very special pleasure.

She will be missed by so many of us.

Avery's dear friend, Anne Tormey, commented, “When they made Avery, they broke the mold. She was unique ... kind, generous, witty, elegant, classy, just and fair. But above all, she had an unsurpassed sense of fun and the ridiculous, which we shared every day.”

She is survived by her daughter Ferney Glize-Santini, son-in-law Jean-Jacques Santini, and their two children, Jean-Yves and Lauren, and by her three brothers: James Kane, Michael Kane and Steven Renahan.

Yet Avery Glize-Kane is also survived by her countless friends, who gathered at Holy Trinity Cannes on January 19th to say farewell, perhaps evoking sentiments written by Ira Gershwin and sung by Mr McKissic at the Martinez: “The memory of all that, no, no, they can't take that away from me.” **Burton Gintell ■**

Denmark is no longer the country I used to love

BY SØREN KENNER



DENMARK is changing and not for the better. But if you complain or criticise you can be sure someone will promptly tell you that it is still the world's happiest society.

So here is what is really happening in Denmark these days:

One out of 11 Danes are on antidepressants, the suicide rate is alarmingly high and tension and uncertainty is everywhere.

Competent immigrants are routinely expelled while violent gangsters like Gimi Levacovic receive millions in welfare benefits.

In our nursing homes, the elderly lie around in diapers because we can't afford the needed staffing, yet politicians manage to spend several billion each year subsidising media (which in turn provide a stage for the politicians).

We are in the midst of a mass migration from south to north that we are powerless to do anything about. There is talk, talk, talk and talk but very little action. We offer help to refugees that can afford to pay traffickers to smuggle them to Scandinavia, yet do virtually nothing to help the hardest hit that are left behind in the war-torn areas.

The left wing is mad about the prospect of families in rural areas maybe being able to afford a car large enough for the whole family.

Growth in Denmark is dead as a doornail. We do everything in our power to destroy our own competitiveness yet still act amazed when we succeed.

Some 100,000 Eastern Europeans take care of tasks that the Danes can't be bothered to do. At the same time, there are 800,000 Danes of working age (between 18 and 65) that live off public benefits.

There are 800,000 employees in the public sector. The same number of people live off of the system. There are 1.2 million retirees.

And only 1.6 million people employed in the private sector to pay for it all.

Our publicly funded job activation programs cost somewhere between 15 and 30 billion kroner (€2-4 billion) a year, but create no jobs.

Meanwhile in the hospitals, doctors and nurses use up to half of their time recording and reporting mostly useless information demanded by government. And at the same time there are massive waiting lists for treatment and patients sleeping in the hallways.

The City of Copenhagen has a communications staff of several hundred, while there are waiting lists for day care institutions and a shortage of teachers.

The border with Sweden is closed and we are paying for the border controls. The border with Germany must also be checked, and we pay for that as well. Call it the heralded Danish business acumen in full swing.

Parliament has just passed the most expensive budget of all time. It will be paid by the world's highest tax burden. Still, we have to borrow 60 billion kroner (€8 billion) from abroad and dip into retirees' pension savings in order to get the budget to work.

If you complain, you will be immediately told that Denmark is the world's happiest and best country. Even though 12% of the adult population pop prescription pills and the suicide rate is one of the world's highest.

Winter can be biting cold in Scandinavia. And your energy bills do nothing to lighten your mood. A nearly unanimous parliament recently adopted an "energy reform" that costs residents an additional 8 billion kroner (€1 million) in taxes each year. It doesn't create any real CO2 reduction, but all those windmills sure do look nice.

The labour union 3F protects something or somebody (it's a little unclear what or whom) by blockading businesses and restaurants with the result that jobs disappear abroad. Many praise their exemplary effort.

Parliament approves a "freedom from information law" so residents can no longer have full insight into the political process. Agencies and ministries use the law to cover up their mistakes and blunders.

The internal revenue service, SKAT, wastes 4 billion kroner (€500 million) on an electronic collection system, which is incredibly poorly planned and purchased. A smart businessman scams them for another 9 billion kroner (€1.2 billion) with a bunch of photocopies. No one is held accountable, and in the meantime, the agency spends most of its time going after the self-employed and small businesses.

The National Rail Company, DSB, wastes countless millions on the IC4 train, the Rejsekort, operating in Sweden and more. Despite the massive government subsidies, it is now more expensive to take the train than to fly. And the trains don't even run on time.

Out in the countryside, a man is fined for cleaning his gutter. Another is fined because the rocks around his campfire aren't facing the right direction. A third is made to tear down his shed because it is one square meter too big.

Meanwhile SKAT and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) admit that they have illegally exchanged sensitive information for more than ten years. The justice minister refuses to do anything about it and uses the "freedom from information law" to sweep the whole mess under the rug.

Property taxes have exploded. SKAT admits that upwards of 85% of its property evaluations are too high and that they have overcharged thousands of homeowners. But they refuse to pay the money back. Parliament approves a special law so that property owners can neither complain nor take SKAT to court for compensation.

The Roskilde Festival succeeded in expropriating a local farmer's land because festival-goers need it to camp. The man is given a compensation amounting to roughly one-fourth of the land's market value.

The local rag, "Ekstra Bladet" tells us, that Prince Henrik's car was parked outside of a swinger's club while he was at the movies, yet the Danish press waited five days to bring the story of the systematic rapes and assaults in Cologne.

Speeding cameras are systematically placed where they will give the best payout



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to the public purse instead of where they would best strengthen road safety.

Police tell the media that they no longer bother investigating break-ins in which less than 100,000 kroner (€14,000) worth of goods are stolen. That Denmark is at the very top of the EU when it comes to burglaries doesn't seem to worry them.

Meanwhile for nearly the tenth year running, Copenhagen is under construction and dug up from end to end.

In the many immigrant communities in our larger cities, violence and social control are a part of daily life. We talk about it. But we don't do anything about it.

Police say that they cannot respond to all reports they receive but also warn that if you take matters into your own hands, then you will go to prison. (I guess they can respond to that.)

Not long ago a bunch of immigrant boys beat a young couple beyond recognition with bicycle chains. Their punishment of two months in jail

was finished before the couple had healed and there was no compensation.

Somewhere else in the country, a foreigner throws his girlfriend from a balcony and gets a job on TV with celebrity chef Claus Meyer. The girlfriend survives but is disfigured and has severe psychological trauma. She gets no help.

And I could continue to go on and on and on.

Why can't we help each other to get things to work?

I grieve. Denmark is no longer the country I loved when I was a young man. ■

Søren Kenner has a home in Fayence, and has lived in Denmark, Malta, the US and now Cambridge, UK (with long stretches in Australia, Thailand, New Zealand). Kenner's an entrepreneur and contributor to "Folkets Avis", where this was originally published. It has been translated by Justin Cremer/The Local Denmark (thelocal.dk), and republished with the author's permission. Follow him on Twitter at @sorenkenner.

CARNIVAL TIME AGAIN AND NICE IS BUZZING ...



BY MARGO LESTZ

NICE'S Carnival (Feb 13th-28th; nicescarnaval.com) is one of the oldest in Europe, with the earliest reference dating back to 1294 when a Count of Provence wrote that he had spent "joyous days of carnival" in Nice.

While today the parades float to the beat of contemporary music, traditionally it was another sound – bands playing instruments made of gourds, or rather *cougourdons* to be exact.

What's a cougourdon, you ask. Well, it's a type of gourd grown in the South of France, which can be fashioned into many useful objects. A gourd and squash are botanically defined as fruit because they're organs that contain seeds, but like tomatoes and cucumbers, they're often referred to as a vegetable.

The gourd remains essential to the local culture and there's

even a festival in its honour each year around the end of March (see "Cougourdons in Nice" on RivieraReporter.com).

What does it have to do with music? One of the many uses for a dried gourd is the making of musical instruments. Since the gourds are all different shapes and sizes, so are the instruments made from them. You'll find some shaped like drums, tubas, flutes, and others that would be difficult to name.

And the sound? You might imagine that the music produced by a bunch of gourds wouldn't be very melodic ... and you'd be right. They were called *vespa* bands, which is the *niçois* (and Italian) word for "wasp". They were labelled as such because they sounded quite similar to, you guessed it, a swarm of buzzing winged insects – just like the little Italian motor scooter with the same name.

These *vespa* bands were very popular at the end of the 1800s and early 1900s but disappeared by the 1960s. Today, as there's more and more interest in the *niçoise* culture and language, maybe we'll see these bands return to the carnival celebration. ■

See curiousrambler.com or watch a *vespa* band: "Conférence cougourdonnesque" on YouTube.

CAN'T PICK-UP?

You can always go solo



Last year “Chard” (2nd from left, front row) co-founded Azur Gaels, the Riviera’s first Gaelic football team. Dec 12th, 2015 they played their first and only match (so far) against GF Provence.

RICHARD Luke Faul, known as “Chard”, grew up near Reading, before moving to Cornwall with his family and becoming a student at Exeter University, where he studied to be a translator. “My studies were barely finished,” the 27-year-old tells the “Reporter”, “when I landed a job as an in-house translator for a company in Toulouse. I was very keen to discover new things and blend in among the people whose language I had enjoyed learning since the age of eleven. I spent 3 and a half years in la Ville Rose, during which time a colleague introduced me to Gaelic football – in Toulouse there’s a very well established club, the Tolosa Gaels – and it very quickly became my main sport.”

In August 2015, Chard took a new translation job here on the Côte d’Azur, which also allowed him to be near a certain someone with whom he fell in love during his Exeter days.

Gaelic football is the biggest sport in Ireland, though it hasn’t really been exported until very recently. It was codified in 1887, but there are references to it dating back to the Middle Ages – so

don’t think it’s anything new – but only started spreading throughout Europe and elsewhere over the last 10 or 20 years. In Ireland, it’s played 15-aside on a huge pitch; here in France, the game is adapted to 11-aside on a standard soccer pitch.

“The quickest way to get an idea for the sport and the rules,” Chard suggests, “is to look it up on YouTube – there are a few explainer videos, plus several full-length All-Ireland finals you can watch.

“It’s a very free-flowing, complete game and while aspects of the rules may sound quite complicated if you’re not familiar with the sport, with practice they all become reflexes. There are many techniques involved and it’s a very intense, attack-minded and high-scoring game. As someone who’s played both soccer and rugby, I love it, because I find it combines the freedom and skill of the former with the spirit and physicality of the latter.”

As he wanted to carry on playing Gaelic football after leaving Toulouse, Chard cofounded Azur Gaels because there was no club on the Côte d’Azur. He took to this sport so quickly not only because

it’s a great game but because the people who are involved are so special. “What I understand now is that to maintain a sport that’s fairly unknown in this country, and to make it grow, it takes committed and talented people. There’s not one person I’ve met playing Gaelic football in France who doesn’t fit into that category. It made me want to get involved, too. In my year and a half playing for Tolosa Gaels, I became a club committee member, champion of France and most improved player of 2015. I even got to captain the team at one of the tournaments. After all of that, I was never going to stop playing just because there was no club in my area!

