



# THE INFOPACK

## PYRENEES ROUSSILLON

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>CHILDREN .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>GETTING THERE .....</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>FESTIVALS AND EVENTS ....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CLIMATE .....</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>ART .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>A BRIEF HISTORY .....</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>SPORTS/ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>GUIDES .....</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>TAXIS &amp; HOTELS .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>NURIA AND THE CARANÇA ...</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A DAY IN THE CORBIERES ...</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>FRENCH PHONES .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CATHARS .....</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>MISCELLANEOUS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>EATING AND DRINKING .....</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</b>	
<b>LES VINS .....</b>	<b>25</b>		

**At the back of this Information booklet**

you will find the **Customer Satisfaction Check**  
Please send it back to us after the end of your holiday so  
that we may continue to improve our service.

# Holiday Information

**We** are pleased that you have decided to discover the many attractions of this very special region of France with its distinctive culture, good wines, traditional cuisine and breathtaking countryside.

**The** information compiled here aims to help you enjoy your stay. We have tried to offer you as much information at a glance as possible. If you find that some details have changed, are incorrect or need updating, we would appreciate a short note.

**email to:** [pete@countrycousins.co.uk](mailto:pete@countrycousins.co.uk)

---

## INTRODUCTION

**A** seemingly trivial modern electronic detail; here cash machines, before the advent of the Euro, used to offer you, as a matter of course, either Francs or Pesetas. As you get to know the area, you realise that this was not simply a modern day super-convenience but an expression of a centuries-old historical fact. Pyrénées Orientales (gradually being re-named Pyrénées-Roussillon) has a lot more in common with the land across the mountains than with the rest of France and secondly, it is a crossroads, a melting-pot, a fertile region much fought over and central to the history of the entire western Mediterranean.

**Perhaps** it momentarily slumbers but its depth, its layers, are there for all of us to uncover and discover. Vibrant, it challenges us with its colours, smells and shapes. In all seasons and all weathers we are offered something interesting, moving, different. We may choose to relax or to take up the challenge. We are always uplifted; a sunrise from the sea, a sunset behind the mountains.

**To** look up from the mundane, the struggle with the shopping trolley across the super-market car park, and see not the greyness of Sainsburys at Camden Town but the wonder of the colours of Canigou on a late October afternoon is a memory that can be recalled with pleasure. Is it not for this reason that we go on holiday?

**The** rivers Agly (from the Corbières), Têt (from the Capcir) and Tech (from the Vallespir) formed the fertile plain which today is a favoured fruit growing area. Roussillon - Red Earth. The colours assail us. In March, walk through orchards of espaliered apricots, nectarines, peaches and plums, branches heavy with pink and white blossom, the sky green, pink and blue with reflections.

**Although** there has been development along the coast, imposed by grand plan from Paris, we still find long deserted sandy beaches and intimate coves which even in January may invite us to picnic or just to stroll around the headland.

**Further** inland the landscape is still dominated by rows of cypresses along the irrigation canals. Small villages, some from Roman times, lay dreamily amongst the apricot and peach gardens. You will discover nature almost untouched; fascinating mountain landscapes and shaded river valleys with tiny villages from another time dotted amongst them. The little market towns and, of course the capital, Perpignan, are full of southern charm.

**The** castles of the Cathars watch out across the still landscape which can easily be explored by bike or on foot along excellent hiking paths. Countless churches and many Romanesque abbeys await your visit. Slightly further away are the medieval towns of Carcassonne, Sète or Narbonne, the old Roman town.

**There** are many sports facilities, the clean mountain streams are full of carp and trout and the excellent *caves* await your visit. But perhaps you just want to do nothing at all and for this our holiday home will give you the opportunity. You are about to discover an extraordinary region of Europe.

**The Real South of France !**

---

## GETTING THERE

**There** are numerous ways to travel to the Real South of France. Whichever way you go, a car is essential at most of our holiday homes as public transport is almost inexistent.. A few properties are accessible by rail and these are marked in the text description. You may choose to drive down and you will find in the following pages some suggested itineraries. If you want to fly and hire a car **we suggest you do it through Europcar which seem to provide the best service in this area. Be warned that if you book an Easyjet from Easyjet in Barcelona you are not insured if you take it into France!**

See also the “how to get there” tab on the website.

### Ferries/Tunnel

**We no longer book these as you can get better prices doing it yourself direct on the Internet.**

### Driving down

**Motorways** in France are subject to toll. Fees depend on the size of vehicle. Also, if you can avoid it, do not arrive in Paris on Sunday afternoon or early evening as local tolls are much higher at these times. For the four main routes the approximate fees each way per family car are:

Calais-Paris-Clermont-F (A75)-Perpignan: 54 EUR  
Calais-Paris-Toulouse (A20)-Perpignan: 59 EUR  
Calais-Reims-Lyon-Perpignan: 79 EUR. See Itineraries below.

**You** don't need cash at the toll booth. Your Visa card will be swiped through the machine (no signature) and you will be on your way in seconds. If you want a receipt, ask for a "fiche" as you hand them the card. It doesn't matter how small the toll is, they prefer cards.

**Eating** in motorway restaurants can be a pleasurable experience in France!

### Speed restrictions

(in brackets when its raining).

**Motorways** 130 (110)

**Dual** carriageways: 110 (90)

**Other** roads: 90 (80)

**Urban** areas: 50 kph

**Radar** traps are very much more frequent than in England. **See Speeding 2004** below.

### Other safety matters

**The** greatest amusement driving in France is to be had from the “priority from the right” rule. Unless the road is marked to the contrary anyone approaching from your right must be allowed to pass in front of you and conversely you have priority over anything coming from your left. In theory it's fits well into the French love-affair with logic, in practise it's a nightmare. Keep in mind that it applies in both town and country. There are road-signs to help you make that snap decision that may save your life but because you're not used to it, stay very alert at all times.

Some signs to help



Junction coming up with **priority** for vehicles approaching from right.

Junction coming up where **in theory** you have **priority**.



Whereas the previous sign refers specifically to the next junction, this one tells you that in general the nature of the road you are travelling on is

“prioritaire” - until this sign (right)



cancels it.

**And once you've got that clear**, remember that at a roundabout priority is from the left ....

**Unmarked** junctions – presume that there is priority from the right .. always. Although it is unlikely that cars will shoot out on to a main road in the country (except for the occasional local farmer who's mind is on the harvest), in towns they always will.

**Two** more signs we're not used to in the UK are: **RAPPEL** (remember) which is to be found on a panel under warning signs that are repeated, a reinforcing message which really does mean danger and **ARBRES INCLINEES** (leaning trees) really does need to be taken seriously.

I've been driving "over there" for many years, but I still look the wrong way at junctions. You will too. The more instinctive a driver you are the worse it is. You look right automatically at a junction and they hit you from the left. **RAPPEL!**

**You** will overall quickly discover that driving styles in the Real South of France are somewhat different to ours. But on narrow tree lined country roads you will still come across flying deckchair 2CV Citroens driven by little men in black berets puffing Gauloises driving at annoyingly slow speeds. They know what they are doing, they are the survivors, emulate them and live. Watch the speed restrictions before bends; as a rule they give the actual maximum speed that you can still get round it on two of your four wheels.

**Children** under ten must be in back and be restrained by belt or approved child car seat. Very young children can be carried in front in approved rear facing child car seat

**Seat** belt laws as GB. Obligatory in front and back seats at all times.

**Misc** Carry a warning triangle (two if you are passing through Spain plus a reflective jacket from June 2004), a spare set of bulbs and a first-aid kit. These are obligatory. Don't forget to alter the focus on your headlights with tape. You don't need to put a yellow filter on the headlights any more.

**Traffic** is very busy going south during the first two weekends in July and August and going north during the last weekends in those months and both ways on the July/August changeover so at these periods allow extra time for your journey or avoid main motorways. Back roads can be followed using "Bison Futé" leaflets, available at service stations. **A6** through Lyon is dire on all these dates, **A71/75** is ok except for bottleneck at Millau. I once spent two hours avoiding it and saw some amazing countryside (the Causses, the Gorges du Tarn and the Dourbie to the east of Millau), better than spending four hours in a traffic jam. Construction of a Norman Foster designed viaduct across the Tarn (avoiding Millau) will be finished in 2005 and will be the biggest bridge in the world. That should solve it. (See illustration right)..

## Overnight stays

**Reasonably** priced hotels and B&Bs can be found everywhere although booking is advisable on weekends. Prices are normally per room, breakfast extra. We can book accommodation en route.

**Speeding 2004.** Because the French are frankly embarrassed by their road accident mortality rate, about double that of GB, they are getting tougher with speeding/drinking drivers, and that means you too. New laws recently passed mean the introduction of Speed Cameras and there's no polite prior warning signs telling you where they are situated.

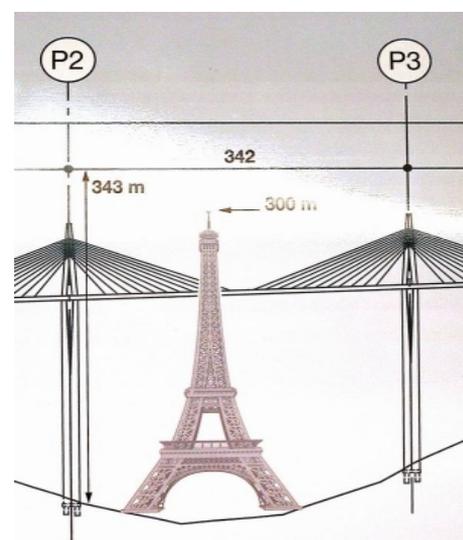
**That's the easy part.** Here's the real one to look out for. Doing 170 down the motorway? Feels like a doddle? Just don't get caught. If you do your license can be taken away on the spot and you are not allowed to continue your journey. Car full of screaming kids and Grandma under the luggage in the back? Bad luck, get a taxi. "Oh, they won't do it to me I'm a foreigner" Just try it and see. Soon you'll have the added bonus of seeing your points deducted in GB for traffic infractions anywhere in Europe.

---

**Instead** of driving all the way you may want to try Motorail to Narbonne . 0870 848 848.

## Overnight stays

**Reasonably** priced hotels and B&Bs can be found everywhere although booking is advisable on weekends. Prices are normally per room, breakfast extra.



## ITINERARY 1

# CALAIS DOCKS TO LANGUEDOC/ROUSSILLON VIA PARIS AND THE A20

TOLLS APPROX 59 €EACH WAY - APPROX 13 HOURS.

THE N20/A20 HAS NOW BEEN DOUBLED ALL THE WAY

NOW A VERY PLEASANT ROUTE

ROAD	VIA
A26	CALAIS DOCKS
A1	ARRAS
<b>EITHER</b> A3 A86 A6	PARIS
	from near CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT follow A3 then A86 then A6 to A10 (First follow signs for LYON then ORLEANS/BORDEAUX/TOURS/A10).
<b>OR</b> PERIPHERIQUE	PERIPHERIQUE either way round to PTE D'ORLEANS or PTE D'ITALIE then A6a or A6b to A10.
A10	ORLEANS
A71	VIERZON
A20	CHATEAUROUX
A20	LIMOGES
A20	BRIVE
A20	MONTAUBAN
A62	TOULOUSE
A61	NARBONNE
A9	PERPIGNAN

## ITINERARY 2

# CALAIS DOCKS TO LANGUEDOC/ROUSSILLON VIA PARIS AND THE A10 - A71 - A75 -A9

THIS TAKES YOU STRAIGHT OVER THE TOP OF THE MASSIF CENTRAL AND IS THE PLEASANTEST ROUTE OF THEM ALL. APPROX 12 HOURS AND 54€IN TOLLS

ROAD	VIA
A26	CALAIS DOCKS
A1	ARRAS
A3 A86 A6	PARIS
PERIPHERIQUE	EITHER from near CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT follow A3 then A86 then A6 to A10 (First follow signs for LYON then ORLEANS/BORDEAUX/TOURS/A10).*
A10	OR PERIPHERIQUE either way round to PTE D'ORLEANS or PTE D'ITALIE then A6a or A6b to A10.*
A10/A71	ORLEANS
A71	VIERZON
A75/N9	CLERMONT-FERRAND
A9	BEZIERS
	PERPIGNAN

THE A75 IS NOW COMPLETE EXCEPT FOR THE GAP AT MILLAU AND SOME SMALL SECTIONS NEAR THE COAST. IT'S TOLL FREE FROM CLERMANT FERRAND TO BEZIERS\*\*

FOR 360 DAYS A YEAR IT IS ALMOST TRAFFIC FREE BUT ON THOSE OTHER 5 DAYS (PROBABLY THE ONES YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO TRAVEL ON I.E. JULY AND AUGUST SATURDAYS!) IT CAN TAKE 4 HOURS TO PASS THROUGH THE BOTTLENECK AT MILLAU. THIS WILL ALL CHANGE IN JANUARY 2005 WHEN THE VIADUC DE MILLAU\*\*\* WILL HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.

*	When going round Paris by either of these routes try and avoid rush hours. They are complicated but very well signposted. Just stay calm!
**	There Will be a toll on the Viaduc de Millau eventually.
***	See <a href="http://www.viaducdemillaeiffage.com">www.viaducdemillaeiffage.com</a> Designed by Norman Foster it will be the highest bridge in the world.