“Charley Cornillau, who had also played in the French championship, for Nantes, and had also made the move to the Côte d’Azur, contacted me shortly after my arrival. We met up in a pub and instantly started talking about creating a Gaelic football club. Our first training session involved me, Charley, a ball and two trees as goalposts. We’ve since become the perfect marriage. We are very different people, but very much united by our

Gaelic Football: THE RULES



- The ball looks the same but is heavier than a regular football.
- It's played with both hands and feet.
- There's no offside.
- The goal is a cross between a regular soccer goal and a set of rugby posts, so you can score 3 points past the goalkeeper, or 1 point by getting it over the bar.
- Every 4 steps, you have to do something with the ball – you can pass, shoot, or, if you want to keep possession, either do a “solo” – drop the ball onto your foot and kick it back into the hands – or a “hop” – bounce the ball against the ground, but you can't do two consecutive hops.
- In Gaelic football, you can't pick the ball up directly from the ground but do a “pick-up”, by scooping the ball up with your foot into your hands.
- When hand passing the ball, you can't just throw it to a teammate. You have to hold the ball in one hand and knock it with the other, either with an open hand or a closed fist.
- Contact: You're not allowed to rugby tackle, slide tackle or rip the ball out of your opponent's hands, but it's still a very physical game.
- When the opponent has the ball, you have to try to slap it out of their hands, or steal it as they do their hop or solo, so you can expect a few stray knocks from swinging arms.
- Blocking shots involves a bit of courage too – to do it effectively, you have to smother the ball at the point of contact, in other words, throw yourself hands first at the swinging boot!

determination to build a club. We're both involved in everything, but he likes the coaching and the sporting aspect, whereas I like the club organisation and communication side of things. He's a defender, I'm an attacker ... *Bref*. Through a lot of Facebook sharing, forum posting, harassment of colleagues and talking about Gaelic football to anyone who'll listen, we were amazed to see our numbers at training grow from 2 to 3 to 5 to 8 to 16 to 22 within the space of two months. We had started out with the initial aim of getting eleven blokes together by the end of 2016 ... but already we've played our first friendly game and are doing everything we can to offer competitive men's and women's football, plus a youth section. Ma Nolan's pub chain is a sponsor and the Toulon rugby club invited us on January 31st to give an exhibition at the Allianz Riviera in Nice before their match with Stade Français. It's just astonishing!

“Now we've around 25 players in total, including men, women and one 8-year-old boy. All are welcome at our club. The majority of the squad are French beginners, which is fantastic. Training is coached in French but I'm always happy to interpret where necessary. We've five experienced heads from the Irish community, three of whom make up the club committee with myself and Charley. As word spreads we're slowly seeing more and more Irish people come and rediscover their sport – far

WANTED! SUNNY BANK NEEDS YOU!



**Recently retired? Just moved to the region?
Have skills to offer? Want to meet people?
Have a few hours to spare?
Yes? Sunny Bank needs you!**

It's the good life for most Anglos on the Riviera, but for those growing older, life can become very hard without moral and physical support. It's up to those of us who are in a secure position, having good health and the support of friends and family to offer a helping hand to those who are less fortunate.

Sunny Bank exists to provide that help and support for English speaking residents on the Côte d'Azur. Working closely with commercial operator EMERA, in Mouans Sartoux, the nursing home Victoria offers 90 rooms.

Opening early 2016 on the same site, Albert offers 33 apartments for independent living. Sunny Bank also provides grants to help people to continue to live independently in their own homes.

The Grange, which is adjacent, provides a vibrant social hub for English speakers with regular lunches and social events and also a wide selection of books and bric-a-brac.

Sunny Bank already has many amazing volunteers who provide a range of services including daily visits to Victoria, and also all-important fundraising.

However, we need more volunteers to help us run the Sunny Bank charity. *In particular we are looking for volunteers who can provide project management, financial or commercial skills, as well as those who can give some time to visit the elderly in Victoria and Albert or to help with our social events.* Interested? Email Catherine Wright, Secretary, Sunny Bank, at catherine.wright@wanadoo.fr

**Further information about Sunny Bank at
www.sunny-bank.org**

AZUR GAELS, PAGE 22

AS Monaco's Vadim Vasilyev has his eye on the ball

BY JOANA RUZGIENE



IN 2011, the Association Sportive de Monaco Football Club (more commonly known as AS Monaco FC) – was at the bottom of Ligue 2, and the team was facing the possibility of being pushed into third division. Apparently, at the time, Prince Albert II of Monaco decided it was time for serious changes in order to save the club; Dmitry Rybolovlev became majority owner and President of the club.

Vadim Vasilyev (above), Vice-President and CEO of AS Monaco, joined the team two years ago when Dmitry entrusted him at the helm of an ambitious project. Despite the fact Vadim had no work experience related to professional sports or managing a football team, the unexpected proposal to lead the club seemed exciting and too good to pass up.

Vadim could be called a one-man orchestra. His position at AS Monaco includes the daily management of the football club and the aim to produce results. There's obviously a lot of work with the team and transfers, the coaches, the technical department and medical services, monitoring the market – and keeping an eye out for new talented players.

The second part of his job tackles the administrative side to ensure viability of the club. This includes the legal, financial, and commercial activities, working with partners, sponsors,

monitoring ticket sales at Stade Louis II in Fontvieille and promoting the brand.

Hard work usually requires sacrifice, and this is the case with Vadim Vasilyev. A year and a half of his dedication has brought very positive results, AS Monaco Football Club has passed from the Ligue 2 to Ligue 1 in a relatively short period and, by the end of the 2014/15 season, had finished third in the French championship, and secured a spot in the Champions League.

Vadim studied economics at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). He was one of the few top graduates to know the Icelandic language, which saw him appointed for a diplomatic position in Iceland. When he returned to Russia he worked for

several international companies, where his activities were mainly connected with import-export. In the late 1990s, Vadim lived and worked in Monaco in the field of international trade. And while he feels anything can happen in life, he sees his future in Monaco.

Dmitry envisions a great future – victories and trophies for AS Monaco, and becoming League champions. Vadim Vasilyev is convinced that the team's joint efforts, along with a little luck, can make that dream come true. Credit must also be given to the AS Monaco Football Academy, from where a large number of legendary graduates are now playing in different French football clubs. According to many industry professionals, the AS Monaco Academy is one of the best in France.

At the end of 2015, the then UEFA president Michel Platini awarded Vadim Vasilyev the Globe Soccer Award given to those who've made significant contributions towards the development of world football.

Vadim has also opened a few restaurants, adding a different dimension to his professional life, yet doesn't consider himself a workaholic because for him harmony is the most important thing. In his opinion, everyone needs to find a balance between work and free time – it's only a question of priorities and planning. ■

AZUR GAELS, FROM PAGE 21

from the rain and mud of back home! – and we're delighted about that. I'm the only Englishman so far ... but nationality is really of no importance, we just want everyone to be motivated to play and have some enjoyment."

If you're curious, now is the time to give it a go; the championship starts in March,

and Azur Gaels have plenty of training sessions plus two or three friendlies pencilled in before then to get you up to speed. The team trains every Wednesday evening at 18h30 and every Saturday at noon at the Stade des Bouillides in Valbonne – and practices are open to all.

To find out more, look for Azur Gaels on Facebook or email azur.gaels@gmail.com.

Their site azurgael.com will be up and running soon.

If you live nearer to Aix-en-Provence than to Valbonne, the neighbouring club GF Provence (gfprovence.fr) may be more convenient. As for the rest of France, there are 23 Gaelic football clubs throughout the country, and you can find your nearest at footballgaelique.fr/federation/clubs ■

Little and missed sunshine



BY SUSAN TOMASSINI

WE live in a region that gets 320-plus days of sunshine but even so, when daylight, sunlight and temperature levels fall, so do our energy levels. Lethargy and sluggishness are especially common at this time of year when we spend more time indoors, as is increased susceptibility to seasonal bugs. All this may be related to diminishing levels of vitamin D3, since 90% of our intake is produced when sunlight touches our skin.

Yet there's much more at stake than just flu and fatigue. Low levels of vitamin D can significantly affect other key aspects of our health. Vitamin D is necessary to absorb calcium and has long been associated with bone strength and protection from osteoporosis. It also helps support mood and mental wellbeing, and there's a well-established link between vitamin D shortage and depression and SAD (Seasonal Effective Disorder). Research shows that having less than optimal levels makes us more prone to heart disease, respiratory illness, autoimmune diseases and cancer.

Vitamin D deficiency is now considered a worldwide pandemic, with studies indicating that up to 80% of the population of France is deficient. It's easy to

understand why. For one thing, contrary to popular belief, food is not a good source of vitamin D as only small amounts are found naturally in egg yolks, cheese and oily fish (sardines, mackerel and salmon), and sometimes added to foods like fortified breakfast cereals and milk. Secondly, our life-giving sun has been highly demonised by health campaigns. We've now become over-reliant on chemical sunscreens that protect our skin, but also inhibit the generation of vitamin D. It's worth remembering that pregnant women, those with darker skin and the elderly have a higher than normal requirement, as do people with malabsorption conditions like Celiac and Crohn's diseases.

Still, current recommendations for Vitamin D intake are likely too low for optimal health. As a licensed nutritionist, I am constantly surprised by how many of my clients have less than ideal levels – despite the sunny lifestyle on the Riviera. To find out for yourself, ask your doctor for a blood test (insurance should cover this) or send away for a private test (simple, easy and inexpensive at Genova Diagnostics – gdx.net).

Meanwhile, the best way to reach an optimal vitamin D level is with moderate sun exposure. Ten to fifteen minutes on a sunny day (closer to midday) is enough, and try to expose as much of your skin as possible. If you can't be outside everyday, supplements may be a good option, but again, you need to consult a doctor or qualified nutritionist. ■

For other nutrition tips, join The Clever Kitchen's monthly Q&A lunches at Stars 'n' Bars in Monaco. Contact Melanie@thecleverkitchen for details.



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HOME NEAR THE GRANGE

Independent apartment living for expat seniors on the Riviera



Welcome to Albert: thirty-three 1 and 2 bedroom apartments in Moans-Sartoux.

BY MARIAN MCCARTHY

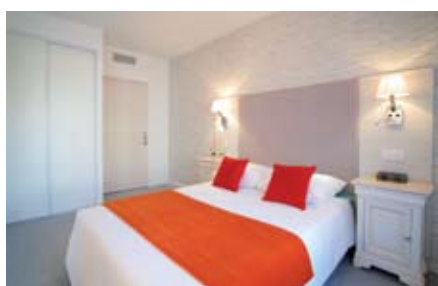
THE Côte d'Azur is an exceptional place to live, whatever your age. However, until recently, the options for expat seniors on the Riviera were relatively limited: return to your country of origin; remain in your home; or move into a more traditional care environment. It's natural to reevaluate

where and how we live as we progress through life and these decisions are often influenced by bereavement, issues around health and mobility, or simply a desire for a greater sense of community.

But what happens if you don't want to go "home", when the Riviera IS your home? Your house is too big but you're absolutely not ready to contemplate a

traditional home for dependant seniors. Still, the idea of downsizing and having less household responsibility is appealing.

Sunny Bank and its commercial partner Emerys are proud to have launched Residence Albert in January 2016. Developed to cater to international seniors looking to continue to live independently but who are no longer comfortable in their own homes,





each apartment is designed and finished to the highest standard. Combining elegance with practicality, these units will appeal to those who enjoy the finer things.

Quality accommodation for seniors is a growth market around the world but it's unusual to find a small development that offers such a high standard of design, location and an independent lifestyle with access to a such diverse range of resources. Albert's one- and two-bedroom boutique apartments are within walking distance from the local supermarket and the attractive village of Mouans-Sartoux. Next door you'll find "The Grange", Sunny Bank's Charity Centre in close support of residents, offering a range of activities.

Albert's welcoming staff will be taught English (in addition to French, of course) and are "determined" to help renters – who can bring their own furniture and pets – enjoy their new lifestyle. There's a communal laundry and a spa while services include a Monday to Friday concierge, and the restaurant offers half board to full board, and even those special occasions can be catered for.

These stylish and innovative units offer the lucky few English-speaking seniors an exceptional opportunity. You'll have enviable access to all the very best the Côte has to offer.

But they are going fast, and will become oversubscribed quickly. Once that happens it might be a long time before another opportunity presents

itself. There are a small number of fully-furnished apartments available for short-term rent so that you can "try before you sign up for longer term rental".

One British couple who have rented at Albert were most enthusiastic: "You have to give up a large amount of your life by making a move like this but, in exchange, you are getting wonderful amenities and a great style of living," they told me. "But, for us, the main joy is that moving to Albert will give us independence. We both think that this is the best move we have ever made."