## ITINERARY 3

# MOTORWAY ALL THE WAY FROM CALAIS DOCKS VIA REIMS & LYON TO PERPIGNAN

12 HOURS - TOLLS APPROX 79 €EACH WAY

---

ROUTE	DESTINATION	KM	TIME
	CALAIS DOCKS		
A26	REIMS	275	2H 38M
A26	TROYES	125	1H 24M
A5	LANGRES		
A31	DIJON	184	1H 59M
A31	BEAUNE		
A6	LYON	193	1H 57M
A7	ORANGE	200	1H 59M
A9	NARBONNE		
A9	PERPIGNAN	253	2H 25M
TOTAL		1230 KM (770 MILES)	12H 30M

---

A MONOTONOUS RELENTLESS AND EXPENSIVE ROUTE, NOT HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. IN THEORY THE FASTEST AND MOST DIRECT BUT ALSO CAN TURN INTO THE LONGEST TRAFFIC JAM IN EUROPE ON SUMMER WEEKENDS.

### GENERAL NOTE

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL MILEAGE, KILOMETRAGE & TOLLS ARE APPROXIMATE. - THEY GO UP WITH MONOTONOUS REGULARITY! - IF PASSING THROUGH PARIS THERE ARE MUCH HIGHER TOLLS SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EARLY EVENING. - ROADS CHANGE THEIR NUMBERS AS THEY ARE REBUILT. - COMPILED IN GOOD FAITH FOR INFORMATION ONLY. - NO RESPONSIBILITY CAN BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY INACCURACIES. - CREDIT CARDS ARE ACCEPTED AT 99% OF ALL TOLL BOOTHS EVEN FOR SMALL AMOUNTS. - PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY.

## ITINERARY VARIATIONS

### The new A16 motorway via Boulogne and Amiens to Paris (May 1999)

Only recommended for those with a warped sense of adventure and bored with the conventional route. The pros are that there is very little traffic on it, it's cheaper and it's a bit shorter. The cons are that it has very few services stations and it dumps you unceremoniously on the outskirts of Paris into the middle of several badly signposted spaghetti junction under construction (May 99). Nerves of steel and good directional instincts will get you to the Peripherique.

Even sturdier souls with a very good map could try an outer route round Paris via St Germain-en-Laye and Versailles. Please tell us about it if you recover.

**If you are taking a western Ferry crossing** you can join up with Itineraries 1 and 2 at the **A10** by following:

From CAEN (A13), LE HAVRE (A131),  
DIEPPE (N27) TO ROUEN THEN  
A13 LOUVIERS (J19)  
N154 EVREUX  
N154 NONANCOURT  
N12 DREUX  
N154 CHARTRES  
N154 ALLAINES  
D927 TO JOIN A10 AUTOROUTE (J12)

### Fly

The nearest airport is at Perpignan but 30 minutes further away is Girona over the border in Spain and Ryanair flies into both – with better flight arrival/departure times to Girona.

Other airports within a reasonable distance of our area are at Toulouse, Carcassonne, Agde/Vias, Montpellier, and Barcelona.

As the Airline takeover situation seems to change daily, please consult our “How to get there” page on the website for more up to date information

### Train

New possibilities are being opened up by Eurostar. In theory that is. It is almost impossible to get a seat in July and August because the British Rail computer can't get into the SNCF booking system more than 60 days in advance by which time the French have nabbed every seat. We are working hard to find a solution through our French SNCF contacts. If you do manage to get a ticket it is well worth it. One easy cross platform change of train at *Lille Europe* means a comfortable journey by train from Waterloo to Perpignan in 9 hours (About 1 hour more than going by air if you count all the waiting around).

**Couchettes** from Calais to Perpignan are a very European way to go. Mon-Wed-Fri in season.

**Also** ask about:

EuroDomino tickets (3 travel days in any one Month per person)

Joker tickets (Apex fares)

Air France/SNCF Combination Travel (Plane to Paris then Train to Perpignan).

Again see the website for the latest information

---

## CLIMATE

**The** Mediterranean climate in Roussillon provides hot summers and mild winters but with frequently very contrasting weather.

**July** and August are, especially near the coast, very hot and dry. Autumn is also a good time to travel and when it is sunny, swimming in sheltered bays is often still possible up until November, although the locals look on with amused horror. In the evening, however, one needs a jumper.

**Rain** tends to fall more during the late spring and late autumn, and it tends to come in torrents. From mid October until May there can be snow in mountain areas above 1200m. January and February and March can sometimes be the real jewels in the crown! Crisp sunny weather, clear air with a view for miles, when meals can occasionally be taken outside, but it can be changeable too.

**Rarely** present is that endless feeling of greyness which we can experience for days on end in England. During the whole year the various winds determine the weather. The dry and sometimes cold Tramontane (cousin to the Mistral) blowing from the mountains is welcomed in summer, the Marin often brings rain and salty sea air and covers the land in mist.

**Average** temperatures: January 8° C, July 21° C (10 hours of sunshine per day), August 24° C. School holidays in France: February, July and August. Public Holidays: 8th May, 14th July, 11th November.

---

## A BRIEF HISTORY

**The** "oldest human remains on earth" (sic) were found near Tautavel (CO): cave people lived here 450,000 years ago. From a later period are the burial chambers which can be found in the Fenouillèdes. Iron ore has been mined since 800 BC (the last iron mine in the Canigou Massif closed only a few years ago). Shortly after the Iberians settled in Roussillon; they founded Ruscino (East of Perpignan, excavations can now be visited), Illiberis (Elne) and Cocolliberis (Collioure).

**The** Greeks brought winegrowing with them in the 5th century. Later Roussillon became a Roman province and Narbonne the provincial capital. Ruscino became the capital of the colony Roussillon, Portus Veneris (Port Vendres) became an important sea port. The Romans built the spa town of Amélie. Constantin renamed Illiberis (Elne) to become Castrum Helena, in honour of his mother. The Romans built the coastal road from Salses via Elne up to the Col de Perthus. Their laws and their growing methods in agriculture became very influential. Art and architecture also flourished (cf Ansignan).

Their reign only ended with the arrival of the Visigoths in the 5th century AD. They brought christianity and Elne became the bishops seat.

**In** the 8th century Roussillon was taken by the Arabs in a conquering surge that reached Poitiers but their rule lasted no longer than 30 years after which it became incorporated into the Carolingian Empire.

**In** the Middle Ages the Catalan nation formed. Fleeing Christians arrived in the Eastern Pyrénées from the Iberian Peninsula and in the following centuries the Benedictine monasteries of Saint-Génis, Saint-André and Saint-Michel were founded. Their political influence was to become very important during the centuries to follow. The monastery near Prades especially had a decisive influence on Romanesque art in Roussillon.

**The** Counts, ruled by the Emperor, gained in importance during the following decades; from the middle of the 12th century the Pyrénées, because of marriage, passed to the king of Aragon, and in 1172 the counties of Vallespir-Roussillon were put under his rule. Up until the Treaty of the Pyrénées in 1659 the culture of the country was strongly influenced by Catalonia. Politically and economically the state now forming will become one of the most important in Europe. When Aragon tried to move closer towards Occitania, the north moved against Occitania and the Cathars. In 1258, after the defeat of the Cathars, Catalonia was separated from Languedoc in the Treaty of Corbeil.

**Under** the new king of Aragon and his son, the King of Mallorca, Roussillon and its capital Perpignan went through a period of

economic and cultural upturn. Urban architecture was strongly influenced by Northern French Gothic. When the Kings of Mallorca formed an alliance against the kingdom of Aragon with the French king, the people refused to support them.

**During** the 14th century Roussillon once more fell directly under the rule of Aragon. The university at Perpignan was founded and a court of law (Loge de Mer) was established in the town. However, after the death of the last king of Aragon, North Catalonia finds itself between frontiers in the growing struggle for supremacy between the emerging states of Spain and France. After being reconquered by the French, Roussillon and part of the Cerdagne fall to France in the Treaty of the Pyrénées. The existing fortifications facing Spain are now strengthened and new ones are built (Port-Vendres, Mont-Louis). Northern Catalonia is assimilated into France. The French build roads, canals and dykes, French becomes the official language. History becomes French.

**During** the Spanish Civil war republican refugees are interned here and then settle. The population swells and swells again during the second world war. Returning colonists settle here after Algerian independence in the 60s and have a great influence upon the region

---

## GUIDES

### PLAIN OF ROUSSILLON (AL & RO)

#### Perpignan

**The** town's population increased dramatically during the chaos of the 30's and 40's and again in the 60's. Today there are approximately 120.000 people living here. The southern atmosphere of this former capital of the kingdom of Mallorca can best be enjoyed on the markets or in one of the street-café's on the Place de la Loge. During the midday heat, the Musée Catalan or the alleys of the Old Town offer a pleasantly cool place to be.

**Best** leave your car in one of the Multi-storey Car Parks. The Tourist Office is in the Palais de Congres in the gardens behind Boulevard Wilson, the Old Town can easily be reached

on foot. There is a bus service from the station.

#### Sights

**Castillet.** Fortification built in the 14C at the northern gate of the town, with Catalonian local history museum, view of the town.

**Palace** of the Kings of Mallorca. The fortified palace, dominating the old town, was built towards the end of the 13C. Now houses a museum, Musée d'Histoire Naturelle and the Catalan Cultural Centre Gives you an overview or culture and art in Roussillon.

**Cathedral** of Saint Jean: started at the beginning of the 14C as a parish church, extended in the 15C, remarkable architectural features. A figure of Christ from the Rhineland (14C) hangs in a side chapel. (There's a good open air restaurant down the alleyway immediately to the left of the cathedral)

**Holy week** processions through the old quartier, women with highly powdered white faces carry effigies barefoot.

**Hôtel Pams:** Art Nouveau villa. Houses the Municipal reference library.

**Musée Rigaud:** Tintoretto, Rigaud (portraits), Malliol (drawings)

**Markets:** Place de Poilus, daily: fruit & vegetables. Sundays morning: flea market: antiques, bric a brac and furniture, in the Car Park of the Parc des Expositions (north bank of the river above the ford (gué). Sunday mornings: food, general and clothing market: Place Cassanyes and the surrounding boulevards.

**A** new sight in Perpignan is a strange statue of Liberty erected front of the railway station. Catalans can be very surreal. The reason for its placement here is because Salvador Dalí pronounced just before he died that Perpignan Railway Station was the exact centre of the universe.

**UPDATE** The statue has been moved and in its place is a railway wagon. Dalí artefacts are

to be found inside though I believe there are to be exhibitions by local artists throughout the summer.

**UPDATE2** The railway wagon has gone, the road has been painted red and there's a sculpture sitting on the station clock. We'll keep you posted ....

**VISA pour l'Image** - International press photography exhibition, the first two weeks in September.

I'm not a very art galleries etc person, so it was with great reluctance that I was dragged kicking and screaming to Perpignan (September 1998) to visit **VISA**. We picked up the catalogue at the Castillet museum (in the old gateway) and I groaned to see that there were 8 venues spread all over the centre of town.

For the first two weeks of September, every available wall of every available building is converted into a photographic gallery featuring the best in press photography from every corner of the earth.

Within minutes of entering my first venue I was transfixed. Grouped mainly by photographer then sub grouped by subject, the photographs are a window on our world, its beauty and its barbarity. 20 years of intimate portraits of Mohammed Ali and the faces of the crowds at Princess Diana's funeral in the Chapelle St Dominique, Destitute and addicted ex boy soldiers from West Africa in the Couvent des Minimes, extraordinary wedding photographs from Bosnia in the Castillet. By 7 o'clock I thought I could take no more and neither could my feet. I was wrong.

A good meal in an open air restaurant (outside the left hand wall of the cathedral) revived those parts that needed reviving and at 9.45 we were on the move again to the Campo Santo, a large open space on the other side of the cathedral in rue Amiral Ribeil. You don't need to know where it is, just follow the throng! Each night, for about an hour and a half, (during the first week of VISA only) some of the best press photographers in the world have their work projected on enormous multi screens here, high above the crowds<sup>1</sup>. The photographers, somewhere below, spin their fascinating tales of derring-do, accompanying the image bath swirling above. That night's offering was from the

---

<sup>1</sup> There are so many people that it is relayed to more seats in the *place* in front of the Cathedral.

photographer who took the haunting photo, one of the most memorable I have ever seen, of the Madonna like Algerian woman, face slightly tilted, humanity almost drained away, that graced the front pages of the world's press in early 1998. It was followed by a run through of 20 years worth of the best from the Paris Match stable.

10,000 photographs are projected on those screens during the week. 50,000 photographs are on display in 7 venues during the two weeks. This year (2000) it runs from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September and ITS ALL FREE! This year you won't have to drag me kicking and screaming, I'll be there, first in line for another look at the world through the lenses of some extraordinary, brave and sometimes visionary people.. Information (some in English) and a venue map can be found at <http://www.little-france.com/visa/plan.html>.

### **Ruscino**

4 kms west of Perpignan, the excavations of the Roman village can now be visited.

### **Bages**

Museum of naïve painting (daily until 10pm).

### **Elne**

**Settled** more than 2500 years ago, Elne is the former seat of the bishop seat with an impressive cathedral (with cloister, started in the 11C) in the style of Roussillonnaise Romanesque. Archaeological museum. Elne is also a lively market town, Monday, Wednesday & Friday, large selection of fruit & vegetables, also health food store (Bio).