For more than a century, Sunny Bank (sunny-bank.org; see page 21) has been supporting elderly English speakers in the region, thanks in part to partnerships with Emera, who manage Victoria, a 90-room *maison de retraite* as well as Emerys, the company behind the newly-opened Albert apartments for independent seniors.

Over the last 30 years, Emera and Emerys Group has been managing retirement and senior residences in France, Switzerland and Belgium. (See ad facing and on cover.)

To celebrate the opening of Albert and to take a look at the available apartments, come to a free musical evening featuring French singer and songwriter Monique on February 25th at 16h30. Please RSVP by email to admin@sunny-bank.org. ■

For more on Albert contact Ellynn Vanlerberghe at Emerys: albert@senioremerys.fr or 06 34 45 06 90.

VICTORIA RETIREMENT HOME



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LIFE IS LA GRANDE



THE golden stone of Provence seems to reflect and glow even during winter – its warmth is incandescent. It offers welcome and the promise of joys to follow throughout the year: springtime – when mimosa-clad hills near the coast waft gentle perfume –

followed by the munificence of our long summers, when poolside relaxation in scented gardens provides a *vie de luxe*.

But when it comes to the stunning interiors of a stone bastide ... what magic then awaits?

Just an hour's drive from Nice, in the centre of the Var, close by the picturesque town of St Luc, a beautiful, extensive stone bastide glows with this special welcome. St Luc itself is pretty and bustling where the streets of its old town interlace



stretching along the hillside.

Set just south is La Grande Lauzade – a wonderful Provençal domaine. Built in the 18th century on the site of a former monastery dating back to the 11th century (though it must be said this site was inhabited as far back as Gallo Roman times) it offers the ultimate lifestyle.

From the moment you enter its gates along a driveway set with beds of tumbling roses, you're transported to a magical place – a sea of tranquillity away from the demands of 21st-century living.

And there is space, for there are 10 bedrooms and 10 bathrooms spread between several buildings. Currently run as an exclusive and successful B&B, it could continue to do so, or become a sensational family home while maintaining income stream from four further one- and two-bedroom dwellings.

The main house is a *maison du maître* – the doorway flanked by impressive original stones from the old monastery. Inside, the large hallway, with high cool ceilings, leads onwards to a fitness room on one side and a spacious séjour on the other – here is a wood burning stove for additional comfort in winter, and the billiard room.

But for those who love to cook – and use the wonderful herbs and produce from local markets naturally washed down with wine picked from neighbouring terroir – the real treat must be the fabulous Provençal kitchen. You will be able to while away the time chopping and cooking to your heart's content. Of course, it is the perfect size to house a large family dining table, the prerequisite of any true French home.

The staircase leads upwards to the first and second floor bedrooms, but wait,

stairs tucked away behind a door take you down to an enormous cave with a stone-vaulted ceiling and the most unexpected of treats – an indoor heated swimming pool complete with jacuzzi. With the ceiling lit at dusk, this is the most romantic and magical of spaces.

Back upwards on the grand staircase, on the first floor, two grand bedroom suites await – one complete with balcony and living area. Up another level are three further bedrooms with character beams and traditional floors – a family suite with two adjoining double bedrooms. All bedrooms are, naturally, en suite with air-conditioning and everything else required to ensure one's comfort.

But the true joy of Provence is a life lived outside for so many months of the year and here again La Grande Lauzade does not disappoint.

Surrounded by the vineyards that still produce, La Lauzade wine are a number of terraces and lovely gardens shaded by plane trees – an essential for hot summer months. Steps lead gently down to the quite stunning heated infinity swimming pool with the perfect shaded terrace, designed for whiling away the hours. A magnificent cedar frames the spectacular view over the garden towards the vineyards and distant Maures mountains. Pure heaven!

With its mix of history and beautifully maintained buildings all set in a stunning location, La Grande Lauzade is a home of charm and character – a truly magical place set to enchant anyone lucky enough to live here. ■

For more information about La Grande Lauzade (reference: 49496) contact Joanna Davies at Leggett Immobilier on 06 01 41 23 34 or email jdavies@leggett.fr



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LOVE AT FIRST VIEW?

... it's really up to you



BY TIM CLARK

"I'LL know it when I see it!" Seven words that strike fear into the heart of the most hardened estate agent. In fact, I'm thinking of beginning a mind-reading course for estate agents, as it is often assumed we can find your dream home by osmosis.

In all my years of working in real estate, I've taken valuable lessons from other industry professionals and one such tip is to offer a specialised property finding service to clients. In order to do this, agents need to have an idea of what potential buyers are actually looking for and my opening sentence, while tongue in cheek, is actually the first comment used by a majority of house-hunters when we initially meet.

Most would-be homeowners have one thing in common, they have busy lives and a shortage of time. It surprises me so often that more planning hasn't been carried out prior to their viewing trip.

If you are planning on searching for a

home on the French Riviera, in order to make the most of your time it is important to understand that professional real estate agents are there to help you find the right property. They should know their portfolio intimately and if you are open about what you are looking for in a property then it will help them maximise your chances of finding that all elusive dream home.

Be clear on the things you absolutely must have. What things are absolute deal breakers that you wouldn't compromise on, and while we are on the C-word, think about what you *would* be prepared to compromise on. For example, if you are searching for a property with a *piscine*, would one without a pool but space and planning permission in place to install one still be of interest if it matches all of your other requirements and, of course, budget?

Be prepared to accept the agent's advice on suitable properties. I'm staggered how often we advise a buyer that a certain property they have short-listed, which

has one of their nonnegotiable negatives, whereby they still insist on viewing, only to arrive and state "Oh yes, I see what you mean about the road/factory/cemetery next door ..." It's as if they think we are saving the property for someone else.

In France, it's also essential to have arranged your funding before making an offer (preferably before viewings), as it is nigh on impossible to secure a purchase if you need to sell first or speak to your bank (see page 30). I've met too many people over the years who view their dream home only to be unable to proceed as fundamentals are not in place. The result? They lose the deal and spend the following five years trying to locate an identical property.

Being prepared will make your life easier when it comes to finding that home on the Côte d'Azur and I look forward to helping many more people realise their dreams this coming year. Happy 2016! ■

Contact Tim Clark of Leggett Immobilier at tim@leggett.fr



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10 STEPS TO GETTING YOUR FRENCH MORTGAGE



Step 1: sort out your finances

YOU'RE looking to buy so you'll need to get an idea of the amount you can borrow when the time comes. Otherwise, as Tim Clark has pointed out several times in his property column (see page 28), your dream home could quickly slip through your fingers. Speak to your bank as well as mortgage brokers to find out what conditions (*simulations de prêt*) they can offer for "Votre Projet Immobilier". A broker cannot approach a bank that you've recently contacted directly about a mortgage. First time buyers may qualify for a part of the mortgage at 0% interest, although you'd still have to pay insurance on the sum.

Step 2: make a decision

YOU now have the information to make your decision, taking into account all factors: amount (*montant*), interest rate (*taux*) and cost of mandatory insurance (*coût de l'assurance*). You may find your bank's offer – which should also include the processing fee (*frais de dossier*) and security deposit (*frais de garantie*) – less attractive than a broker's proposal, even with the additional broker fee (*frais de courtage*). If you can avoid changing banks it saves the hassle of transferring accounts and payments (*prélèvements*) down the line (think EDF, Orange, *impôts* ...), but if you are dissatisfied with the quality of your current bank's service, then it's worth switching.

Step 3: mortgage application

NOW that you've chosen the best offer, don't dilly-dally. You're not even halfway through the process and nothing is guaranteed. Whatever lending organisation you have picked, you'll need to provide paperwork with respect to the preliminary information you provided. Specifically, you have to provide your payslips or other documents verifying your income, your last tax notice, and proof of identity and residence (*justificatif de domicile*). At this point, you should also be able to provide a sales agreement (*compromis de vente*).

Step 4: financing agreement

ONCE the credit institution has gathered all the documents needed to analyse your mortgage application, it will review your financial situation closely to ensure that it corresponds to the information that you gave at the first meeting. It will then measure your ability to make repayments based on your income, savings and credit rating. (You should be able to cover at least the *notaire* fees.) If it's a go, only then will you get what is called an "agreement in principle" (*un accord de principe*). This is not the final loan offer but you're close and, more importantly, it assures the seller.

Step 5: open account

WHEN a bank offers a mortgage (*un crédit immobilier*), it also seeks to negotiate other products and accounts with you. If the loan is not with your current bank, the new bank will certainly ask you to open a current account (*compte et domiciliation des revenus*) with them and, depending on the other conditions offered, may ask that you also transfer your Livret A savings account; you may even be required to take house insurance (*souscription assurance habitation*) with the new bank. In this case, the new bank will assist with the formalities and paperwork.

Step 6: terms of offer

FOLLOWING the *accord de principe* and opening a new bank account to facilitate the loan, you'll have to wait several weeks for the final loan offer. In that time, the bank sends your file to securities (*cautions*) and waits for a favourable reply. The drafting (*contrôle et édition*) of a French mortgage offer is strictly regulated and must contain certain information such as the total loan amount, repayment schedule, precise conditions (mortgage rate, duration ...), the nature of the guarantees, and contact information of the bank, the borrower and guarantors. Finally, this document must specify that you have a cooling-off period (*un délai de réflexion*) before signing and accepting the offer.

Step 7: cooling-off period

IN mortgage terms, you have an obligatory period of reflection. Thus, you cannot accept the loan offer until the eleventh day following the date of receipt (the offer is sent by regular post, keep the envelope). The offer is valid for 30 days, so you still have twenty days to decide after the mandatory 11 days. When you are sure of your decision, simply return the offer by regular post to your bank along with your signature and the date of acceptance. It's a good idea to have your *conseiller commercial* (bank adviser) go through the document with you so that you have signed and initialled (*paraphé*) the correct pages. (Note: some offers have an additional page asking whether you want subscriptions to magazines, so be careful not to sign up; this is not part of the loan proper.) Meanwhile, the mortgage institution cannot reverse any conditions or ask for any payment, not even the *frais de dossier*.

Step 8: déblocage of your funds

AFTER you have returned the signed mortgage offer, you'll need to send a copy of it to your *notaire*. The *notaire* will then provide you with *un appel des fonds*, a document outlining sums due, including the amount of the mortgage, the balance of the *frais d'acte de vente*, as well as pro rata for *taxe foncière* and *avances de trésorerie*, and in some cases pro rata for *copropriété* charges. You'll need to transfer the money to the *notaire* just before signing the deed. To do so, you'll have a *déblocage de fonds* from your account with your bank. In other words, you release the sums provided for the financing of the property by authorising a bank *virement*. That's right, the entire amount of the loan will be transferred into your account and then transferred on to the *notaire*. It's not very often you'll see your bank balance that healthy!


Step 9: sign acte at notaire

THIS is the official act established and recorded by a notary by which the buyer becomes the owner of property permanently. It confirms the sales agreement and must be authentic (written by a notary and signed in his presence). Once you and the seller sign, you become the owner of the property and will get an attestation, which you'll need to set up water supply, electricity, home insurance etc. The *titre de propriété* (deed) will be sent to you over the coming months.

Step 10: first loan repayment

THE month following the signing of the *acte authentique* of the sale, you'll pay your first monthly mortgage payment, on a date predetermined with the mortgage provider. ■

For more see page 10.



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Sirens of the South

BY DELANA NELSEN

A family séjour in Paris was all it took to pique 4-year-old Rosa Jackson's curiosity about food, the start of a life-long passion that would bring her back to France as a food writer

CANADIAN Rosa Jackson returned to Paris to study cooking while pursuing her career as a food writer. She founded the hugely successful Edible Paris, which offers food itineraries and guided tours (edible-paris.com). Ten years later it was on to Nice, still enticed by everything cuisine.

"I vacationed to the South of France while living in Paris, and one day I just ended up buying a place in Nice that had a great kitchen. I felt it was a perfect spot to start giving cooking classes."

The author of three cookbooks, Rosa divides her time between the City of Light and her home on the Riviera. Her Nice-based company, Les Petits Farcis (petitsfarcis.com), offers English-language market tours and a wide variety of cooking classes – including organic and vegetarian cooking – from its new atelier at 12 rue Saint-Joseph in the Old Town. *Bon appétit!*

WINTER WINE:

A red from the Côtes-du-Rhône, to go with the local *daube* (beef slow-cooked in wine) or meat-filled ravioli.

NECESSARY EXTRAVAGANCE:

Free-range eggs (*œufs frais de poules élevées en plein air*) from a local farmer – they are not cheap but, simply poached or gently fried, they are heaven.



FAVE APP:

Personal: Calm meditation. Professional: Turboscan, which is great when you need to scan and send something quickly and for storing business cards.

BEDSIDE BOOK:

"On Love: A Novel" by Alain de Botton and "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath.

CASUAL DINING:

La Petite Syrah in Nice, a wine bar that serves incredible bistro food and the best American-style apple pie in town.

DINING TREAT:

Without a doubt, Restaurant Jan (12 Rue Lascaris), whose artistic chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen turns each plate into a tableau.



CAN'T-MISS FESTIVAL:

The Nice Jazz Festival always has an interesting line-up and a laid-back atmosphere.

LIFE'S A BEACH:

Since I'm not much of a lying-on-the-beach kind of person, I'd be more likely to walk the coastal path from Nice to Villefranche and take a dip in one of the coves along the way.

2016 TO-DO LIST:

I'm a music lover so I'm finding ways to combine music and food with different events at my cooking school in Nice.

PEOPLE-WATCHING:

It's always fun to sit on a terrace on the Cours Saleya in Nice and take in the market scene. I would rather look at everyday people (and their dogs) than celebrities.



SCENT-SATION:

Jo Malone Lime Basil and Mandarin Cologne, which combines all my favourite scents.

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LOCAL GEM:

The little café Brasilia at 8 rue Bonaparte serves by far the best coffee in Nice.



Photo: Facebook/Brasilia boîte à café

TO MARKET:

There is no organic market per se in Nice, but the Liberation market has plenty of small farmers' stalls selling organic or untreated produce, and there are several organic farmers at the Cours Saleya market on weekends. I'll go out of my way for the wholesome organic bread at Mama Baker on rue Lepante, and I love the old-fashioned butcher in the covered market at Liberation, even if I don't buy much meat.

FAB FOOD DISCOVERY:

I never much bothered with pomegranates until I learned to seed them properly this year – by cutting them in half horizontally, loosening the skin and beating them with the back of a wooden spoon to get the seeds out. It's great for getting rid of excess frustration, too. I also started to eat the feijoa (right), a Brazilian fruit that also grows in Nice – the pulp is delicious blended with orange juice.



Photo: ACurrie

GUILTY PLEASURE:

Why should pleasure be guilty?

GO-TO FRENCH COOKBOOK THAT YOU DIDN'T WRITE:

"The Larousse Gastronomique" (English Edition) is my reference for just about everything, and I'm a fan of the Nature series by Alain Ducasse and dietitian Paule Neyrat, with its healthier interpretations of French classics.

UNDERRATED STAPLE:

Look to local, easily available foods rather than expensive imported products like Goji berries or coconut oil (although I do use it from time to time). For instance, sage is wonderful as an infusion to treat colds and coughs, especially with a spoonful of local pine or rosemary honey.

BEAUTY SECRET:

Try not to stress too much about what you eat – the French don't, and they usually look great.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL:

I practice yoga at Art Yoga Studio in Nice (4 rue Massena) and also belong to a local hiking group, but I shy away from anything too rigorous.

ESSENTIAL SIGHTSEEING:

I always think that getting a feel for a place is more important than seeing sights, so I'd

recommend getting lost and asking for directions in many *boulangeries*, which will give you an excuse to buy something at each one.

KITCHEN GADGET:

My plastic pastry scraper accomplishes an amazing number of tasks in the kitchen.

HEALTHY EDIBLES:

I have a certificate in dietary counselling from the Institute of Health Sciences in Dublin and so, in addition to my regular classes, I offer one-on-one dietary counselling and personalised cooking classes, very much in demand these days.

ONLY-FOUND-IN-FRANCE PRODUCT:

The variety of honeys that can be found in Provence – lavender, linden blossom, chestnut or the herbal-tasting garrigue.

SHOPPING LIKE A LOCAL:

I like to browse in the vintage and second-hand clothing shops in the Old Town, such as Caprice Vintage Shop at 12 rue Droite (below). When I find something, it really feels like it's meant for me.



Photo: Facebook/Caprice vintage shop

FAV FRENCH PHRASE:

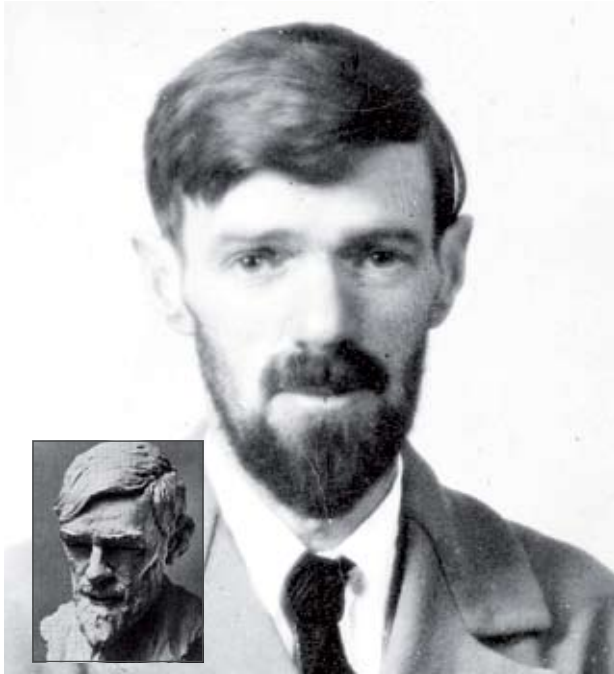
Vouloir le beurre et l'argent du beurre – like having your cake and eating it too.

PODCASTS:

The "Unmistakable Creative" and "Betty in the Sky with a Suitcase!", a light one about flight attendants. ■

FROM THE SUN TO THE STARS

D.H. Lawrence's final journey



BY ROBERT BULLOCK

AT the beginning of 1930, English novelist D. H. Lawrence was living with his German wife, Frieda, at Villa Beau Soleil, a rented house in Bandol. Weighing barely 45 kilos, he had been seriously ill with tuberculosis for several years – a disease which in that same year caused the death of some 60,000 people in France and 50,000 in Britain. Deeply concerned about his state of health, friends in England contacted a pulmonary disease specialist, Dr Andrew Morland, to ask him to examine Lawrence during a holiday he had planned in the South of France in January and to convince the writer to seek medical treatment as a matter of urgency.

When Morland examined Lawrence on January 20th, he straightaway realised that if he was to stand any chance of recovering, he needed to undergo emergency treatment in a sanatorium. He had been informed that Lawrence was hostile to doctors and medical science in general and knew that he would only agree to enter a clinic if the regime was not too strict. He therefore recommended a sanatorium-cum-hotel called Ad Astra just outside Vence, some 20 kilometres inland from Nice.

Lawrence delayed making a decision for

several days, but realizing his health was continuing to deteriorate, he finally agreed to accept Morland's advice. On February 6th, 1930, he left Bandol to surrender to the Ad Astra. A taxi took the poet, Frieda and Earl Brewster, an American friend, to the railway station in Toulon and after what was an interminably long and exhausting journey for the "Lady Chatterley's Lover" author, they finally arrived in Antibes where they were picked up in a car by a young English friend, Blair Hughes-Stanton, and driven the rest of the way to Vence. When they reached the Ad Astra, Lawrence was so weak that he

had to be carried into the sanatorium and helped up to his room on the second floor.

At first, he felt relatively well in his new surroundings. He had a large balcony and was able to admire the Mediterranean five miles away at Cagnes and the coastline as far as the Cap d'Antibes. He considered the air in Vence – situated some 350 metres above sea level – more salutary compared to Bandol, and wrote several letters to family and friends to say he was pleased with the move and felt better. To Lawrence, the Ad Astra seemed more like a hotel than a sanatorium, the only real difference being that there were two doctors who examined him once a week and took X-rays of his lungs, and a nurse who checked his temperature morning and evening.

By the third week, however, there was a radical change in his attitude to the institution. Seeing little or no improvement in his overall condition and conscious that he was still losing weight, Lawrence bitterly turned against the Ad Astra. His one thought now was to discharge himself. In several letters to friends such as British author and later psychedelic pioneer Aldous Huxley, and his wife Maria, he wrote, "I'm miserable here," and "this place no good," and he begged Frieda to find a house in Vence to move

to – not an easy task as few people at that time wanted to rent a house to someone with tuberculosis for fear of contagion.

During Lawrence's last week at the Ad Astra, he received a number of visitors, including H.G. Wells (who later unsympathetically dismissed his illness as "merely hysteria"), the Aga Khan and his wife, the Huxleys – who were aghast to see the sudden deterioration in his physical condition – and the American sculptor, Jo Davidson, whose clay bust of Lawrence just four days before he died shows only too clearly his terribly emaciated appearance (insert).

On March 1st, St David's Day, Frieda called a taxi and Lawrence was taken to the house she had succeeded in renting in the hills to the west of the town, the Villa Robermond. Lawrence collapsed onto the bed on which he was later to die. The following morning, he read a few pages of a book about Christopher Columbus, but after lunch he began to suffer terrible pains from what was probably an attack of pleurisy, and in desperation asked for morphine. Huxley managed to persuade Dr Madinier at the Ad Astra to come and administer the drug to his ex-patient, and the exhausted Lawrence lapsed into semi-consciousness.

Later in the evening, he began to have hallucinations, imagining he could see his own body lying on a table on the other side of the room. He called out to Frieda, saying he didn't know where he was and asking her to hold him. To Maria Huxley he cried: "Maria, Maria, don't let me die!" The end came at about 10 o'clock in the evening of March 2nd. Lawrence was only 44, but in spite of the debilitating tuberculosis he had suffered from for so many years, he bequeathed to posterity a magnificent literary oeuvre of novels, poems, short stories, travel books, plays, articles and letters which unquestionably make him one of the greatest English writers of the 20th century.

A plaque to his memory was unveiled at the former site of the Ad Astra sanatorium, now the Clinique des Cadrans Solaires, on December 15th, underlining the importance of the links between Lawrence and the town of Vence. ■



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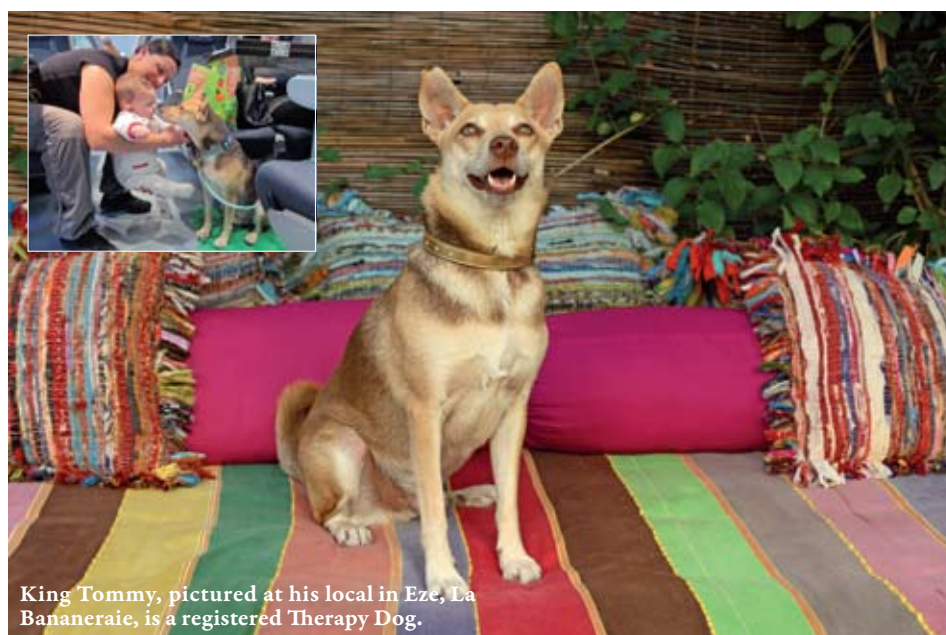
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The Royal treatment

BY MONIQUE GOLD

DOGS



King Tommy, pictured at his local in Eze, La Bananeraie, is a registered Therapy Dog.