### **Albères**

**The** wooded Albères give quite a good idea of the original vegetation of the Mediterranean before its deforestation. Cork oaks are growing here, the bark of which is used for wine corks, and chestnuts, for making wine barrels. The old olive groves however have largely been left to decay since a severe winter a few decades ago destroyed most of the trees. At the foot of the Albères lay charming little towns and villages. The cool shade on the mountain sides is very pleasant in the summer. Beautiful walks can be taken from here e.g. up to Pic Neulous (1250m) and the narrow quiet roads are excellent for biking. Information for hikers can be obtained from the Centre de Randonnées in Montesquieu.

### **Saint-André**

**9th** century monastery and church with important lintel.

### **Saint-Génis-des-Fontaines**

**9th** C church, lintel from 1019. The marble cloister is missing. At Brouilla, a few kilometres to the North, there is a beautiful small church with marble portal.

### **Sorède**

**has** a little market, and a very good restaurant (la Salamandre). Sorède and nearby Laroque are good starting points for beautiful walks up into the chestnut and oak forests and up to the GR10 at the Spanish border.

### **Laroque des Albères**

**A** very pretty village with a fortified upper quartier. Warning! Don't try and drive up to the fort! The inhabitants sit out in the narrow streets and have to move their chairs to let you pass. They do it graciously but it is most embarrassing! Caroline and Debbie run the very successful café/restaurant/bar next to the Mairie (The Bar Shamroc) which is causing a gastronomic sensation amongst the local population as they discover possibly the best litre of Guinness south of Dublin, from whence it indeed comes. **Vive l'Europe!**

### **Thuir**

**This** very pretty small town is an undiscovered gem, yet visitors never seem to get further than its wine cave which still produces the very good, if now unfashionable, apéritif, called **Byrrh**. In its heyday, in the early 1900's, it had its own fleet of delivery aeroplanes and its own railway branch line (now a cycle track to Perpignan) connecting straight into the factory. You can visit it all, with the obligatory but ever so pleasant "tasting" on the way out daily in summer. They think the highlight of the visit is the "largest oak barrel in the world". I think it's the superb railway terminal built by Eiffel.

5 km from Thuir is the small picture postcard village of Castelnou with its winding alleyways (no car traffic) and a thousand-year-old castle housing a good Catalan restaurant specialising in roasting whole pigs on the ramparts (not every day!). Good footpath to Camélas from here. There is a

pleasant mountain road, with views to the coast, which winds through cork oak forests to St Michel de Llotes. This area between the Têt and the Tech is known as the Aspres.

### **le Boulou**

**An** old spa town with a whiff of the border close by. The small church has a famous Romanesque portal. South of le Boulou is the chapel Saint-Martin -de-Fenollar, its Romanesque frescos glowing in wonderful colours.

### **Le Perthus**

**One** almost expects Zapata to jump out of the shadows and to sell you a souvenir in this surreal border town. At least everything is cheap! It also has food shops open on Sundays which can be very useful. The real frontier runs across the main street, half way down. The border post, now deserted, post Schengen, lies pointlessly at the bottom of the hill.

## **COTE VERMEILLE (AL)**

### **Collioure**

**"I only need to open the shutters and I have all the colours of the Mediterranean with me."**

**Matisse** created the "Open window at Collioure" in 1905. Here he lived with his artist friends and here he created "La Danse" five years later (now in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg). The artists, called Fauves by their critics, met with Braque, Chagall and Picasso and others from Céret at the Hostellerie des Templiers. When in the autumn the tourists have gone and one looks across the empty promenade of this little fishing village out onto the sea, one gets a glimpse of the fascination of the "Crimson Coast" with its magic light dancing on the water and glowing from the stones of the fortified church at the harbour. At the Château Royal, built by Jacob the Conqueror in the 13th century, art exhibitions and concerts are held during the season (daily). Works by Catalan artists are on show in the Villa Pams (afternoons, daily, during the summer).

**Collioure's** speciality, anchovies, were already caught and processed here during the Middle ages. The colourful fishing boats, however, only have a decorative role today.

There are still several processors and on Port d'Amont you can eat a tasty anchovy salad from beachside restaurants.

**From** the town you can follow the path taken by the pilgrims in August and September and walk to the hermitage de Notre Dame de Consolation, or to the Tour Madeloc, the medieval signalling tower where you have a beautiful view of the plain and the sea.

**Market:** Place Général Leclerc, Wednesday & Saturday.

**Collioure** produces a rich, dry red wine (cf les vins).

### **Port-Vendres**

**This** little town has real atmosphere and is less crowded than Collioure. Portus Veneris to the Romans and during this century, an important trading centre for goods and people from the North African colonies, it boasts one of the largest fish markets in the Mediterranean and the catch is auctioned at the harbour in the late afternoon (excl. Sundays). You can either go into the market where there are stalls or buy direct off the boats as they tie up round the harbour. There is a war memorial by Malliol on the Place de l'Obelisque. Restaurants: out of the centre: Oasis on the beach with a view of the harbour, and le Gibraltar on the quai. At the harbour: le Chalut (fish). Boat trips can be made during the summer from the harbour. Saturday morning market in the Place d'Obelisque.

Beautiful bathing coves towards Banyuls.

### **Banyuls-sur-Mer**

**This** small port town with its old alleys, home of the sculpture Malliol, is slightly more "genteel" than the other two towns. There are several good restaurants in the shaded old town. Banyuls is known chiefly for its sweet wines growing on terraces above the town, for which the grapes are still harvested by hand (cf les vins). There is a bronze replica of the war memorial by Malliol on the Ile de Grosse (contrary to the wishes of the artist the original stands in the ave Général de Gaulle). He is buried at his house on the Baillaury in the mountains. Interesting Seawater Aquarium (daily, Summer until 10pm). Classical concerts are held in the chapel. Beautiful walks to Puig de Mas and to the chapel, N.-D.

de la Salette. Town festival with fireworks in August.

### **Outings**

Drive along the Corniche from Banyuls into Spain. Extraordinary coastline. Extraordinary views. If you started early you may detour to Cadaques but it is a long and windy road. Eat in Figueres and visit the Dalí Museum. Buy some pots along the main road back to France then pick up the motorway (Autovia) and home.

## **VALLESPIR (VA) THE VALLEY OF THE TECH**

**The** sunny Tech valley with its old Roman baths has plenty of water and is refreshingly cool in the summer. In the spring when the cherry trees are in bloom Céret is enchanting place to be. The first cherries of the season are sent to the President of the Republic from here. At the beginning of the century cubism originated here. The upper Tech valley is remote, the old crafts have disappeared. Tiny villages cling to the slopes of Mt Canigou where iron was mined in former times.

### **Céret**

**Céret** was called the 'Mecca of Cubism'. The new Museum of Modern Art shows works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Cocteau, Dalí, Duffy, Jacob, Malliol, Miró, Saint Saëns and others (whole year, incl. Tues during season).

The attractive town with an ancient bridge (Pont du Diable) spanning the Tech and the pretty square with its cafés in the centre has meanwhile also become the town of Sardane, the dance of the Catalan people. Saturday market with goods from the whole Vallespir. Casa Catalane de la Culture with minerals, archaeology, music (season only). Town festival and Sardane festival in July and August.

### **Amélie-les-Bains**

**The** sulphuric hot springs were already used by the Romans and today numerous visitors still take to the waters not surprisingly as three weeks minimum at a spa is often prescribed by French doctors (on the State health system budget) for all sorts of ailments. Teachers and social workers have almost free visits too because of their stressful occupations How civilised! On the opposite

banks of the river lays Palalda with its little alleys. Postal Museum (afternoons) at the old church.

### **Arles-sur-Tech**

**The** Romanesque former abbey church with its wonderful gothic cloisters from the 11th century is worth a visit. Tasty pralinées at the confiserie on Place d'Avall. Les Gorges de la Fou nearby are crowded (it is said to be the narrowest ravine in the world) but worth the visit (don't forget to wear the safety helmet to guard against falling stones!).

### **Corsavy**

**The** tiny medieval mountain village makes a good starting point for trips to Mount Canigou and the old iron mines at Puig de l'Estelle.

### **Saint-Laurent-de-Cerdans**

**This** little industrial town deep in the forests south of Arles flourished during the 18th and 19th centuries. A small museum recalls the iron mining and processing and the manufacture of espadrilles which came later (May-Sept. daily). Beautiful 12th century sandstone church in neighbouring Coustouges.

### **Prats-de-Mollo**

**Beautiful** walled town. Church with Baroque altar and 13th century bell tower.

## **CONFLENT (TE) THE VALLEY OF THE TET**

**This** valley just never fails to fascinate. You're going to need a dozen trips just to begin to scratch the surface. To the left, Mount Canigou, the sacred mountain of the Catalan people, to the right the wild, rocky and beautiful Fenouillèdes

### **Le petit train jaune de Cerdagne**

**This** is a stunning train journey up the Têt valley and across the plateau of the Cerdagne. **The Little Yellow Train** clings somehow to the mountainside stretching for 63 kilometres between Villefranche-de-Conflent and Latour du Carol. In summer some carriages are open-air allowing you to enjoy the beautiful views more clearly. The children, of course scream their way through every one of the countless tunnels This is truly one of the most spectacular train journeys in Europe. If you're

a train buff, feel free to go all the way, you won't regret it (2.5 hours each way) but if you've got kids with you just do the return trip from Villefranche de Conflent to either Mont Louis where you can walk up into the walled town for a visit to the solar oven museum or a little further to Odeillo where you can visit the new solar oven. Information on 04 68 96 09 18. See also the dedicated section on the Country Cousins website ("Interesting things ..")

### **Canigou**

**This** peak, though not the highest of the Eastern Pyrénées, is the one everyone makes a fuss about, perhaps because it can be seen so clearly by us mere mortals down on the plain. It's a mystical and mythical mountain for the Catalans, their spiritual anchor. It changes in height and distance incessantly with the light, sometimes it feels close enough to touch. Even in early summer it may still be covered in snow and on some spring days (pink days I call them), when there is a slight mist and the sky seems to reflect the peach blossom, you cannot see the base of the mountain, just the snow covered top, literally floating above the plain. Our plumber runs up it once a year for charity, a feat that never ceases to amaze me. You can do it too but remember that it's only advised to climb from mid-May to mid-September. A St John's Night Fire is lit there on 21st June with accompanying party. Wimps can take a Landrover taxi from Prades (and elsewhere) to the Chalet at Cortalets, leaving a mere two hour walk to the summit

### **Ille-sur-Têt**

is a lively little town in the fertile Têt valley. The peach market is held on the large square with the cafés in the summer. Small museum with religious art (off season: Saturdays & Sundays only).

### **Prades**

**This** important market town was the home in exile of Pablo Casals, the great Spanish cellist, who founded the now internationally acclaimed music festival in the fifties (tickets available from May and always a few on the day). Musée Pablo Casals with correspondence, scores etc. (out of season Tues morning only). Church of St-Pierre with Baroque altar and Romanesque bell tower (figure of Christ). There is a film festival in

June and the Catalan summer university during August.

### **Eus**

**With** a dynamic mayor, this super-pretty village is simply buzzing. 5 minutes drive from Prades, it has an off-festival running concurrently with the one at Prades. The church atop is to be visited by even those who hate visiting churches.... A study in woodworm if nothing else.

### **Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa**

**The** monastery, historically the most important in this region, and a model for a number of similar Romanesque structure (oldest cloister in Roussillon) is a short drive from Prades. Founded around 950 it developed into a spiritual centre for the whole of the Roussillon during the following centuries (open whole year, crowded in summer).

### **Villefranche-de-Conflent**

**Enchanting** historic townscape surrounded by defensive walls in an almost perfect state of repair. Church with marble portal. Very touristy but really worth a visit. Restaurants: Catalan dishes in Rue Saint Jean. Caverns (daily in summer) in the direction of Corneille-de-Conflent, the former seat of the Counts of Cerdagne, with impressive church facade (11th & 12th century, modelled on Saint-André) and statues. Many spectacular caverns in the area the best to visit is the Grotte Grandes Canelettes discovered in 1951. Take the Vernet road from Villefranche and it's a few hundred metres up on the right. Tour takes approx. 1 hour. No closing during season. Tel. 04 6896 2311 or 04 6880 2589.

### **Saint-Martin-du-Canigou**

**A** Benedictine monastery on a rock, founded in 1001. And what a rock ... this is the sort of place that make even a hardened atheist like me wonder if I got it wrong.. Monks tends to like life hard but this was more than even they could handle. After an earthquake in the 15<sup>th</sup> century it was abandoned, to be restored in a strange turn of century style from 1902 onwards. Now inhabited by a new Order specialising in overseas aid, there are guided tours, led by the monks, around the building every morning and afternoon. Definitely not to be missed. Take the N116 from Perpignan

past Prades to Villefranche de Conflent. Turn left, go straight through Vernet les Bains to Casteil. Park the car where you can. Now walk in a very decidedly upwards direction for 45 minutes. You can cop out and take the Landrover taxi but having seen just how close the wheels go to the edge of the precipice I think even I prefer to walk. You don't have to go back down the same way, there's a stunning path which starts just to the left of the buildings and drops down almost vertically to Casteil following a cool and clear mountain stream à la long forgotten advert for menthol cigarettes. A trip that leaves an impression....