HE has travelled far, King Tommy. His ancestors are documented in tales about the Hindu Gods and the first accounts of Indian culture talk about what is now called the Indian Native Dog (the INDog), one of the few remaining primitive breeds in the world, although they are often neglected and badly treated.

King Tommy, with his gold coloured eyes and gentle soul, was living on the street outside my house in Goa, India. I took him to California, he landed there as a 2-year-old, never having walked on a leash and only two months later he started winning dog shows. King Tommy's a Canine Good

Citizen in the US and the UK, and has won Best Rescue Dog titles and obedience competitions and all over the world.

He also became the first Indian Native Dog from India to ever become a Therapy Dog in the US, quite an honour. It's even more so an honour to see him interact with people who need love and healing. He's always had that gift, as if he was born with it, to heal people and give them all his attention. We walk into facilities for people with special needs and he trots in proudly and starts doing his magic.

We needed a base in Europe and Villefranche seemed the perfect place. King Tommy

struts all over Cap-Ferrat and thinks that David Niven's pink villa is rather nice, especially since Mr Niven's love for canines resulted in the tiny dog-friendly beach in front of his villa. It's still there to this day. More often than not, though, there a few "handbag" dogs there that Tommy loves teaching a thing or two about real dog life!

Our walks often take us further out on the Cap to Saint Hospice, while a favourite hangout in Eze is La Bananeraie, where the owner shouts, "It's the King!" each time he enters. King Tommy immediately lies on the soft mats from the market in Mapusa, the town in Goa where he was born, smelling them as if he knows they are a part of his past.

Every so often we take trips to new lands: we went to Sweden, Italy and when qualifying for a competition in Devon, England, he met the actor Martin Clunes. Meanwhile in India, King is pushing to change the attitude towards the Indian Native Dog (see indog.co.in).

We offer a free program for end of life and special needs adults. If you'd like to have King Tommy visit a facility as a Therapy Dog, contact imagesbelow@yahoo.com. ■

"King Tommy and the God of Beginnings", Monique Gold's novel based on a true story about how a street dog from India became the first Therapy Dog in the US, available from Amazon.com.

Not the king of the castle



BY DAN BRIGGS

IN general, attempting to speak in French to the French elicits a positive response. There may be a disconcerting pause as the harsh English accent is deciphered, but this is nearly always followed by a warm smile and an effort to continue the conversation. I say in general because there are of course two exceptions, Parisian waiters and children.

My relationship with Parisian waiters has always been based on contempt. Theirs for me rather than mine for them, although recently the graph of who-dislikes-who-more is flattening out. Here's a scene from any of my visits to the capital.

"Un demi, s'il vous plaît?" I order.

"Large or small beer?" replies the waiter, demonstrating in English that he thinks I have no comprehension of what I have just ordered.

"Un demi," I repeat.

"Large or small?" he challenges.

"Small," I give up.

Still, on any given day I'd rather take on a Parisian waiter than a bunch of kids. Here's why.

Recently the teachers at our school took the morning off for essential training. The parents were left with the choice of closing the school or staffing it themselves for the

half-day. None of them had apparently read "Lord of the Flies", so volunteers were called for. The head of the PTA, Marie Lou, batted her eyes at me and I was co-opted.

A program of activities was organised in the courtyard of the school, with different parents responsible for different activities – softball, cycling, table tennis, children's boules and a budget blowing Bouncy Castle. Recognising that it might be difficult for me to explain the rules of any particular activity, Marie Lou sensibly allocated me a floating role. I was to take messages between the parents, and help out in the case of any child feeling unwell.

So I sat on a wall for most of the morning, drinking coffee and kidding myself into thinking that I was helping. At the very least I was showing face and at the same time could keep my eyes on my two boys, Chris and Joe. The hours passed; occasionally a panting, puce child would sit on the wall next to me. I'd hand them some water, and we'd both pray that they didn't vomit. Thankfully, there was a God that morning, if a very capricious one.

As you can imagine, after a busy few hours of supervision the parents were keen for their lunch. Marie Lou explained the children were to eat in 20-minute slots according to their age. Ever the generous

soul, and still not quite used to eating on the stroke of midday, I volunteered to supervise those left outside. The theory was that the kids now understood the rules of each activity and were free to use the equipment themselves. Marie Lou warned that the only thing that might get out of hand was the Bouncy Castle, a beast of an inflatable that none the less needed to be limited to no more than 15 children at any one time.

So I put on my best nightclub bouncer face and stood arms crossed, intimidatingly preventing entry. Somehow though, kids managed to slip past me, and the crowd wanting to join the party on the inflatable grew and grew. Soon all the children in the courtyard were careering off the inflatable walls, and launching into rugby tackles. Upwards of 50 kids were totally out of control.

Enough was enough.

"Toute le monde," I shouted, "*il faut sortir!*"

Nothing, I shouted again, louder at the top of my voice: "*Il faut sortir!*"

"*Il faut quoi?*" said one of the more disruptive little cherubs.

"Sortir," I shouted back.

"*Ecoute,*" said the cherub, gathering his gang, "*il faut sauter.*"

And so the refrain began "*Il faut sauter, il faut sauter!*" and 60 children bounced higher and higher, turning somersaults, with each and every-one of them one mistimed leap from the emergency room.

"*Il faut sortir, il faut sortir!*" I bellowed.

"*Il faut sauter, il faut sauter!*" they chimed back.

"Sortir!"

"Sauter!"

My humiliation was complete. The rest of the team of helper parents filtered out from lunch with coffees in hand to watch the spectacle of me being taunted by 60 children yo-yoing skywards.

"Sortir!" I shouted.

"Sauter!" they laughed.

At which point Marie Lou pulled the plug, and with a piercing whistle the inflatable castle deflated. ■

Read more about Dan Briggs's trials and tribulations at provenceguru.com



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Calypso's revival?

YACHTING



BY MICHAEL HEALY

THE famous exploration vessel *Calypso*, owned by Captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau from 1950 till his death in 1997, was based amongst the megayachts in Monaco when not on worldwide voyages of exploration or underwater filming. Since she was rammed and sunk by a barge in harbour in Singapore in 1996, she has been lying in La Rochelle (Charente-Maritime) and then in Concarneau (Brittany; pictured arriving) with endless litigation about her ownership and her future. It now seems possible that she can be removed from the Concarneau shipyard, replanked and refitted, either for further service afloat (unlikely) or as a museum. Monaco authorities would like her, once restored in some Mediterranean shipyard, to be on permanent display ashore near the famous Oceanographic Museum, of which her owner was for 33 years the director. But the decisions rest with the Cousteau Society, led by Cousteau's widow Francine, who finally managed to raise funds

from sponsors to have the vessel released by the courts. There may be news soon.

Calypso (42-metres, 360 tons) started life as a minesweeper in the Royal Navy, built in America in 1942 and assigned to the Mediterranean campaign, where she participated in the Sicily landings. In 1947, she was laid up in her home port Malta, followed by a short career as a ferry on the Gozo run. In 1950, Captain Cousteau noticed her there and acquired her through a wealthy Irish sponsor. He converted the ship in Antibes into a research vessel with laboratories, mini-submarines, a helicopter, diving compressors, a decompression chamber and extremely sparse accommodation for 27 crew – all male except for Madame Cousteau (passion-calypso.com). With the new equipment, *Calypso* sailed the seven seas for 46 years, exploring, documenting and making films such as “The Silent World” (1956), which brought her and her owner worldwide fame. An iconic ship, part of France's heritage, ready for rebirth.

TO Float, to Move, to Enjoy – these form the motto of the megayacht (and apply to less mega too, like mine). These three principles, adapted from Royal Navy training courses, keep the captain and crew constantly alert in harbour as at sea because that is the essence of good seamanship. However, something

went very wrong on January 4th, when the timeless classic motor yacht, *The One*, caught fire overnight. There was not much left of her by breakfast time after the fire damage and the water poured into her to douse the flames; she will only survive if a major rebuild is undertaken, and more likely she is what is termed a “constructive total loss”. She was berthed stern-to at a marina in Marmaris (Turkey), so little machinery would have been running, and fire engines were able to reach her and the 52-metre *Barbie* next-door. Other yachts were able to make an emergency departure to the nearby anchorage.

What made *The One* special was her earlier career under Austrian flag under the name *Carinthia VI*, owned by the Horten supermarket family and based mainly on the Riviera. Her predecessor, *Carinthia V*, ran aground and sank during her maiden voyage and the story goes that when the captain sheepishly reported this to Mr Horten, his immediate reaction was to leave the wreck on the seabed and order a replica to be built: *Carinthia VI*. His widow Heidi Horten has since moved further up to the 97-metre *Carinthia VII*. The megayacht industry needs owners like the Hortens! And these three latest Carinthias have been sensational in their design (British) and their build (Lürssen Werft in Bremen, Germany).

No other megayacht casualties are reported in the 2015 statistics list, but three 20 to 30-metre boats caught fire ... so not too bad a year, and no deaths. ■

THE WONDER (where I put that) YEARS



BY LYDIA PORTER

"CRYING is good for you," my Mum would sniffle after bursting into tears yet again for no reason. I was in my mid-twenties, ignorant of the uncontrollable changes caused by decreasing levels of oestrogen. Fast-forward thirty years and my own biological process: I'd say that laughter is the better medicine, of which I've swallowed huge spoonfuls with my closest friend, Julie.

I met Julie in another lifetime, working at Manchester Business Reference Library, helping Northern entrepreneurs establish empires while offering the lonely and dispossessed a warm refuge from the Lancashire drizzle. We forged our friendship giggling over interviews in "Smash Hits", stalking Morrissey and making fun of inane questions at the library enquiry desk.

After I moved to London, Julie and I took it in turns hopping on the train travelling to and from Manchester, but since moving to the French Riviera, visits have become much less frequent. I built a new life here thinking there'd be plenty of time to catch up but before I knew it, my mousy brown hairs were outnumbered by grey ones and I couldn't remember the last time my old chum and I had enjoyed a naughty, girlie weekend. So I invited Julie to spend a few days in the sunny South of France, share a glass or two of champagne and indulge in a little disgraceful behaviour.

Leaving Nice airport, we drove along the

Promenade des Anglais, with its backdrop of mountains, sea and sky that I now call home. Passing by happy crowds of locals and tourists, I pondered the particularly female problems of growing old.

"D'you know what I find worst about the menopause? It's the spots. I never had them when I was a teenager, but now ..."

"Really? I think the forgetfulness is worse. I've gone out of the house a couple of times and left the French windows wide open. And once I forgot to lock the back door."

"Oh God, yes! I used to have a fantastic memory for films and actors. But in the past year, I've seen the same thriller twice. I got half way through and realised I'd seen it before. It's a really good film tho'. What's it called? That 'Titanic' actor is in it."

"Huh. I forget words, too. I've started using an online thesaurus, although it doesn't include rude words. I was trying to find a polite way of saying 'w*nk', but had to use 'w*nk' in the end."

That evening I treated Julie to a night out in Monaco. We started with a glass of bubbly at Jack Monaco and guffawed as we sat in its outrageous blue and orange thrones.

"Do you know what I'd like? Fish and chips. I bet they don't do that here."