**Vernet-les-Bains:** a spa town with connection to Rudyard Kipling. Vernet and Espira-de-Conflent are good starting points for walks. The Cattlar Valley (north of Prades, signposted for Molitg les Bains) up to the Col de Jau is worth the drive, and a walk in the forest over the col.

### **Andorra**

High in the Eastern Pyrénées, a small republic ruled jointly by the Bishop of Urgell in Spain and the President of France. Sounds romantic but in reality its a series of mountains layered with coachparks serving supermarkets which will empty your wallet of any currency you care to proffer. I have always been told that bargains were to be had, especially for electrical goods but I found prices were not far below those on a standard British high-street and the savings to be had were probably not worth the gruelling drive up there (if I sound disappointed, it's because it was raining and visibility was down to ten yards while driving through snow drifts in June! Its probably very beautiful in summer, if summer ever arrives).

**Let's** be positive. Cigarettes are about 60p for 20 and alcohol is also very cheap. Diesel is 35p a litre. Good Spanish olive oil is less than £2 a litre, half the price found in English supermarkets. There is no VAT. There were battalions of Spanish coaches on day trips and the shelves were denuded in seconds, especially of butter, so that must be cheap too.

**Leaving** Andorra, especially on Saturdays, the customs stop two out of three cars returning to France or Spain. Andorra is not in the common market but two hundred

cigarettes per person and one item of electrical goods does not seem to excite much attention, in fact the officer searching my car was most perplexed that I didn't have more.

**To** get there, head up the Têt valley via Prades to the Cerdagne. When you reach Bourg Madame ignore the Andorra signs and cross over into Spain. Take the ring road round Puigcerdà and head for Seu de Urgell (N260) then Andorra la Vella along the excellent Eje Pirineico (the Spanish Pyrenean spine road). The road is better, shorter, quicker and there are no mountain passes to climb in zero visibility.

**If** anyone has a more positive experience, please write and tell me and I will change this for next year's edition!

## UPDATE

### Update February 2001

**Revisited** Andorra yesterday so I really feel my earlier comments need updating ... It was a beautiful sunny day (as opposed to the thick fog encountered on the last visit) so things could be seen more clearly ... I was wrong, it's not a giant supermarket on top of a mountain, it's in a deep gloomy valley with a bitterly cold wind gusting through it ...

**Cigarettes** have gone up.... they are now 80p a packet, but the number you can pass through customs has gone up too, 2 cartons. Hmm... now there's a plus. I spent £44 in the supermarket, thought that was rather a lot until I did a few calculations. In England, a carton of cigarettes would have cost me that! Here I came away with 2 cartons, 4 litres of spirits, oodles of good quality olive oil and a whole rake of things I thought I really needed ...

**The real question** one must ask oneself is whether it really is life-enhancing to travel 400 km round trip (through some stunning countryside and with a fantastic meal in Puigcerdà on the way back down) to augment one's CD pile with the "Judy Garland Platinum Collection" (3 CDs for £3.85). You bet! (sad?) I'll be back next month, well, it beats a grey day at Sainsbury's any day....

**Travel tip:** Don't go on Sundays. You will be crushed in the rush by tiny Spanish

grandmothers carrying 5kg bags of sugar. (Well if your really interested in jam making it only costs 238 EUR).

## Nuria and the Carança

**Readers** of the 1995 Information Pack may remember a note about a walk across the Pyrénées via the Carança valley. We promised to investigate further and indeed we did. Intrepid explorers from the London and German offices set out for a day trip to the starting point, the shrine at Nuria, in Spanish Catalonia in mid September and this is what they discovered:

**Being** from Essex originally, I regard anything over 200 foot with a certain sense of awe. I also smoke too much, so once advised that "investigating" this walk from the Spanish side would be facilitated by a rack railway taking us up to 1900 metres before we had to move a muscle, we headed over the border and at Figueres, turned right.

**To** follow in our footsteps, take the road through Besalú then Ripoll (slightly faster via the new Capsacosta Tunnel) to Ribas de Freser. You are looking for the "Cremallera" railway station which is called Ribas Enllaç (or Ribas Empalme in Spanish). There is ample parking in the station car park. Trains go up and down about every 90 minutes, more often in high season. Sit on the right hand side of the train for the best view. After Ribas Town station it meanders through tame looking meadows for a while and you may wonder what all the fuss is about. You find out at Queralbs when the rack is engaged. Pointing its nose in the air the train almost struts as it climbs the valley (memories of Thomas the tank engine puffing "I think I can, I think I can" surface at this point!) and the magic begins to work. Everyone gets up and alarmingly moves over to your side of the carriage. The view is indescribable.

**You** will catch sight of the old pilgrim path below, built lovingly over centuries by the faithful, stone by painful stone, as they struggled up to the shrine at Nuria. Awe really sets in when you realise that this path was the only access until 1931 when the railway was built. Lineside plaques bearing the names and heights of other mountains of the world are passed as you climb above their imaginary

peaks. Silence falls across the carriage. Everyone stares in wonder. Then a last grind of the rack and you have arrived.

**So** there we were, briefcase in hand and laptop over shoulder (I didn't want to leave it in the car) surrounded by eager young Catalans out for a weekend walking in one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. Trying to make our absurd baggage look like knapsacks, the mobile phone firmly hidden, we strode off to explore.

**A** group of buildings on a small plateau at the head of a valley. Towering above us on three sides, brooding and majestic, the high Pyrénées. Very much a centrepiece is the austere looking hotel which has been recently completely gutted and refurbished with all modern comforts. There are apartments to be rented here as well, a cafeteria, shops and an "information about Nuria" continuous cinema presentation. A rather incongruous boating lake in front of the hotel looks icy and very deep. Two nights stay at the hotel includes an hours boat hire free!

**Clearly** intended as a massive architectural statement of 1930's Spain, man conquers mountain and Madrid conquers all, but just stand back a few hundred metres in any direction and these tiny scratches on the mountainside pale into such insignificance that you wonder how they could have ever fooled themselves.

**Stunned**, and full of exhilarating upwards momentum, we decided to go even higher on discovering an unexpected cable car (Telecabina). It is one of those non-stop marvels where you have to take a well timed run at it to get in. A group of nuns looking almost tipsy piled in before us with shrieks of laughter and enjoyment. A ten minute ride took us up to a sizeable youth hostel where eager young things were checking in for a good night's sleep before going over the top.

**We** realised that this, for us, this time at least, was truly the end of the line. At sea level we had felt comfortable, a few hours earlier, in T-shirts and shorts. Here at about 6500 feet, the world seemingly laid out below us, the sky swirling in autumn colours, we stood weighed down by electronics, our breath condensing in the early evening air, slightly shivering.

**Cold** and ridiculous we may have looked, but we could not move. For half an hour we were rooted to the spot. It was one of those rare moments when everything stands still, calm descends and the realisation that the world is more beautiful than we can ever imagine it to be, enters our befuddled, urban, 90's minds.

**We** headed humbly back down to the bar to recover our strength before gathering our information and making our notes.

**From** Nuria there are many beautiful walks apart from 'the big one' going over the top and if you are not experienced it may be a good idea just to go up for the day and try out one of the shorter ones first. I found particularly attractive the idea of taking the train up and walking back down to Queralbs along the old pilgrim path. This, they calculate on the walking map, available from the Information Bureau at Nuria, will take you about 2.5 hours, but I would allow longer because you will be continually stopping to take in the view and wave at the people in the train! It is walk 1A.

**If** you want go up to the top and back down again, without losing sight of civilisation try walk 7A/B. It is described as an 'easy ascent' over 900 metres. A further walk along the ridge will take you to the head of the Carança valley and some extraordinary views. Allow at least three hours in each direction.

**The** crossing of the Pyrénées via the Carança (a combination of paths 7A, 7B, 7C, 7F and 7G) should only be attempted between mid May and mid September because of the altitude and the weather. You must be well prepared and take, at minimum, water, food, a sleeping bag, space blanket and a tent\*<sup>1</sup>. Never take the mountains for granted.

**A** suggested plan is: drive early on day 1 to Thuès-Carança railway station (formerly called Thuès-entre-Valls) and leave the car there. You will find it approximately 4 kms west of Olette on the N116 the road between Perpignan and Andorra. Although it is in the middle of nowhere, you are advised not to leave anything valuable in the car, especially in high season.

**Take** The Little Yellow Train up to Latour de Carol\*<sup>2</sup>, the end of the line. Change trains and take the local train across the frontier to Puigcerdà where you change again onto the Spanish line. This takes you down the other side to Ribas Enllaç where you change onto the rack railway as described above. This will take you all day! Stay the night at the Youth Hostel or the Hotel at Nuria.

**Day 2**, very early, take one of the paths up to the Col de Carança and down the valley on the other side where you will be passing through a landscape of alpine meadows and untouched lakes. You are aiming for one of the mountain refuges, preferably the "Ras de Carança", to stay the night. There are 30 places here and in summer they serve food, if there's any left by the time you get there!

**Day 3.** The long and beautiful descent down the Carança valley continues through woodland and slowly narrowing, down the steep Gorge de Carança where there are vertiginous metal bridges and ropes to hold onto before regaining your car at Thuès!

## NOTES

**Register** at the Information Bureau at Nuria if you are going to be on the mountain overnight. This helps the mountain rescue service if you get lost or have an accident. They will also advise on and sometimes book a space in the refuges. Think about going with one of the organised groups if you are at all nervous.

**Check the weather forecast before you go.**

Useful telephone numbers are:

**Nuria Information Bureau - 972 73 20 03**

**Youth Hostel 'Pic de l'Aliga' (Open all year except November) - 972 73 20 48**

**Reservations for all Catalonian Youth Hostels are done through a central telephone number in Barcelona 93 483 8363**

**Hotel 'Vall de Nuria' - 972 73 03 26**

\*<sup>1</sup> In high season the refuges may be full so it is wise to carry a tent.

\*<sup>2</sup> You can also get off the Little Yellow Train at Bourg Madame, ten kms before Latour de Carol, and just walk across the frontier to Puigcerdà station. It will take you about ten minutes.

**You** may of course just feel like a day out. A pleasant circular trip goes as follows and if you start very early you will at least have a few hours at Nuria. From Le Boulou take the D115 road up the Vallespir through Amélie les Bains and Arlès sur Tech to the frontier at Col d'Arès. Prats de Mollo is an interesting walled town just before the frontier and a good coffee stop. On the Spanish side the road winds down through a remarkably different landscape to Camprodon, a faded spa town where you can buy delicious wild boar hams and other local specialities from several shops in the main street. Carry on through Sant Joan de les Abadesses to Ripoll and on to Ribes for the train up to Nuria. Afterwards, descend again to Ripoll and take the Capsacosta tunnel to Besalú, where the medieval streets and bridge over the river are well worth looking at. There is an interesting restaurant on the main street, the Fonda Siques. A good road then takes you down to Figueres and the Autovia back into France.

**This** article is dedicated, with much love and admiration, to Caroline Furlong, dynamo of the Cafe Shamroc in Laroque, who gamely managed to climb path 7A right to the top of Noucreus in high heels and clutching her handbag. She too came unprepared (her husband Paul, told her she was going somewhere special for her birthday so she got dressed up!) but got further than us, About the equivalent, in fact, of 1/3rd the way up Everest.

## Les Bains De St Thomas

**It's** the end of February. Tiny points of white blossom are beginning to appear on the almond trees. The sun is shining brightly oh so brightly and the colours everywhere are vivid. No mist, you can almost reach out and touch the snow capped peaks to the West and it's warm enough to wind down the car windows and let the breeze rush through the hair. Time also to dig out the swimming costumes .... and head for the hills.

**Up** the valley of the river Tech from Perpignan, past the still sleeping peach orchards. In another 3 or 4 weeks their dark red blossom will begin to stain the sky. Past sleepy villages and drifting wood smoke, up and up the narrowing valley to Fontpedrouse.

**Near** the far end of the village turn left (decidedly downwards) and following the signs to LES BAINS. The road crosses the river and climbs up the other side into a ravine, carry on carefully, especially if there's snow on the ground et voilà, Les Bains de St Thomas are before you.

**I** once took a friend who hails from tropical climes on this little expedition. Her face grew longer and longer as we approached, dropped completely when we passed the snow line, and turned positively hostile when we arrived. Her by now vestigial sense of adventure prevailed however and swimming costumes donned, we tiptoed through the snow and descended down the steps into the open air pool....

**Within** minutes, smiles all round. Delicious warmth, penetrating warmth, warmth that really gets to those aching joints, those tired knees, those nagging lower vertebrae – Ahhhh! The water comes out of the ground at an amazing 80°C but it's cooled down to a more comfortable temperature before you come into contact with it.

**After** half an hour or so a little stress steps in as you realise that at some point the pleasure will have to end and at some point, in the not too distant future, you'll have to get out .... But not now, not right now ....

**When** I first came here over 10 years ago it was derelict and very sad. The heyday of small spartan spas had long passed and perhaps, here, no-one believed any more in the extravagant claims of the original prospectus from 1878 which promised to cure everything from war wounds to scrofulous ulcers via catarrh, gout and acute prostate infections.

**The** dynamic mayor of Fontpedrouse was determined not to let the baths or his mountain village die however and he fought and battled and rebuilt and created some employment for the young people who would

have otherwise packed their bags long ago. You can't do much on the local taxes of a village with an ageing population of 126 but he performed a miracle, two new pools, a cooling and water purifying plant and an enormous semicircular stepped terrace where even in winter you can lie out in the sun after your "immersion" and pretend you're in heaven.

#### **UPDATE 2002**

The mayor has been at it again. The old spa "hospital" has been transformed into a modern "hammam" with Turkish baths and other delights including the medicinal application of mud, you can even have a massage. It's still deliciously unsophisticated as befits its surroundings but there's now a whiff of the activities of a PR company in the air, almost miraculously an algae has been found in the water, it's claimed to do marvellous things to wrinkled skin and is incorporated into a range of lotions and potions, all available, of course, at the mini boutique on the way out ...

**I** wonder what it does to scrofulous ulcers?

\*\*\*

**About** 45 minutes drive from Perpignan on the N116 to Fontpedrouse then follow signs down left to LES BAINS from the top end of the village.

**Take** the Little Yellow Train from Villefranche de Conflent to Fontpedrouse, it's a 1.5 km walk from the station. If you spent half day here you could either spend the other half walking in the hills or complete your journey to Mont Louis (for solar oven museum) on the train. (because of reduced winter service out of season on the railway, this is only practical in summer).

**Prices:** 3.70 EUR for the baths, 10.00 EUR for the Hammam + Baths. Reductions for children. (but be aware, they won't officially let babies under 6 months old into the pools and children under 12 into the hammam).

**Open** every day of the year (except 1<sup>st</sup> May and a two week cleaning period in late November) from 10:00 to 20:00 in winter, 21:00 in summer. Hammam closed Mondays.

**There** are photo links at the bottom of this same page on the website. You'll find it under the "Interesting things" menu.

## **EASTERN CORBIERES (CO)**

**The** colourful chalk rocks of the Corbières form the natural border to the north of the Roussillon plain. Ancient Cathar castles watch from the mountain peaks (cf Cathars) and on the dry slopes grow some of the best wines of the region (cf les vins). The Corbières are a landscape of quiet mountains, hills and pretty valleys. Some sights in the northern Corbières are well a visit, including the medieval Lagrasse with its abbey and the Cistercian abbey of Fontfroide (southwest of Narbonne) and the Cathar town of Villerouge-Termenès (medieval festival during August). The Western part of the Corbières, already influenced by Atlantic climate, are described separately.

### **Maury**

**The** little village at the edge of the Corbières, well known for its excellent dessert wines akin to Port, makes a pretty starting point for visits to the old Cathar castles of Quéribus and Peyrepertuse. (see "A day out in the Corbières") Maury was the favourite tipple of Lawrence of Arabia.

### **Rivesaltes**

**One** of the best known sweet wines comes from this old and important trade and wine producing centre among the vineyards on the river Agly. Large market on Mondays. Several festivals during July and August.

### **Salses-le-Château**

**The** impressive fortifications constructed towards the end of the 15th century once guarded the border to Spanish Roussillon. A textbook defence system, it can now be accessed from the motorway rest stop.

### **Tautavel**

**Archaeological** museum, audio-visual trip into the past (during afternoons, very crowded in summer).

### **Sigean**

**Le Musée** des Corbières: History and culture of the Corbières. Wild animal kingdom park.

### **Les Etangs**

**A** trip to the salt lagoons, Les étangs. The old trunk road RN9 goes past the lagoons near Leucate, Salses, Lapalme, Bages and Sigean. Approaching from the South, direction Narbonne: Turn off after Sigean in the direction of Peyria-de-Mer and follow the D105 to Bages. The pretty road runs along the lagoons, an atmosphere as if in another world. Bages is a picturesque little village on a hill overlooking the sea. In the bay there is a quai for boats to moor - a scene of times gone by. (NB this is not the Bages near Elne!)

## **WESTERN CORBIERES (CO & FE)**

### **Carcassonne**

**This** fortified medieval town from the 12th and 13th centuries is among the sights one really ought to see. Every one else thinks so too, so why not leave it for the next trip? Wonderful stained glass window in the church of St Nazaire.

### **Esperaza**

**Sunday** market, a felt hat museum (more interesting than you'd think!) and a dinosaur museum

### **Limoux**

**The** town of Blanquette, the very drinkable sparkling wine first produced in the 16th century: Beautiful old quarters, good foodshops with local produce. Carnival processions every Sunday from January until March.

### **Quillan**

**Nice** small town with market (Wed) under the platane trees, good base for walking tours through the high forests, to the gorges du Rebenty and for visiting the Cathar castles. River canoeing, fishing, riding. Good saucissons at Bigou, Grand Rue Vaysse. Restaurant: La Pierre-Lys, Avenue de Carcassonne. Beautiful train journey to Limoux and Carcassonne, duration approx. 1 hour.

### **Outings**

**From** Axat to the little hamlet of Quirabajou, where Alex Picard sells wonderfully aromatic mountain honey; table d'hôtes.

Caverns at l'Aguzou in Mijanès, 15kms along the D118/116 (Tel 04 6820 4538).

The little spa at Rennes-les-Bains and last but not least the mysterious village of Rennes-le-Château whose sudden riches were the source of many a tale.

## FENOUILLEDES (FE)

**The** fennel country provided the last refuge for the Cathars during the 13th century. Until 1240 it belonged to the kingdom of Aragon and later fell to the French king. The fennel hills are stony, dry in summer. You can walk for hours along the old paths without seeing another CCA holiday maker! Deserted orchards with fig and almond trees and little villages almost entirely dependent on wine growing. Wild flowers border the paths in spring.

### Caudiès-de-Fenouillèdes

**is** the former capital of the fennel mountains. Benedictine monks founded a hermitage here in the 8th century.

### Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet

**where** the rivers Boulzane and Agly meet, grew around the monastery founded in the 10th century, parts of which still exist today. Saint-Paul is more Occitan than Catalan, a market town with small industry and trade: the Croquants, crusty almond biscuits come from here. There was a spa near the Gorges de la Fou at the beginning of the century, now deserted. The sulphuric waters can be got at the well. Market Wednesday and Saturday. Town festival mid July. Artisan museum Musée d'Artisanat et Tradition.

**The small wine hamlets south of Saint-Paul all** have their own austere charm. Only since the end of the seventies have people become aware of the high-quality wines that can be grown in the stony soil. Special bottlings can often be bought at the caves, such as "Cru Edward Heath", if there's any left! (cf les vins). Of all the villages, Caramany with its castle is the most picturesque. At Ansignan there is a Roman aqueduct in the valley, built as a bridge and still in use (Restaurant in the village).

Sournia has two churches dating from the 10th century and there is an old oil mill near Saint-Arnac. The feldspar quarries above the village are among the largest in Europe.

---

## A DAY OUT IN THE FENOUILLEDES/CORBIÈRES

**This** is a car circuit around the Fenouillèdes and the Corbières which will give you a very enjoyable, and if you so wish a very energetic, day (or two) out! You can "plug in" to it anywhere but we will start at the Moulin de Perle at Fosse.

**Turn** right out of the Moulin and follow the road towards Le Vivier. Just before entering the village turn left over the stream and follow the road to St Paul de Fenouillet. On a clear day, after passing St Martin de Fenouillet, you can see across to the Canigou Massif, at 2784m the highest point in the Mediterranean Pyrénées and the spiritual home of the Catalan people. After a long steep descent with excellent views across the valley of the river Agly you will cross the river itself and turn left into the Gorge de la Fou, the confluence of the rivers Agly and Boulzane.

**Two** features here, the remains of a Roman bridge down to your left (don't try and cross it as it was severely weakened during the storm of 1992 when the water rose to the level of the road) and the thermal spring to the right whose waters were bottled up until about 1940 and sold as Eau de la Fou. An early competitor of Evian and reputedly very good for the digestive system, people still come from miles around to fill up containers for home consumption. The ruins of the old Spa buildings can still be seen just round the corner to the left.

**After** passing through the gorge follow the road down to the traffic lights in St Paul and turn right. After the Z bend on the main road through the town you arrive at the Place de St Pierre on your left where you can stop and buy "Croquante à l' Ancienne" the "world famous" crisp almond biscuits. We guarantee that the packet won't last the day.

**Continue** along the main road towards Perpignan for 10 kms (You are now entering French Catalonia) until you reach Maury and

you will find the Cave Co-operative half way through the village. Taste the apéritif and desert wines which are excellent and the favourite tippie of Lawrence of Arabia!

**But** don't drink too much! Just past the Cave turn left off the main road and climb the winding road to the Grau de Maury (Grau is Catalan for "mountain pass"). At the top a road to the right takes you up to the Château de Quéribus, the last stronghold of the Cathars in the Corbières. Entry fee is about 10 francs and well worth it. There are magnificent views across to the Pyrénées, down to the coast and back up towards the Fenouillèdes.

**Redescend** to the Grau and turn right to continue descending into the village of Cucugnan. There are 2 Caves here, the Cave Co-operative and the Cave du Reverand, both offering free tasting. The Cucugnan AOC is good and you can buy it "en VRAC" (5 litre plastic containers).

**Turn** left on to the D14 and follow this road to Duilhac-sous-Peyrepetuse. There is a delightful café here by a natural spring spurting ice cold water from the rock (The sign says that you will fall in love if you drink it!). They also do a marvellous lemon sorbet!

**Follow** signs for the Château and climb up to Peyrepetuse. (You can now drive almost to the top. *May 99*) This is one of the largest of the Cathar Castles and was built to incorporate the natural rock line as part of its natural defence system. Again, incredible views on a clear day.

**Redescend** to Duilhac and turn left following the road through, first Rouffiac then Soulatgé until arriving at Cubières sur Cinoble. Turn left on to the D10 and follow this to the Gorge de Galamus. The road through the actual Gorge is very narrow so take it easy and be prepared to avoid pedestrians admiring the view rather than the road.

**For** those wishing to take a swim it is recommended to park on the left before entering the gorge proper. Descend with care down to the river where it is possible to swim, sunbathe and pic-nic. If you are very prepared you may bring a pic-nic basket and a rope and while half the party descend, the other half stay at the top to let down the food on a rope

further down the rock pools. Only to be attempted if (1) you are reasonably agile and (2) you can trust those down below to leave you some food! Beware the rocks are sometimes slippery. This is a beautiful, wild and unforgiving landscape, treat it with respect.

**At** the far end of the Gorge (just before the tunnel) there is a parking space on the right. Park here and descend the (many) steps to the Ermitage de St Antoine where you can have a drink in the café perched precariously in the rocks. The chapel is in a cleft in the rock at the side. No hermit since the 1920s. Well worth the visit.

**Leave** the car park and turn right. Through the tunnel and 7 kilometres down in to the valley brings you back into St Paul de Fenouillet. At the traffic lights turn right and pass up the valley to Caudiès de Fenouillèdes. In Caudiès turn left by the fire station to Fenouillet and Sournia and climb into the mountains past the beautiful little church of Notre Dame de Laval. After 4 kms a fork right will take you up to Fenouillet (La Vilasse) 1 km further on. Its worth the detour to either just stand in the village square and look at the view or go down the hill beyond the square to a little bridge over the stream where the GR 36 passes behind the little house on the right and down through a spectacular gorge (Gorge de St Jaume). The walk will take you about an hour down and back.

**Then** back up to La Vilasse, down again to the fork where you turn right and 3 kms brings you to back to Fosse and home.

---

## CATHARS

**The Cathar** religion or depending on your point of view, the Albigensian heresy, originated in the regions governed by the counts after the peace of Oliba in the 12th century at a time of economic recovery and intellectual tolerance, and as a reaction to the increasing power and wealth of the Roman Church. Their exemplary way of life brought the Cathars more and more followers, especially amongst the merchants and tradespeople, and the lower nobility. Not only the Pope felt threatened but the French king as

well. The murder of a papal nuntius provided the church with a reason to call for a crusade against the Cathars. In 1209 Béziers was destroyed and all inhabitants were killed. Led by Simon de Montfort (a well known mercenary of the era, who gained much land in the process) the crusade against the Cathars now developed into the conquest of Occitania. The agreement of Meaux in 1229 spelled the end of Occitanian independence. Supported by the French crown the church could now finally eliminate the Cathars by using the inquisition: Peyrepertuse fell in 1240, the Cathar symbol of Montsegur, the fabled treasure of which became a legend, in 1244 and Quéribus in 1255.

**The** fall of the Cathar mountains also was the end of an independent Occitania. The deserted ruins of these strategic and spiritual refuges meet us today as stone witnesses of the past - a visit to them will be remembered for a long time.

**For** visiting the castles you need good shoes and pay attention, not everywhere are there railings.

### **Quéribus near Cucugnan**

**Accessible** from Maury. The last Cathar castle, looking as if it had grown out of the rock, offers a unique view of the Roussillon plain. Betrayed, it fell in 1255. Below lies Cucugnan, a small wine-growing village. Good wines and two restaurants to be recommended here .

### **Peyrepertuse**

**From** below the large fortifications on the plateau are almost indistinguishable from the rock. Peyrepertuse can be reached very well from the Col de Grès along a path.