I asked for a menu, but Julie was right, the dish wasn't listed. Nothing else took our fancy, so when the waiter asked if we'd like to order, we declined.

"No thanks, you don't serve British food."

"But why come 'ere to eat like in England? 'Ere is Italian, we 'ave the best

food in the world."

"Rubbish! You can't beat steak and kidney pie, or roast beef and Yorkshire pudding."

We snickered like schoolgirls as the waiter huffed and tutted and offered to bring our bill.

"A year ago I couldn't have imagined being so forward."

"Oh I know; I lost all my confidence, but it seems to have returned."

That's something else that happens with the menopause, we agreed. Anxiety and panic attacks changed us from flirty gadabouts into gibbering wrecks. When we came out the other end, the relief at rediscovering our confidence led us to be more outspoken and less concerned about what others think.

"I know where we can go," I said.

"Cosmopolitan serves the best fish and chips in Monaco."

"Sorted."

Over dinner we discussed literature, feminism and family. We ordered red wine, served with good grace by our waiter, no doubt accustomed to the foibles of Monaco's middle-aged expats.

As we left the restaurant, a sleek orange Lamborghini pulled up.

"Is easyJet doing sports cars now?" tittered Julie.

An elegantly dressed young woman stepped out, teetering on her nude prostitute shoes. Over her shoulder she toted a bag out of which poked a Chihuahua's curious little face.

Julie sniffed as we passed them. "Don't people usually leave the restaurant with a doggy bag?"

We burst out laughing, arm in arm.

"Oh God, another thing about the menopause, you have to go to the loo at every opportunity, 'cos when you sneeze or laugh it can be so embarrassing."

"And sometimes it just comes out when you don't expect it to. I've taken to carrying a spare pair of knickers in my bag."

"Don't! Don't make me laugh."

"Well, if you didn't laugh, you'd cry!"

And I remembered what my Mum had said all those years ago. I know now what she meant. With the menopause, when you're not laughing, you're crying. ■

"The Departed" stars Leonardo diCaprio.



RED-Y FOR WINTER?

WINE

BY ALEX IGNATIEFF

WINTER is upon us! Bliss. Collapsing into a bucket chair on a terrace in the mountains wondering whether lunch will be followed by more skiing or perhaps just a nap before the evening's activities kick off.

With this truly life defining question in mind, I made a pre-season trip up to the Trois Vallées to stock a cellar ahead of the festive attack. Resisting the urge to put the foot to the floor, I took in the stunning scenery of the southern Rhône. Vineyards spill off on either side, as they have since Roman times when the highway was the river.

The Rhône flows from Switzerland through much of the vineyard territory of eastern France. It was the natural route for the arrival of the vines that spread from the Bouche du Rhône all the way through Lyon, Dijon and even up to Champagne. At Valence, where I turned off to Grenoble and the mountains, the weather on the river turns cooler, the climate wetter and the Syrah-dominated wines generally harder, most certainly the subject for a further discussion in partnership with a more detailed exploration of the delights of the cuisine of Lyon! South of Valence the vineyards are definitely under the influence of the Med.

The narrow, dramatically cliff-lined funnel that typifies the Rhône north of Valence gives way to a broader plain that spills into the sea. This plain is home to the vast appellation of the Côtes-du-Rhône, a production that almost rivals the total production of Bordeaux. Yet islands of more hallowed terroir poke from the plain.

The heart of the southern Rhône is Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which literally rises on the eastern banks of the river just a stone's throw from the A7, south of Orange. The appellation laws, honed mid-last century by the Baron de Roy, stipulate the highest minimum alcohol content of any French appellation – prescribing a blockbuster of a wine. A generous total of 13 different grape varieties can be included in the final blend although Château de Beaucastel was the last to use them all and stopped in the 2009 vintage. (For a taste of that original blend, we have a stock from the sun-kissed 2003 vintage, see contact details below).

The wonderfully individual Louis Reynaud makes what is probably the ultimate Châteauneuf-du-Pape at Château Rayas. He combines cuvées from separate sites under the beautifully evocative names Heart, Sunrise and Sunset. This Holy Trinity combines delicacy with power, lightness with force and elegance with generosity. In short, he is a master chef growing the best ingredients to pull together in one wonderfully focused, multilayered treat. And if he likes the cut of your jib, you can have some. A final example comes from the latest incumbent of the great *négociant* house of Chapoutier. Michel Chapoutier's organic offering, currently from 2009, is surprisingly developed and rustic.

Set a step above the general Côtes-du-Rhône appellation, individual villages that produce higher quality fruit and wines have been allowed to use the slightly cumbersome Côtes-du-Rhône Villages appellation. The

quality difference can be telling but to be absolutely certain of finding something out of the ordinary, look for those that have been given their own appellation. A string of villages – Gigondas, Vacqueras and Rasteau – lie perched above the plain on the eastern foothills of the Alps. Two producers of special mention that showcase the best of Rasteau and Gigondas. It was a bright and gloriously sunny summer's day when I first met André Roméro of the Domaine la Soumade in Rasteau, a stocky mini dynamo of a man resplendent in his *ouvrier's* blue overalls. He makes intense grenache, deep purple and unapologetically full of flavour. His three Rasteau Cuvées blend Grenache with a spicing of Syrah and Mourvedre and varying wood ageing. They are overwhelmingly attractive in their youth but blossom with age – which unfortunately needs to be in your cellar – another topic to be followed up on. A man who doesn't believe in white wine, his Viognier goes into a Côtes-du-Rhône Cuvée Anthea.

A more traditional modernist is Louis Barruol of Château Saint Cosme in Gigondas. He too has various Grenache-based Cuvées. An elegant edge belies the power of these wines, deceptively approachable in youth but do hold on to a few and watch them evolve. His Côtes-du-Rhône is a benchmark for all that can be achieved in this vast appellation and really is an approachable mini version of his top Cuvées. ■

For more, visit emporiumduvin.com or call L'Emporium du vin on 04 93 49 27 01.

WINE BARS IN NICE worth braving winter for

BY CHRISSIE MCCLATCHIE



AS we head deeper into self-imposed winter hibernation, I thought it might be fun to compile a selection of my favourite Nice wine bars, to encourage readers to occasionally pop out of their winter dens.

In the eight years that I've been living in this city, the wine bar landscape has only slightly evolved: there are the institutions (save for the fantastic Cave Wilson on rue Gubernatis, rumoured to reopen under new ownership, so watch this space) while every year throws up a few new hot spots.

From the Carré d'Or, Place Wilson, Place Garibaldi, Vieux Nice and the Port, each *bar à vin* has a speciality and would appeal to different folks at different times, depending on your mood and *envie*.

VIEUX NICE

CAVE BIANCHI

Wine shop

Best for: Wine tasting

Cave Bianchi has a trump up its rather historic sleeve: not one, but *two* underground cellars which ooze that wonderfully damp vintage wine atmosphere. Sadly, you can't just walk in off the street and experience said cellars for yourself, but you can book a tasting in them. The welcoming staff also propose a daily taster in the shop itself, to

whet your appetite for the more serious and pricey tastings held below. 7 rue Raoul Bosio. Mon-Sun 9h30-19h30 (22h30 Fri & Sat). cave-bianchi.fr

CAVE DE LA TOUR

Wine shop, wine bar

Best for: Local wines

To me, Cave de la Tour (left) is the quintessential French wine bar. Cranky owner? Check! Tables made from used wine barrels? Check! Locals staring down anyone foreign who dares enter? Check! Yet it still is my

preferred wine bar in Nice. It doesn't hurt that almost every wine from the Alpes-Maritimes is stocked on their shelves or that the outdoor tables are perfect for summer sipping while the interior is all cosy and warm on winter afternoons. Spend enough time here and you might even manage to make the cranky owner crack a smile. Now there's a result! 3 rue de la Tour. Tues-Sat 7h-20h and Sun 7h-12h30. cavedelatour.com

CAVE CAPRIOGLIO

Wine shop

Best for: Atmosphere and history

Not a wine bar as such but rather an institution that can't be ignored, this family-run wine shop in the heart of Vieux Nice has been in business for over a century and little has changed since the doors first swung open. Inducing the same euphoria in adults that sweet shops do in children, Caprioglio's shelves are lined with a remarkable wine selection and they also offer *vin à la tireuse*, where you bring in an empty bottle and they'll fill it to the brim with wine for a rather small sum. It may not be the best quality but, hey, it might just prove the perfect match for a sweltering *niçois* evening (remember those?). 16 rue de la Prefecture. Tues-Sat 8h-13h and 15h-19h30; Sun 8h00-13h.

PORT

VINIVORE

Wine bar, restaurant

Best for: Organic, biodynamic, natural wines



Spearheading the restaurant movement, Vinivore has made the rather unassuming rue Lascaris *the* place to dine in Nice. Focusing on local produce, the menu's seasonal fare never disappoints and the wine selection, chosen by owner Bonaventure Blankstein, is guaranteed to include a few grape varieties and growing regions that you have never heard of. This is one place to ask for their recommendations and then enjoy your new discoveries. 10 rue Lascaris. Tues-Fri 12h-14h and 19h30-22h30; Sat 19h30-22h30h. vinivore.fr

PLACE GARIBALDI

LES COMPAGNONS DE LA GRAPPE

Wine bar, restaurant

Best for: Rare wines and vintages

A good choice on Place Garibaldi is Les Compagnons de la Grappe, tucked away on the south-eastern corner of the square at the start of rue Catherine Segurane. It's hard to give this relative newcomer just one label; instead I'll reel off a few reasons to visit; big, comfy chairs made for losing an hour or two in the



company of friends, musical evenings, a great lunch menu and an incredible cellar housing some of the most evocative names in the wine world.

2 rue Catherine Segurane.

Tues-Sat 10h30-19h30.

lescompagnonsdelagrappe.com

LA PETITE SYRAH

Wine shop, wine bar, bistro

Best for: Organic, natural wines

La Petite Syrah had an Andy Warhol moment a few years ago, when a pointed sign with scaled prices for a coffee, depending on how politely you ordered it (above), went viral worldwide and garnered this small wine bar its 15 minutes of fame. The attention may have quietened down these days but the sign is still up, alongside a handpicked wine selection, which demonstrates owner Fabrice Pepino's love for the fermented grape, especially organic and natural wines. Fabrice's wife is South American and her influence often shines through in the food menu. 13 rue Cassini. (Shop) Tues-Sat 10h-20h. (Food) Tues-Sat 12h-02h00 & Thurs-Sat 19h30-22h.

lapetitesyrah.fr

PLACE WILSON

LA PART DES ANGES

Wine shop, wine bar, bistro

Best for: Organic, biodynamic wines

You'll find one of the city's most atmospheric wine bars situated across from the pretty square Place Wilson, east of avenue Jean Médecin. The focus here is very much on organic and biodynamic wines, and you'll find names from all over France

and beyond. Choose a bottle to take home or enjoy in situ, amongst the wooden wine crates full of tempting discoveries. Hungry?

A great spot for lunch with many *assiettes* and an ever-changing bistro menu. 17 rue Gubernatis.

Mon-Sat 10h-20h30.

la-part-des-anges-nice.fr

CARRÉ D'OR

CAVE 35

Wine bar, wine shop

Best for: Late night, trendy

Along with Yolo/Flume (below), Cave 35 is Nice's trendiest nightspot, making it the place to be when you're looking for a hipster New York or London vibe. A great wine list helps, as do the cheese and charcuterie plates for when you get peckish. 35 rue de la Buffa. Tues-Sat 18h-00h30.

YOLO/FLUME

Wine bar

Best for: Late night, trendy

Fighting it out with Cave 35 (above) for the title of Nice's coolest nightspot, Yolo (which takes over Flume's 1^{re} étage at the weekend) is one of Nice's most centrally located bars, two blocks west of avenue Jean Médecin. After work, Yolo is the spot for an intimate drink (or two) with a selection that includes a fair share of Nice's own Bellet wines available by the bottle. On Friday and Saturday, the action moves upstairs, with an industrial vibe and a similarly fashionable crowd at Flume. 10 rue Maréchal Joffre. (Yolo) Mon-Thurs 18h-00h30; (Flume) Fri-Sat 18h30-01h30. yolo-flume.com ■

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we've got mail...