### **Puilaurens near Lapradelle**

**This** castle in the forests near Axat wasn't destroyed in the crusades. The French made profound changes in the 13th century and from 1636 the buildings fell into disuse.

### **Fenouillet near Caudiès**

**The** two ruins of the Vicomtes de Fenouillet, Castel Sabarda, directly above the village and Château Saint-Pierre, from the 13th century, out of which the village was largely built, can be reached along a beautiful footpath from Caudiès (Cf Day Out in the Corbières) past

the little church Notre-Dame de Laval and up through the gorge of Saint Jaume - the way villagers used to go into the valley. Have a rest at the gîte where Marie-Claire will be happy to serve you a beer. After the crusades the fennel country fell to the French crown. Up to the present day the inhabitants speak a different dialect.

### **Montsegur**

**A** trip to Montsegur can easily be combined with a visit to the medieval town of Foix (atmospheric old district, large market every 1st and 3rd Monday, Medieval Festival in July and August) and the impressive caves (with drawings). Near Axat onto the D107 through the Gorges du Rebenty to Montailou or from Quillan on the D117 and D05 613 via the high plateau. Life in the middle ages has been described in great detail by Le Roy Ladurie.

**The** Cathar castle of Montsegur is situated above today's village on a 1200m high mountain. It was the last refuge of the Cathars during the inquisition and surrendered in 1244 against an overwhelming force of 6000 besiegers. More than 200 Cathars voluntarily went to the stake. A museum shows the finds of the excavations (daily May - Sept.).

**The** region around Montailou and Comus (where we have one property) is an excellent area for cross country skiing in winter.

### **Puivert**

the castle of the troubadours, is easily reached from Quillan. There is a beautiful reservoir nearby, Lac de Montbel, and a pretty little town, Chalabre. Festivals in July and August.

---

## **EATING AND DRINKING**

**The** hearty Catalan and Roussillonnaise mountain cuisine offers a lot of very filling dishes dominated by olive oil and garlic. Sea food plays an important part along the coast and in the mountains wild boar is prepared during the hunting season. The restaurants are generally quite good and offer a menu consisting of hors d'oeuvre, main course, a selection of cheeses and dessert and, in the more upmarket restaurants, various intermediary courses. Lunch is usually between noon and 1pm, dinner is normally

served between 7.30 and 8pm. For well-known restaurants it is advisable to book in advance. New restaurants are being opened in the region all the time by young people eager to make their name known. This is a sure sign in France of a belief in the future of a particular region.

Keep your eyes open for local produce as you pass through villages especially sheep and goat cheeses from the mountains. There are fromageries in Collioure, Elne and Amélie.

### **La Cuisine**

**Boutifare** - Black Pudding

**Bunyettas** - Catalan Easter pancakes from Millas (RO)

**Saucissade** - Catalan frying sausage

**Sardinade** - freshly grilled sardines

**Cargolade** - grilled snails with garlic mayonnaise

**Bouillnade** - Catalan fish stew with potatoes, tomatoes and peppers

**Quillade** - Catalan winter stew with potatoes, cabbage, white beans and various meats and kinds of sausages

**Tourron** - Catalan sweet made from almonds and honey (cf Arles)

**Rousquilles** - Biscuits with caster sugar from the Vallespir (cf Arles)

**Croquants** - Biscuits with Almonds from the Fenouillèdes (cf Saint-Paul)

**Cargolade, Sardinade and Saucissade are also the outdoor feasts that take place in the summer, where the above delicacies are cooked over fires of last years vine wood.**

### **Shopping**

**Although** the large supermarkets offer everything under one roof, since they have sprung up at the periphery of the towns (particularly around Perpignan), thousands of small foodstores, butchers, cheese and wine merchants have lost their livelihood. It is estimated that approx. 700 local shops shut down for every supermarket opened. In many small villages daily shopping has thus become difficult and many local suppliers have of

course also disappeared because the big supermarket at the edge of town isn't going to buy its goat cheese from the smallholder in the village. Lately more people seem to want to buy directly from the producer once more. We are in the process of drawing up an index of local producers, e.g. for cheese, wine, honey, saucissons etc. The numerous markets also offer an excellent selection of local cheese specialities, fresh ripe fruit and vegetables.

**Some** delicacies are even worth a detour: Olive oil - in Millas on the lower Têt, the region's last working oil mill can be found. Olive oil is pressed there in January. Cheese - in Perpignan at Henri Reynal's, Rue Cordonniers.

### **Opening times**

**No** law specifying shopping times; as a rule daily until 7pm, large out of town supermarkets until 9pm; Sunday mornings but only during the summer season. Lunch from 12.30 until 3 or 4 or even 5pm takes some getting used to for those of us eager to shop. Closing day Monday, whole day or mornings only (butcher).

**Hypermarket** Auchan in Perpignan (follow signs to Port d'Espagne) open daily except Sunday until 10pm.

**Carrefour**, near the Perpignan Nord motorway exit is better quality, less crowded but more expensive.

### **Organic Produce**

Many small local growers sell their produce on the markets. To buy proper health food or certified organic products you have to search a bit.

A small selection:

Céret (VA): Health food store near Hotel Pyrénées and stall on market (Sat)

Elne (RO): Small "health food store" near the market

Espéraza (CO): Health food shop, Chemin de Tennis

Ribaute (CO): Wine co-operative, cave

Lagrasse (CO): Cave

## **RESTAURANTS**

**This** is the restaurant list for all the areas we cover. It's been painstakingly researched at great expense by our now roly-poly team of Directors There are of course hundreds more so do feel free to email us with anything you may come across that's good, we'll feel obliged to go and check it out ...!

In **Sorède**, on the Laroque road, 25 metres from the Place de la Republique, you have the **Salamandre** (book on 04 68 89 26 67, very highly recommended). The two bars on the main square do good light meals (summer only).

In **St Génis des Fontaines**, the **Barbazon**, a little gem which we highly recommend. The food is a dazzling blend of French and Moroccan Jewish, truly mediterranean. It's along from the Post Office on the main street.

In **Laroque des Albères**, you have Crepes, light meals and snacks at the **Café Shamroc** which is an extremely pleasant place to be. The **Palmiers** is under new management this year. Great ambience with a Spanish flavour is to be found at **La Cueva**. Behind the church.

Good words are being said about **Chez Max** in **St André**. You can see it down a side street to the left as you are heading out towards Argelès.

In **Palau del Vidre** go into the village and turn right at the glass sculpture. (Palau del Vidre means Crystal Palace in Catalan just in case you were wondering). A few hundred yards down on the right is the **Au Croq Sympa** which does good standard fare and an excellent sea food platter.

Take exit 13 on the **N114** (just south of Argelès towards Port Vendres and Collioure), cross back over the dual carriageway, go down the hill and just past the railway bridge, turn right, and right, and right again. This will bring you into **Racou Plage**. Go left through the barrier into the big car park. Here is not only our favourite beach but a very nice restaurant on the terrace of the **Hotel Oasis**.

There are two excellent fish restaurants in **Port Vendres**, **Le Chalut** and **La Côte Vermeille**. You will mildly gulp at the prices at the former, faint at the latter. Go on, spoil yourself with a *plateau de fruits de mer* and enjoy it. There's the **Poisson Rouge** too but we haven't been there yet, friends say it's good.

In **Collioure** don't miss the **Templiers bar**. Here Picasso sat etc. He was known to be very

canny and would only pay by cheque.... Knowing full well it would never be cashed The restaurant of the **Hotel Fregatte** has a good reputation.

There are many good restaurants in **Banyuls Sur Mer** which is a pretty Catalan town where you could be forgiven for thinking you were across the border in Spain 30 years ago.. Boules on the promenade, Sardana on Sundays ... We like **Henry's** on the promenade

About 2km out of **Le Boulou** on the main road to Perpignan you will find very traditional Northern Catalonian fayre at the **Auberge de la Domaine des Nidolères**. After the level crossing go past the right turn to **Nidolères** and its signposted to the right. Booking essential (04 68 83 04 23), you get what your given (except for the main course), there's a different *Domaine de Nidoleres* wine with every course, make sure you arrive starving and have someone in the party to drive home who is prepared not to drink the home made blackberry liquor.

In **Le Boulou**, on the one way system in the centre, There is **Le Manège**, good at lunchtimes.

**Ceret** - Good value for money is to be found at the **Table Ceretain** on the way out of Ceret towards Amelie as well as the **Quattrocento** in the centre. The **Feuillants** is for special occasions as is the **Terraces au Soleil** towards *Fontfrede*

On the main road just past *Ceret* heading up the valley, **Le Chat qui Rit** has a good reputation.

*Grillades* are to be found at the **Auberge Mas des Olivettes** (04 68 38 83 67) on the road between Fourques and Caixas and at the **Hostalet de Vives** in Vives.

In **Perpignan** the good but rather expensive traditional Catalan restaurant **Casa Sansa** is in a small street (2 rue Fabriques Nadal) near to the *Castillet* tower. Two good and not too expensive restaurants are to be found in the *Place de la Catedrale*. The **Bistro St Jean**, and **les Trois Soeurs**.

In **Thuir**, all good to very good, there is **Can Marti**, **Coin Sud** and the **Pizzaria** in *Boulevard L J Gregory*, (the main street running off the *Place de la Republique*). At lunchtimes there is the **Café Bleu** next to the *Porte de Perpignan*, opposite *les Caves Byhrr*. There is also the

restaurant of the **Hotel Cortie** near the church steps which is excellent and you have to book on 04 68 53 40 30. There are a couple of nice restaurants in *Castelnou* about 5 km out of Thuir.

### **Corsavy**

**Chez Françoise** - restaurant/epicerie/bar/tabac - traditional food

**Le Camping Corsavy** - simple food - good reports

**La Creperie du Cortal de la l'Aloy** - crepes and small menu - v. pleasant, good view

### **Arles sur Tech**

**Les Glycines** - Hotel/restaurant - good quality

**Bar PMU** - simple food

**Central Bar** - Simple food

**Pizzeria**, Les Caves Mouragues

**Bahia Mini Golf** - Restaurant - very good reports

### **Amelie les Bains**

The **Casino** restaurant - excellent quality

### **Prats de Mollo**

**Ferme Auberge Coste d'Adalt** (Chez Michelle et Gilbert Lanau) recommended, need to reserve 04 68 39 74 40

Can Camaou, rte de la Preste - good reports 04 68 39 70 43

---

## **LES VINS**

**More** than 50% of the wines of Roussillon, (unfortunately often mentioned in the same breath as the ordinary table wines of Languedoc) are now classified as AOC (cf wine glossary). The region is the oldest wine growing area of France; the Greeks brought olive trees as well as vines when they settled on the coast in the 6th century BC. The wine trade received a boost when the train tracks to Perpignan were laid in the middle of the 19th century. Shortly after that the phylloxera (vine pest) destroyed the majority of the vines in the Roussillon. The resulting poverty blew up into the winegrowers revolts of Languedoc at the beginning of the century (cf. Literature).

**Today** the wines are improving by leaps and bounds every year as young producers leave the Co-operatives and strike out on their own. More than a third of the wine produced in

France is grown in this region. No, the wines cannot be compared, in the main, with the grands crus of Bordeaux, but just wait a few years.

### **The various growing areas are:**

**Côtes-du-Roussillon** consist of Roussillon down to the Albères in the South, the Aspres in the West stretches up to the Têt river in the North, but includes the area around Sournia and the region to the East of Rivesaltes. For the vin de pays, this is the region Pays Catalan.

**Côtes-du-Roussillon-Villages** is the region to the North of the river Têt, the Fenouillèdes and the South Eastern part of the Corbières (for the vins de pays this is divided into Coteaux-des-Fenouillèdes, Côtes Catalanes - to the North and East of Perpignan - and Vals d'Agly). Two villages hold an extra right to include their name in the Appellation Controlée - Caramany and Latour de France.

### **The growing areas of the vins doux naturels are:**

**Maury** - the area immediately around Maury;  
**Rivesaltes** - includes the villages of Saint-Paul, Rasiguères, Estagel, Paziol, Tautavel, Vingrau, Opoul and Salses;

**Banyuls** - includes Castelnou, Céret, Thuir, Tressère, Bages, Saint-André as well as Collioure and Banyuls itself (both Banyuls Grand-Cru).

### **Caves**

**In** the caves you can buy many wines that will never reach the shops. For reasons of simplicity the following selection divides the growers and Caves into the same regions as our houses. The IGN map will show most domaines.

## **ROUSSILLON**

### **Thuir**

**Caves** Byrrh, blvd Violet. Cusénier (Pernod) produces a number of well known Apéritifs, including Dubonnet, Ambassadeur, Bartissol, Americano 505, Vabe, and Byrrh itself. Guided tours (in English if requested). The main attraction is the largest oak vat in the world, built in the 1930s.

### **Torreilles**

**One** wine producer who has recently left the Co-opérative system and set up his own Cave

is Janvier Benedittis. If you are in the area he will happily show you round, especially if you mention Country Cousins. He speaks English. His Muscat de Rivesaltes is superb and his white Muscat (if there is any left) is one of the best wines in the region.

His Cave is open all day, except 12-3p.m., and is to be found at 24 Avenue Maréchal Joffre, Torreilles (just north of Canet), so combine it with a visit to the beach. Toreilles Plage and St Marie Plage are small resorts nearby.

### **Ponteilla**

Marie Sentenach

### **Trouillas**

Dom. de Canterrane (D05 612 direction Bages)

Château du Mas Déu (D05 612 direction Bages)

### **Bages**

Cave Villa

### **Saint-André**

Cave des Vins

### **Canet-Plage**

Château l'Esparrou

west of Canet-Plage on the étang (nature reserve)

### **Villeneuve**

Mas Palégry

2 km south of Perpignan on the N114 direction Elne

Château de Corneilla

south of Perpignan on the N114 direction Elne

## **ALBERES**

### **Saint-André**

Cave des Vins

Mas Rancoure

## **COTE VERMEILLE**

Banyuls

L'Etoile

Percé Frères

Celliers de Templiers

Les Vignerons (cooperative)

La Grande Cave

**Take** a right turn on the place Paul Reig in front of the Mairie into Avenue du Général de Gaulle. The road takes you up to Tour

Madeloc following the route of the Cretes. 2 km further on you will find the Grande Cave, the most important of the Cru Banyuls.

(Continue to Tour Madeloc with fantastic views of the coast. Drive faster than 5 mph at your peril).

### **Mas Reig**

**The Caves** can be reached by continuing on the D86 towards Route des Cretes. After 500m you will reach Mas Reig, a former castle and a command post of the Templars. Follow the path up to the Cave du Mas Reig. Parking available. The vaults are 13th century.

### **Collioure**

Cave Co-opérative

Port-Vendres

Caves de Vieillissement

In the centre of the "Promenade" turn into Rue Jules Ferry; 100m further on is the cave. Film, tasting. 9am-7pm, June - September.

## **FENOUILLEDES**

### **Maury**

Co-opérative

Domaine Mas Amiel

(mountain road direction Estagel)

### **Saint-Paul**

Caves Co-opérative

### **Saint-Martin**

Taïchac

### **Ansignan**

Coop

### **Caramany**

Celliers de Comtes – recommended

### **Latour de France**

Recommended

### **Rasigères**

Soc. Coop. De Vinification (Rosé)-recommended

## **CORBIERES**

### **Limoux**

is known for its Blanquette de Limoux, a sparkling wine that is every bit as equal to the

Loire wines. To be enjoyed chilled or as a "Kir".

Co-opérative de Gardie (Restaurant: Maison Blaquette)

### **Claira**

Père Puig, to the East of Rivesaltes

### **Tautavel**

F. Bonzomes

### **Salses**

CavePilote, Villeneuve-lès-Corbières (road to Tuchan on the Maury side of Estagel). This **Cave** offers a fine selection of Corbières and Fitou reds some aged in oak casks from 2-5 years. Try also the Rivesaltes Rancio which has to be aged in bright sunlight according to an ancient tradition!

### **Rivesaltes**

Caves Frères

### **Espira de l'Agly**

Co-opérative Vinicole  
Dom. du Moulin

### **Cases de Pene**

Randony  
Chat. de Jau

### **Estagel**

Mas de la Dona (direction Pézilla)

### **Opoul**

les Vignerons

### **Lagrasse**

Château Saint Auriol, Vialade-Salvagnac,  
(tours)

### **Ribaute**

Cave-Coop  
Cave Pech-Latt (tours)  
Cave Dom de Seur

### **Temperature and age**

Many wine connoisseurs believe that wine is frequently drunk too warm today, because the term "room temperature" is based on room temperatures that existed in the past before centrally heated rooms were common, e.g. approx. 18° C. Drinking temperatures of younger wines should be distinctly lower.

Vin de pays: 11-14

Côtes du Roussillon 13-16

older C. du R. 16-18

Rivesaltes (rosé/blanc) 10-12

Muscat de Rivesaltes 8

Rivesaltes (rouge) 13-16

older wines 16-18

Recommended drinking age:

vin primeur ½ year

White and rosé 1 year

vin de pays 1-2 years

Côtes du Roussillon 2-5 years

C. du R. Villages 1 ½ - 5/10 years

(Muscat/blanc/rosé) 1-2 years

## **Glossary of wine terms**

**AOC** - Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée. Highest category of wine growing regions and vines. The return and settling of colonial wine growers from Algeria who settled mainly in this part of France did much to improve the quality of wine in this region, bringing back with them skills relevant to the control of temperature during fermentation.

Reflected in the granting of AOC status to much of this region in 1977.

Côtes du Roussillon Villages is the best  
(12% 45 H/H)

followed by Côtes du Roussillon (11.5% 50 H/H)

**VDQS** - Vins Délimités de Qualité Supérieure - next category down. Now not common in this region.

**Vin de pays** - "Country wine", geographically specific but not very! Production limited to 80 H/H. Divided here into - Vin de Pays Catalane, VDP Côtes Catalanes, VDP Val d'Agly and VDP Côteaux des Fenouillèdes.

**Vin ordinaire** - Table wine, not geographically specific, may even include a % of imported wine.

**Cave**- Wine cellar, where wine is made and/or stored

**Côte** - Area of production

**Mis en bouteille à la propriété** - Bottled on the property

**Mutage** - Sherification, Alcohol is added to halt fermentation to make Vin Doux Naturel.

**H/H** - Production limit: Hectolitres per Hectare

**Vin Doux** - Sweet wine

**V.D.N.** - Natural Sweet Wine (Sherrified, no added sugar)

**Producteur – Producer**

**Négociant – Merchant**  
**Vendange - Grape harvest**

**Vigneron - Wine grower**

**En VRAC** - wine sold loose, per litre in plastic containers (not recommended for storage for more than 2 weeks)

**Some special wines**

**Banyuls** - Sweet Port-like wine from Banyuls on the Côte Vermeille

**Maury** - Another Port like wine. Lawrence of Arabia's favourite tippie

**Muscat de Rivesaltes** - A light, less sweet Vin Doux which you will be offered, served chilled, as you walk into any house in the region. Marvellous smell of Muscat grapes.

**Blanquette de Limoux** - White sparkling wine mentioned elsewhere. Heaven when iced.

You can take practically unlimited quantities of wine home with you. Only if you take more than 90 litres (incl. 60 litres sparkling) do you have to satisfy HM Customs, if they do check, that you are not going to sell it.

---

## CHILDREN

**Amélie-les-Bains** : Postal Museum with small 'Post Office' (afternoons only)

**Canet Plage** : Toy Museum, summer daily 11am - 12pm, otherwise closed Tues. Games library.

**Banyuls** : Seawater Aquarium, daily, summer until 10pm.

**Tautavel** : Prehistoric Museum

**Villefranche-de-Conflent** : Little yellow train

**Diving** : Banyuls : Club Réderis, Tel. 04 6888 3166

**Sailing** : Collioure : Club Eveil, Tel. 04 6882 0028

**Fun Pool** : Saint-Cyprien : Aquacity

**Villeneuve-de-Raho** : Mas Palégry, domaine and aircraft museum.

---

## FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The numerous traditional festivals of the region make a visit in almost any time of the year worthwhile. In addition to the well-known festivals we have especially listed small local events.

### January

Limoux: until March carnival every Sunday

### February

Roussillon: carnival; bear festival in the Vallespir

### Easter

Perpignan: Good Friday procession; Roussillon, Arles, Céret: Easter procession; Saint-Paul, Caudiès: aplechs.

### May

Serrabonne: pilgrimage; Fontfroide (RO): concerts

### June

Perpignan: summer cultural festival until July; Céret until Sept.: Corridas, Sardana; Mt. Canigou: Saint Johns Fest; Amélie: town festival

### July

Prades: Film weeks; Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa; Pablo Casals Music Festival; Prats, Arles: town festival; Saint-Paul: town festival; Carcassonne: theatre festival

## August

Summer festival in Saint-Félicien-d'Amont (Riberal); town festivals in: Collioure, Caudiès, Banyuls and others; historic town festival in Carcassonne; Sardane Festival in Céret; Wine Festival in Estagel; Catalan Summer University in Prades

## September

Start of the grape picking

## October

Thuir, Amélie: grape picking

## November

Perpignan: Saint-Martins Market

## December

Roussillon: Christ Masses, traditional songs  
See also the myriad leaflets from local tourist offices

## Souvenirs

In the little villages in the Roussillon and the Corbières you can take original mementoes home from the craftspeople, winegrowers or beekeepers. Aromatic garrigue honey. Local Almond biscuits (Croquants) (we defy you to make them last until you arrive home). Goats cheese incidentally is not always suitable for transportation in your car.

## Antiques

The Antique Dealers Federation organises exhibitions during spring and autumn and sends out a brochure giving details of their members: Groupement des Antiquaires et Brocanteurs du Roussillon, 4, rue André Bosch, 66000 Perpignan.

## Tourist Offices

Syndicat d'Initiative in the small towns and villages are often only open during the saison.

Arles	04 6839 1199
Banyuls	04 6888 3158
Carcassonne	04 6825 6881
Céret	04 6887 0053
Collioure	04 6882 1547
Corsavy	04 6839 2651
Laroque	04 6889 2113
Limoux	04 6831 1182
Montsegur	05 6101 1027
Perpignan	04 6834 2994
Port-Vendres	04 6882 0754

Prades	04 6896 2758
Prats-de-Mollo	04 6839 7083
Quillan	04 6820 0778
Rivesaltes	04 6864 0404
Saint-Laurent	04 6839 5575
Saint-Paul	04 6859 0026
Thuir	04 6853 4586

---

## ART

### Mallioli

Here in the Roussillon, at the place of their creation, the sculptures of Mallioli come to life: La Baigneuse Drapée on the beach at Saint-Cyprien (here also the Musée des Artistes Catalanes), La Méditerranée and La Pensée in the courtyard of the town hall, Hôtel de Ville, in Perpignan. In Céret, Port-Vendres and Banyuls are war memorials by the artist, in Elne there is a bust of a friend. The Museum Rigaud in Perpignan shows paintings and drawings.

### Cultural Monuments

Arles-sur-Tech (Vallespir)

Abbaye Saint-Marie, Romanesque, Gothic cloister.

Elne (Plaine du Roussillon)

Cathedral Saint-Eulalie 11th-13th C. Nave and aisles, consecrated 1069. One of the most beautiful in Catalonia. Marble cloister.

Prieuré de Serrabonne (Aspres)

Priory from the 11th & 12th C. Cloister. Marble gallery, one of the Romanesque treasures of the region.

Prieuré de Marcevol (Fenouillèdes)

Romanesque priory, 12th C., founded by the Order of Saint Sepulcre.

Monastir-del-Camp (Aspres)

Augustinian priory. Church and cloister on a domaine.

Saint-Martin-du-Canigou (Conflent)

Restored abbey in the Canigou dating from the 11th & 12th C. Walk from Vernet-les-Bains, Prades or Casteil.

Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa (Conflent)

Restored Romanesque Abbey. Church 10th & 11th C. Cloister 17th C.

Abbaye de Fontfroide (SW of Narbonne)  
One of the largest Cistercian abbeys. 12th & 13th century.

Hermitage de Saint-Antoine-de-Galamus  
Hermitage in the rocks near Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet, 17th & 18th C.

Ansignan  
Roman bridge and aqueduct, still in use.  
Open throughout year, no charge, delightful.

---

## SPORTS/ACTIVITIES

### Walking

**Good** walking country. There are Randonnées organised all of the time and the local people will welcome you. Ask in the local Syndicat d'Initiative where there will be leaflets or a notice board. also look on notice boards in shops, tabacs and supermarkets.

### Walking Maps

**The** detailed and up-to-date colour-printed maps by the French Institut Géographique Nationale (IGN), scale 1:100,000, come complete with the legend in English. IGN walking maps (either 1:50,000 or 25,000) are available locally in bookshops, Tabacs and petrol stations. Look out for the special IGN "Carte de Randonnées" walking map series.

### Flying/Gliding

Aéro Club du Roussillon Tel: 04 68 05 61 18 97  
Perpignan Airport, Haut Vernet, 66 Perpignan  
Pleasure Trips, Flying Lessons.

### Parachute School

Centre Ecole de Parachutisme du Roussillon  
Tel: 04 68 28 03 23  
Aérodrome de Saint-Laurent  
Saint Laurent de la Salanque  
Courses for all Levels from July to September

### Parascending

Plage des Elmes Tel 04 68 88 33 43  
Banyuls Sur Mer  
July – September

### Hang Gliding

VOLEM  
Ecole d'Epousouille Tel 04 68 04 34 11  
Fontrabieuse 66210

### Gliding

Association Aéronautique Tel 04 68 04 22 04  
La Llagone 66210  
Courses for all levels, first flights, Microlites.