PETITE SIRENE IN CANNES

COPENHAGEN'S "Little Mermaid" is famous all over the world but Cannes has one also (rather more sexy, though). She's near the end of the Port Canto in front of the lighthouse. Her name is "Atlantean" and her legs are covered in scales. She is the masthead of the Port Pierre Canto.

Lars Mikkelsen, by email



FLY ME OR LOSE ME

IF we don't use them, we will lose them so I do hope that others in the Var keep up to date on the new air routes to and from Toulon-Hyères. FlyBe have just announced a new seasonal service to Southampton and CityJet have a new London City route. Southampton is often more convenient than the big London airports for connections to Manchester, Leeds, and some Scottish and Irish destinations.

For many British expats this can eliminate the need to drive all the way to Nice.

Paul Welland, Lorgues, by email

SECULAR FRANCE

YOUR reader who wrote "You want bacon with that?" has an excellent point and was right to walk out of a restaurant in England that doesn't include bacon as part of its full English breakfast. But what are we to make of the new proposal to adjust UK exam times to fit in with Ramadan? It's time to live in a country that leaves religion out of public life. Oh, wait a minute, we already do. It's France!

Gill Hilton, Nice, by email

SILENT CALLERS

EVERY night we receive several phone calls from 0277070115. When we answer there is no one on the other end, one night I waited for 45 minutes hoping that at least I would get to the bottom of who the caller was but nothing! I've been on line to try and trace the number but without any joy. Have you heard anything about this and do you have any suggestions.

J.D. by email

These "silent calls" are automated from a system that calls several random numbers at once and speaks only to the first one that answers; the others get silence. This saves them "downtime" and increases the possibility that they will get a live caller. Waiting for them to say something will get you nowhere, so don't even try; they're already connected to someone who answered before you did. The return number is spoofed by the system because they know that many people won't answer unless a number is shown. They are trying to sell you something that you probably don't want anyway.

You could put yourself on the "liste rouge" but as these calls often originate from out of the country, the "no commercial calls" restriction is unlikely to be obeyed by them. It wouldn't do any harm though, except that your number will no longer appear in the paper or online telephone directories. You may even wish that.

One way to protect yourself is by forcing all incoming callers to identify themselves. This is a service offered by some mobile and landline providers such as SFR.

It works like this: When someone calls,

RECYCLING CARDS

FIRST a thanks for your magazine that we have enjoyed for many years and found very useful for various things, now perhaps another. Is there anywhere that wants old Christmas cards for re-use into other cards, I know that this happens in England.

Allen & Janet Weston, Fréjus

Used cards can be sent to:

*The British Association of
Monaco, BP 41
MC 98001 Monaco Cedex*

your phone doesn't ring. The caller gets an automated message asking him to identify himself and only if he says something does your phone ring. You then get to hear the name he's given and you can take or refuse the call. These pesky silent call systems can't deal with that. Ask your provider if they offer a similar service. RR

BABY YOU CAN'T DRIVE MY CAR

A FEW years ago my letter was published on the subject of car parking around Nice. Since then there have been many improvements with parking wardens actually giving out tickets, but still I was horrified on a recent walk to Parc Phoenix. Just after the closed Midas garage there is car after car, so obviously abandoned. As you get closer to Parc Phoenix the street

WHEN TROUBLE COMES KNOCKING

THIS year's census takes place January 21st to February 27th in metropolitan France. The National Police remind you of three key rules to note if someone claims to be an enumerator when knocking at your door.

1. You will be notified by post of an agent's visit. If you don't receive an official census letter in advance then the person is a fraud.
2. The enumerator has a tricolour official card with a photograph, the stamp of the mayor and the signature of the mayor.
3. He or she will give you forms that you can fill out calmly, online or on paper.

If you have any doubt about the person standing at your door, call the police on 17. See le-recensement-et-moi.fr

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has about 20 cars that have been there a long time covered in bird guano; some have been stripped of their insides or burnt out. One or two look like a shelter or temporary home for someone. The street is a sad representation for Nice. As we're now very near the airport I can see why; it's probably cheaper to leave a car there than paying airport parking charges.

Not a parking ticket anywhere so perhaps this is the city car dump!

My street in the Les Musiciens area did see a few parking wardens and a bit of a clean up but now its back to normal with double parking, garages blocked with cars honking to get in or out or even passed. One car has been left on the street since October; clearly it's a rubbish tip inside but no parking ticket has ever been put on it. Why is this allowed to happen on so many streets in Nice? Maybe there are just too many parking spaces for everyone that they can just let these cars sit on the street for months, maybe years even.

Michele, by email

NEXT TIME ROUND

LET'S not be too complaisant about the French regional elections, which saw many conservative victories and a few socialist ones. French conservatives (Les Républicains) seem to have fallen right into President Hollande's trap when he agreed to remove Socialist candidates from the second round to bar the way of the Front National. Christian Estrosi owes his victory to that strategy. Payback time will come when Hollande asks Les Républicains to return the favour in the

next year's presidential elections leaving Hollande vs their candidate in the second round. If that candidate is Sarkozy, who the French people no longer trust, is there not a real chance that Hollande will be re-elected in 2017?

Michael Carlson, Antibes, by email

WHERE AM I?

HERE'S one from just across the border to add to your funny sign collection. I had no idea where they were telling me to go and for once I couldn't blame it on my wife!

Jonathan Swill, by email



MAGALUF ON ICE

YOU'VE written before about how the disgraceful behaviour of so many young Brits abroad is a national embarrassment. These uncouth louts once targeted only warm places with cheap alcohol such

LETTERS

WRITE TO US: Letters to the Editor can be sent by post (see page 50) or email: info@rivierareporter.com. Unless specifically marked "not for publication", letters may be published in our Letters pages. Names are withheld when requested but please note anonymous letters will not be considered.

as Spain and Greece but what are we to make of the fact that they are now coming to France and aren't even waiting for the hot weather to do so?

In January the previously elegant ski resort of Val d'Isère was invaded by bands of drunken British chavs making fools of themselves. The French are rightfully less tolerant than the Spaniards when it comes to "wet and wild pool parties" and "Tigne-Age Dirtbag" themed evenings where women are told to dress up as "teen age mums". Is there another nationality that would act like this?

Even tragedy doesn't put a damper on their madness and one 18-year-old has already passed out drunk in a snowdrift and froze to death. At least the cold discourages them from having open sex in the streets like they do in Spain's infamous "Shagaluf".

They fight with the locals and the police and many hoteliers understandably don't want their business. Sometimes I'm ashamed to be British.

Richard Welles, by email

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10 FRENCH TV SERIES YOU HAVE TO WATCH IN 2016



BY KATIE WARREN

FRANCE isn't well known for its stellar TV, but a recent surge of great shows is making it worth your while to tune into some French channels. And remember that if you binge-watch these shows, you're not being lazy and unproductive: you're practicing your French.

1. Marseille

This is Netflix's first French-language original series, produced entirely in France and starring none other than Gerard Depardieu. The premise is a struggle for power between a mayor who has been in office for 25 years and an ambitious young man set on taking his place. Filmed in the vibrant southern city of Marseille, the series has been dubbed France's version of the American remake of "House of Cards". It's set to air on May 5th. (Netflix)

2. Versailles

Much like its namesake, this show was really expensive to make – the most costly series ever produced in France, in fact. That means a budget of about €30 million for the first ten episodes. To appeal to a global audience, the show was shot in English, which some French critics weren't too happy about (but at least you won't need to use subtitles.) The plot follows the antics of 28-year-old Louis XIV, who wants to build the greatest palace in the world. The first season premiered in November, 2015 and it's been renewed for a second season which starts filming in January. (Canal+)

3. Le Bureau des Légendes

This show is about a French intelligence officer who worked undercover for six years in Syria. But after coming home, he can't seem to shake his secret identity. The

creators are trying to make the show as realistic as possible, having met with actual spies as part of their research. At the 2015 Series Mania festival, an international TV festival in Paris, the show's first season was nominated for "Best French Series" and won the prize for "Best Male Actor". (Canal+)

4. American Dream

It might not sound French, but "American Dream" is indeed a French production. This dark comedy focuses on a young man named Omar who flees from police to the US to join his childhood friend, Jimmy. But they soon realise that Los Angeles isn't all it's cracked up to be when they get tangled up in the local gangs. The show guest stars American actor Michael Madsen. (Canal Play and Canal+)

5. Une chance de trop

This thriller is based on a book by legendary mystery novelist Harlan Coben, and the French are loving the suspense. The last two episodes of the first season drew about 8 million viewers. A young mother's life is turned upside down one morning by two gunshots. She awakens from a coma eight days later to find that her husband has been killed and her daughter kidnapped. Suspected by the police, she begins searching relentlessly for her daughter. (TF1)

6. Dix pour cent

A refreshing change from France's usual somewhat dark, dramatic series, this comedy is about three rival talent agents fighting each other for the best roles for their prestigious clients. In each episode, different real-life French film stars play themselves. The best part is that they aren't afraid to make fun of themselves. (France 2)

7. Disparue

Inspired from a Spanish show, this popular detective miniseries attracts more French viewers than the American favourite "Grey's Anatomy". The disappearance of a teenage girl on her birthday devastates a family in Lyon. It's been compared to the UK's "Broadchurch", because in both shows the detective has a complex past and the family doesn't seem to be telling the whole truth. (France 2)

8. Les Témoins

This show has a unique but extremely creepy premise. In northern France, six corpses are dug up and then meticulously rearranged in two houses to form new families, each with a wife, a husband, and a teenager who didn't know each other before their deaths. (France 2)

9. La Stagiaire

A little lighter than rearranged corpses, this courtroom comedy started out as a film and, due to its popularity, was extended into a series with the same main actors. The show follows 50-year-old Constance Meyer who decides to continue her studies to become a judge. Much to his dismay, a younger and very uptight judge finds himself with an overly eager intern. (France 3)

10. Le Passager, France 2

This miniseries set in Bordeaux is adapted from a novel written by the show's creator. A psychiatrist, bored of his job, finds his professional interest renewed when he receives a client who lost his memory the day before and was found near the scene of a horrible crime. The psychiatrist works with the police captain to solve a series of crimes inspired by Greek mythology. (France 2) ■

For more see thelocal.fr

february

CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED

Tues evenings from Jan 26, 20h: Holy Trinity Cannes is running a 7-week course, a deeper look into the life, the message and the person of Jesus Christ as told in Mark's Gospel. A book will be provided as part of the course. No prior theological knowledge required. Ave Branly, Cannes. Tel: 04 93 94 54 61. holyltrinitycannes.org

POLITICAL WINE, NICE

Wed Feb 3: 18h30-20h: With the Riviera Chapter of Democrats Abroad at La Canne à Sucre (11 Promenade des Anglais; Parking: Palais de la Méditerranée or Palais Masséna). All Americans are invited for a presentation explaining how, when, and where you get to cast your vote for Democrat presidential candidate in 2016. Please understand that, although we do not impose a formal entry fee, we ask that you order at least one item. Please RSVP (even "maybe") to dafrance.riviera@gmail.com

STEP EUROPE INT'N CONFERENCE

Thurs Feb 4 & Fri Feb 5: "Advising the International Family in Europe" at the Hotel Hermitage Monaco. step.europe@monaco.mc

POSH PARAPHERNALIA

Thurs Feb 4 & Thurs Mar 3: Books, posh paraphernalia, bric-a-brac, and light lunch from 12h30-13h30.

Sat Feb 20 & Sat Mar 19: Books, bric-a-brac, posh paraphernalia and 2-course lunch from 12h30-13h30. At the Grange (815 chem Gourettes, Mouans-Sartoux). Library is open every Thursday 10h-15h (bric-a-brac and books). There is easy parking and pets are welcome. sunny-bank.org

FRANCE-GRANDE BRETAGNE

Fri Feb 5: Guided Tour Musée Bonnard, Le Cannet.

Thurs Feb 25, 15h30: Tea, biscuits, conversation & Scrabble in English or French at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 11 bis rue de la Buffa, Nice. 04 93 81 76 74 - fgb-nice.com

SUPERBOWL WITH STARS N BARS

Sun Feb 7: See you on the Stardeck for the 50th Superbowl live from Santa Clara, CA. Info & reservations: starsnbars.com

FEB 10 ASH WEDNESDAY COMMUNION SERVICES

Holy Trinity Cannes, 19h30: Holy Communion Service (ave Branly). holyltrinitycannes.org

St Paul's Anglican, Monte Carlo, 18h30: Imposition of Ashes and Communion (22 ave de Grande Bretagne). stpaulsmontaco.com

St John's Menton, 10h30: With Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes at the English Cemetery Chapel, Via del Campo, Bordighera, Italy. anglicanchurchmenton.com

COMMONWEALTH CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Thurs Feb 11: Outing to Bordighera, incl. visit to Bicknell Museum. See commonwealthclubriviera.com

BRITISH ASSOCIATION CANNES

Fri Feb 12, 11h: Annual General Meeting at Holy Trinity Church Hall, ave Branly, followed by buffet lunch (€12 incl. wine). Please contact Rev Giles Williams to book lunch 04 93 94 04 56.

LITERATURE CONFERENCE

Thurs Feb 18, 8h: The representation of Nice in Anglo-American literature by Judit Kiraly. Upstairs at the CUM Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen, 65 Prom. des Anglais in Nice.

RADA "SUMMER END"

Thurs Feb 18, Fri Feb 19 & Sat Feb 20, 20h: The Riviera Amateur Dramatic Association presents a light-hearted murder-mystery by Eric Chappell, author of TV's "Rising Damp", at Mougins School. Admission: €10 (incl. a free drink). Three ways to book: phone 07 83 53 76 20, email radabookings@free.fr or at the English Book Centre, 12 rue Alexis Julien, Valbonne.

AMIA LUNCH

Thurs Feb 18: The Robinson, Mandelieu La Napoule (new venue). Please contact Doug Attwood to reserve on 04 92 97 50 72.

dates for 2016



NICE CARNIVAL:

February 13 to Feb 28

CITRON FESTIVAL IN MENTON:

February 13 to March 2

CLOCKS CHANGE:

March 27

MONTE CARLO ROLEX MASTERS TENNIS:

April 9 to 17

TOP MARQUES MONACO:

April 14 to 17

ANTIBES ART FAIR:

April 16 to May 2

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL:

May 11 to 26

MONACO FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX:

May 26 to 29

IRONMAN NICE:

June 5

MONTE CARLO TELEVISION FESTIVAL:

June 12 to 16

SUMMER SALES ALPES-MARITIMES:

June 6 to August 16

NICE JAZZ FESTIVAL:

July 13 to 18

JAZZ FESTIVAL IN JUAN-LES-PINS:

July 14 to 24

FESTIVAL NUITS DU SUD IN VENCE:

July 7 to August 23

YACHTING FESTIVAL CANNES:

September 6 to 11

INTERNATIONAL GASTRONOMY FESTIVAL LES ETOILES DE MOUGINS

September 17 to 19

REGATTES ROYALES CANNES:

September 20 to 24

MONACO YACHT SHOW:

September 28 to October 1

LES VOILES DE ST TROPEZ:

September 24 to October 2

LES GRANDE BRADERIE ST TROPEZ:

October 28 to October 31

CLOCKS CHANGE:

October 30

NICE-CANNES MARATHON:

November 13

2016 official French public holidays

Mon Mar 28: Easter Monday
Fri May 1: Labour Day
Tues May 5: Ascension
Fri May 8: Victory Day 1945
Mon May 16: Whit Monday
Tues July 14: Bastille Day
Sat Aug 15: Assumption
Sun Nov 1: All Saints' Day
Wed Nov 11: Armistice Day
Fri Dec 25: Christmas Day

School holidays for 2016 for Zone B (Nice and region)

Winter break: Feb 6-Mar 21
Spring break: Apr 2-Apr 17
Summer hols: July 5-Sep 1
Toussaint: Oct 20-Nov 2
Christmas break:
Dec 17, 2016- Jan 2, 2017

BA OF THE VAR

Fri Feb 19: Coffee Morning
Cotignac. See baofthevar.com
Sat Feb 27: Lunch in Montferrat.

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Sat Feb 20: Olive oil tasting and tour of Olive Mill in Opio followed by animated lunch. For information see: AmericanClubRiviera.com

MESSIAH'S CHURCH: RIVIERA ARCHITECT AARON MESSIAH, HIS LIFE AND WORK

Thurs Feb 25, 18h30: Daniel Jessula, the great-grandson of Aaron Messiah, Dr Judith Kiraly, architectural historian, and Fr Walter Raymond OGS, Anglican chaplain, present a public conference on the life and work of Aaron Messiah, architect. The conference will be given primarily in English and supported by slides with the work of this important Riviera architect. At Messiah's church, Saint Paul's, Monte-Carlo (22 ave Grange Bretagne), which he began to design in 1914, and will conclude with a reception in the St Paul's Library. For more info, call +377 93 30 71 06 or email info@stpaulsmonaco.com

march**US DEMOCRAT GLOBAL PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY**

Sat Mar 5, 11h-20h: For all Americans living on the Riviera. At Subway (8 blvd Gambetta, Nice). Please contact dafrance.riviera@gmail.com for more details.

ST PAUL'S MONTE CARLO

Sun Mar 6, 10h30: Mothering Sunday (Mother's Day) Children's Service. St Paul's Anglican, Monte Carlo. stpaulsmonaco.com

BA OF THE VAR

Wed Mar 16: AGM in Le Muy. baofthevar.com

AMIAI LUNCH

Thurs Mar 17: Les Vents d'Ange, Beaulieu-sur-mer. To reserve please contact Kim on 04 93 01 20 37 or email kimandgary@sky.com

MONACO-IRELAND ARTS SOCIETY

Fri Mar 18, 20h30: Irish evening for St Patrick's week at the Auditorium du Collège Charles III, avenue de l'Annonciade, Monte-Carlo, Monaco.

The evening will consist of: "Reflections on the 1916 Easter Rising - A Hundred Years On," with poems by W.B. Yeats, as well as Irish songs; "The Abbey Theatre Revisited", a short history of Dublin's famous Abbey Theatre, illustrated with one act plays by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, and extracts from plays by Bernard Shaw and Sean O'Casey. For reservations phone 04 93 41 97 22.

RISTRETTO CONCERT: JOHN STAINER'S "THE CRUCIFIXION"

Sun Mar 19, 20h : Written in 1886-87 recounting the story of the Passion, "The Crucifixion" is a very dramatic and intense piece with some of the most memorable hymn-tunes ever written. Although a very popular work in the UK, it is relatively unknown in France. The choir will also be performing an anthem by the same composer, "I Saw the Lord". The evening will start with an introductory talk. Concert is given in association with Landmark, and is supported by the AMC (Association de Musique de Chambre). Artistic Director: Errol Girdlestone; organist: Laurent Fievet; soloists from the choir. More info available on the chamber choir's website: ristrettovoices.com. At St Paul's Anglican Church, 22 ave de Grande Bretagne, Monaco. Tickets €20 available at the FNAC and AMC - 06 43 91 67 43 or ristrettoamc@aol.com

COMMONWEALTH DAY

Sat Mar 19: Cocktail dinatoire to celebrate with the Commonwealth Club of the Riviera. Details on commonwealthclubriviera.com

AMERICAN CLUB OF THE RIVIERA

Sat Mar 19: Visit to Oceanographic museum in Monaco followed by animated lunch. For more, please see: AmericanClubRiviera.com

WINE & CHEESE

End of Mar, 19h: The Association France-Grande-Bretagne Cannes's popular cheese and wine evening, very french style, at Holy Trinity Cannes (behind the Carlton Hotel). For exact date, contact Iris 04 93 97 86 32 or Odette 04 93 49 37 01.

CLOCKS CHANGE

Sun Mar 27: 02h00

to note**VISIT TO EPHRUSSI DE ROTHSCHILD VILLA & GARDENS**

Fri Apr 15, 11h30: Meeting at villa entrance for tour followed by lunch overlooking gardens. €30 including entrance fee, tour and lunch and time to explore beautiful gardens after. Transport available. Further details please contact 04 93 75 65 17. Please book before 31st March.

HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES**ALL SAINT'S, MARSEILLE & AIX EN PROVENCE**

Sun Mar 27, 10h: Easter Sunday Service at 4 rue de Belloi, Marseille.
Sun Mar 27, 11h : Easter Sunday Service at The Oratory, 34 place des Martyrs de la Résistance, Aix-en-Provence.
anglican-marseille.org

HOLY TRINITY CANNES

Thurs Mar 24, 19h30: Holy Communion service for Maundy Thursday.
Fri Mar 25, 12h-15h: Vigil at the Cross.
Sun Mar 27, 9h: Holy Communion; 10:30: Easter Day Family Service.
Ave Branly - holyltrinitycannes.org

ST JOHN'S MENTON

Sun Mar 27, 10h30: Easter Eucharist at Chapelle St Roch, Place St Roch, Menton.
anglicanchurchmenton.com

ST PAUL'S ANGLICAN, MONTE CARLO

Sun Mar 20, 8h & 10h30: Palm Sunday Services.
Sun Mar 20, 10h: Place des Moulins: Ecumenical Blessing & Procession of the Palms.
Wed Mar 23, 18h30: Weekly Healing Prayer & Communion.
Thurs Mar 24, 18h30: Maundy Thursday Liturgy of the Last Supper.
Fri Mar 25, noon: Good Friday Stations of the Cross.
Sun Mar 27, 8h & 10h30: Easter Sunday Services.

Sun Mar 27, 10h30: Annual Easter Egg Hunt. 22 ave Grande Bretagne - stpaulsmonaco.com

INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH NICE & ST PAUL

Sun Mar 27, 10h45: Easter Sunday Service in St Paul de Vence (Espace Sainte Claire Commercial Center/Vinci Parking garage on Level 0, Route de Vence - D2).
Sun Mar 27, 18h30: Easter Sunday Service in Nice at 13 rue Vernier. ibcfrance.org

HOLY TRINITY NICE & ST HUGH VENCE

Sun Mar 20: Palm Sunday Sung Eucharist at Vence at 9h and at Nice at 11h, with Procession and distribution of Palms.
Tues Mar 22, noon: Chrism Eucharist, Bishop David Hamid; light lunch afterwards.
Thurs Mar 24th: Maundy Thursday, Sung Eucharist at Vence at 18h and at Nice at 20h30.
Fri Mar 25: Good Friday, Solemn Liturgy at noon at Vence and 15h at Nice.
Sat Mar 26, 20h: Holy Saturday, Easter Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter at Nice. Vigil before Altar of Repose after the Sung Eucharist in Nice (please note, an hour earlier than last year).
Sun Mar 27: Easter Day, Sung Eucharist at Vence at 9h and at Nice at 11h.
11 rue de la Buffa, Nice.
anglican-nice.com

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MISC

THE FRANCE-GRANDE- BRETAGNE ASSOCIATION IN CANNES

holds French and English classes from beginners to advanced including conversation every Saturday from January to June 2016 from 2pm to 5pm followed by tea and biscuits. We also organise a social event every month. We are on the first floor of the Maison des Association Cannes, 9 rue Louis Braille, in Cannes (behind the train station off rue d'Alsace). Parking free and available.

More info: Tel. Iris on 04 93 97 86 32 or Odette on 04 93 49 37 01

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