### Golf

Saint-Cyprien  
North of Saint-Cyprien on the Etang-de-Canet  
9/18 holes - 2720/6480m. Handicap needed. Green fee 195-250 F/day. Interesting wind conditions and water obstacles.  
Mas d'Huston, Tel 04 6821 0171

### Amélie-les-Bains

7 holes - 500m  
No handicap. Green Fee 100F/day, 60F/afternoon. Closed Oct-May  
Ave Jean-Paul, Tel 04 6839 3766

### Carcassonne

south of the M-way on the D204 to Saint-Hilaire  
9 holes. Handicap. Green Fee 160F/day  
Route de Saint-Hilaire, Tel 04 6839 5142  
Coustouges/St Laurent de Cerdans  
Please ask for Information

### Horses and Riding

These are just a few of the literally hundreds of riding centres

Centre Hippique UDSIST Tel: 04 68 39 01 98

Amélie Les Bains Palalda, 605 6110

L'Eperon d'Argent Tel: 04 68 81 20 87

Argelès Sur Mer 66700

Horse boarding, Promenade

Centre Hippique Le Mas de la Grèle (Haras)

Tel: 04 68 86 07 82

Port le Barcarès 66420

From Beginners to Advanced, Jumping, Promenade

Relais Equestre de la Bastide Tel: 04 68 39 41 56

La Bastide 605 6110

Beginners, Promenades, Day Trips

Pony Club Sainte Croix Tel: 04 68 67 17 82

Cabestany 66330

Club Hippique Saint Georges Tel: 04 68 54 75 50

Canohès 66300

Centre Equestre Castel Fizel Tel 04 68 59 92 84

Caudiès de Fenouillèdes 66220

Beginners to Advanced Promenades, Day Trips.

Ecole d'Equitation (FEF Haras)  
 Tel: 04 68 30 11 52 Font Romeu 605 6120  
 L'Etrier du Conflent (Ante)  
 Tel 04 68 96 06 38 Los Masos 66500  
 Beginners to Advanced Proms, Day Trips.  
 Centre de Randonnées des Albères  
 (Ante/Haras) Tel 04 68 89 63 65  
 Montesquieu 66740  
 Beginners to Advanced Promenades, Day  
 Trips. Introduction to the Blacksmiths Art.  
 Horse care on the trail.  
 Centre Equestre (Ante) Tel 04 68 83 96 87  
 Can Sabe, Route de Taulis, Montbolo 605  
 6110  
 Beginners, Promenades.  
 Elevage des "Tres Estrelles" (Ante/haras)  
 Tel 04 68 05 58 38  
 Py 66550  
 Promenades, Day Trips.  
 Centre Equestre UDSIST (Ante/Haras)  
 Tel 04 68 21 18 10  
 Domaine Las Planas  
 Saint Cyprien 66750  
 Beginners to Advanced Promenades  
 Pony Club Le Cheval St Cyp  
 Routes des Arènes (village)  
 Beginners to Advanced, Promenades, Day  
 Trips.  
 Same telephone as above  
 La Montagnette (Ante)  
 Tel 04 68 63 55 06  
 Salses Le Chateau 66600  
 Horse and Pony Promenade, Day Treks  
 Centre Equestre Tel 04 68 97 74 04  
 Le Vieux Moulin  
 Sournia 66730  
 Centre Equestre UDSIST Tel 04 68 05 60 04  
 Mas Rabat  
 Vernet Les Bains 604 6820  
 Treks:  
 1 hours 70 Francs  
 2 Hours 130 Francs  
 2 1/2 hours 150 Francs including  
 a waterhole:  
 The Cafe at Brouilla  
 6 hours 350 Francs with picnic  
 1 hour adventure 90 Francs  
 (experienced riders only)

### **Rock climbing**

Centre Loisirs Jeunesse Tel 04 68 81 34 87  
 Argelès sur Mer  
 See also Castel Fizel

### **Karting**

Chemin du Prat d'En Veil Tel 04 68 21 41  
 76  
 Saint Cyprien 66750 - Beginners to  
 Advanced, Competition for 12 years & up  
 Route de l'Aérodrome Tel 04 68 92 27 58  
 Saint Estève 66240  
 Saturday and Sunday afternoons for 14  
 year olds and up  
 Route du Littoral  
 Torreilles  
 Seasonal only. No other info available.

### **Boat Hire**

Sea fishing and trips from Collioure, Port  
 Vendres, Banyuls and other resorts. Also  
 sailing on high mountain lakes  
 Les Angles  
 Base Nautique La Bonne Barquette  
 Tel 04 68 04 46 45  
 Base Nautique L'Ourson  
 Tel 04 68 04 49 45  
 Banyuls Sur Mer  
 Nautic Catalan Tel 04 68 88 09 13  
 Le Barcarès  
 Centre Nautique du Barcarès Tel 04 68 86  
 07 28  
 Ave de la Coudalère  
 Port Le Barcarès  
 Popeye Club Tel 04 68 86 29 62  
 Plage du Cap Coudalère  
 Canet En Roussillon  
 Europ Mer Tel 04 68 80 41 77  
 Collioure Tel 04 68 82 07 16  
 Hire of Boat with Skipper  
 Port Vendres  
 Roussillon Marine Tel 04 68 82 12 41  
 Puyvalador  
 Base Nautique Tel 04 68 04 40 64  
 Saint Cyprien  
 Marine Service Catalan Tel 04 68 21 05 40  
 Basin sud du Port  
 Cap Sur Tel 04 68 21 11 01  
 Navy Loc Tel 04 68 21 31 13  
 Tabo Voile Quai C, Port

### **Water Fun**

Saint Cyprien  
 Aqua City Tel 04 68 21 04 20  
 An open-air water fun park/pool.

### **Sea Excursions**

Argelès sur Mer  
 Trip on the Saint Honorat  
 (May to September)  
 Tel 04 68 88 36 33

Le Marie André  
(Club Antares)  
Tel 04 68 81 46 30  
Banyuls sur Mer  
Trip on La Catalane  
(May to September)  
Tel 04 68 88 50 56  
Port Le Barcarès  
Coche d'eau (trip on the lake)  
Easter - September  
Tel 04 68 86 07 35  
Trip on sail boat on the lake  
March to October  
Collioure  
Club International de Plongée  
July and August  
Port Vendres  
Santa Monica  
Port Vendres - Rosas (Spain)  
July and August  
Tel 04 68 82 08 40/04 68 82 02 77  
Le Loup de Mer  
(in season)  
Tel 04 68 82 00 28  
Saint Cyprien  
La Juillanaise  
June to September  
Tel 04 68 21 12 08

### **Sea Diving**

Argelès sur Mer  
Scuba Club Antares Tel 04 68 81 46 30/  
04 68 86 48 90  
Club de Plongée Tel 04 68 81 31 60  
Banyuls sur Mer  
Rederis Club Tel 04 68 88 31 66/04 68 92  
01 01  
Canet En Roussillon  
Stages en piscine Tel 04 68 80 20 66  
Cerbère  
Cerbère Plongée Tel 04 68 88 41 00  
Collioure  
Club International de Plongée Tel 04 68 82  
07 16  
Port Vendres  
Le Loup de Mer Tel 04 68 82 00 28  
Saint Cyprien  
L'Otarie Club  
1 rue Bourdaloue  
Tel 04 68 21 12 08

### **Windsurfing**

Les Angles (in the mountains)  
Base nautique "La Bonne Barquette"  
Tel 04 68 04 46 45

Base nautique "L'Ourson" Tel 04 68 04 49  
95  
Both of the above on the Lac de Matemale  
Les Angles 66210  
Argelès sur Mer  
Various clubs "Al Roc" "Gym Club"  
"Migjorn" "Central Windsurf" "Centre  
nautique"  
Information Tel 04 68 81 15 85  
Port Le Barcarès  
Station Voile du Barcarès Tel 04 68 86 16  
56  
Courses from 30th March to 6th November  
Camping Le Pré Catalan Tel 04 68 86 12 60  
Route de Sainte Laurent.  
Hire of boards.  
Banyuls sur Mer  
Yachting Club Tel 04 68 88 33 16  
Courses  
Canet En Roussillon  
Inter Club Canétois Tel 04 68 80 36 82  
On the beach  
Collioure  
CIP Tel 04 68 82 07 16  
Courses 31 March to 11th October  
Eveil a la Mer Tel: 04 68 82 00 28  
Courses in season  
Port Vendres  
Roussillon Marine  
Quai P Forgas  
Tel 04 68 82 12 41  
Hire in season  
Puyvalador  
Base Nautique Tel: 04 68 04 40 64  
Hire of boards in season  
St Cyprien  
Centre Nautique UDSIST Tel: 04 68 21 11  
53  
Courses  
Vinça  
Vinça Nautic Club Tel: 04 68 05 80 24  
(Artificial Lake)  
Villeneuve de la Raho  
Base Nautique Tel: 04 68 55 43 66  
Hire of boards all year. (Inland Lake)

### **Sailing**

Les Angles (in the mountains)  
Base nautique La Bonne Barquette 04 68  
04 46 45  
Base nautique L'Ourson Tel 04 68 04 49  
45  
Boat School Tel 04 68 81 27 03/04 68 81  
26 58  
Courses in season  
Migjorn Tel 04 68 81 27 03

Port Le Barcarès  
 Station Voile Tel 04 68 86 16 56  
 Courses on Catamarans. Hire

Banyuls sur Mer  
 Yachting Club Tel 04 68 88 33 16  
 Races.

Canet En Roussillon  
 Club de Voile Tel 04 68 80 20 66  
 Regattas and boat trips all year.  
 Membership obligatory.

Collioure  
 Introduction to Water Sports Tel 04 68 82  
 00 28  
 for children 10 - 15 years. Diving, wind-  
 surfing, sailing.  
 Stage d'initiation Tel 04 68 82 07 16

Puyvalador  
 Base nautique Tel 04 68 04 40 64

Saint Cyprien  
 Centre de Sports de Mer UDSIST  
 Tel 04 68 21 11 53  
 Ecole de croisière Tel 04 68 92 64 70  
 Bateaux Ecole Tel 04 68 21 16 07

Vinça  
 Nautic Club Tel 04 68 05 80 24  
 Sail and Wind-surf Racing. Club  
 membership obligatory.

### **Inland lakes and plans d'eau open for leisure activities**

Les Angles  
 Les Bouillouses (Lac 142 ha)

Ansignan  
 New lake should be full and in operation  
 for  
 leisure activities summer 95

Marquixanes  
 Lac des Escoumes (9ha)

Matemale  
 Lac de Matemale (236ha)

Puyvalador  
 Lac de Puyvalador (90ha)

Saint Cyprien Plage  
 Plan d' eau de Capellans

Salses Le Chateau  
 Etang de Salses (3220ha)

Le Soler  
 Small communal Plan d'Eau

Villeneuve De La Raho  
 Lac de Villeneuve (237ha)

Vira (Fenouillèdes)  
 Small communal Plan d'Eau, ideal for  
 swimming but not for small children.  
 Beautiful open air barbecue spot.

Fosse  
 Small communal Plan d'Eau

Ideal for swimming and small children.  
 Fenouillet  
 Small communal Plan d'Eau

### **Canoe/Kayak**

Argelès sur Mer  
 Club Germanor Tel 04 68 81 26 49

Caudiès De Fenouillèdes  
 Canoe School(Beginners to advanced)  
 Rafting Hydro-speed  
 Tel 04 68 59 00 14

Eus  
 Base de canoe/kayak UDSIST  
 Tel 04 68 96 20 33/04 68 53 05 70/04 68  
 21  
 81 82

Puyvalador  
 Base nautique Tel 04 68 04 31

Centre de Séjour Sports-Nature De La For  
 11500 Quillan  
 Tel: 04 68 20 23 79 Fax: 04 68 20 90 28

Rafting, Kayak/Canoeing Cycle Touring

### **Potholing**

For information concerning potholing in  
 Roussillon the Catalan Potholing Federation  
 can put you in touch with potholing clubs.  
 (See also Castel Fizel)

Cercles des Jeunes, Ave Foche 66000  
 Perpignan. Tel: 04 68 35 07 60

### **Bike Hire**

Café Shamroc  
 Laroque des Albères  
 04 68 95 40 13

SARL Cedo Fils  
 2 Ave Leclerc  
 Amélie Les Bains  
 Tel 04 68 39 29 05  
 Fax 04 68 39 32 55

Les Angles  
 Base nautique L'Ourson  
 Lac de Matemale  
 Tel 04 68 04 49 45  
 (seasonal)

Port Le Barcarès  
 Boutique Evasion Tel 04 68 86 13 36  
 (all year)  
 Camping Pré Catalan Tel 04 68 86 12  
 60 (seasonal)  
 Camping Les Tamaris Tel 04 68 86 08  
 18 (seasonal)  
 Camping Floride Embouchure Tel 04  
 68 86 11 75 (seasonal)

Camping La Presqu'île Tel 04 68 86 12 80 (seasonal)  
 Libre-Service du Grand Large (Quartier Lido) Tel 04 68 86 13 32 (seasonal)  
 Popeye Club (Quartier La Coudalère) Tel 04 68 86 29 62 (seasonal)  
 Sport 165 (Blvd St Ange) Tel 04 68 86 26 62  
 Argelès sur Mer  
 Coste Reve Tel 04 68 81 45 46 (seasonal)  
 Garage Fina  
 Route Nationale  
 Arles Sur Tech  
 Tel 04 68 83 86 22  
 Canet En Roussillon  
 Opération 1000 Vélos  
 Hired out at the Capitainerie du Port  
 Parking du Front de Mer (Parking on the sea front)  
 Tel 04 68 80 35 88  
 Saint Cyprien Plage  
 Le Nautilus  
 Bd Desnoyers  
 Tel 04 68 21 23 80  
 April - September  
 Mini Cycles Maillol  
 Bd Maillot  
 Tel 04 68 21 00 00  
 May - September  
 Perpignan  
 Cycles Mercier  
 1 rue du President Doumer  
 Tel: 04 68 85 02 71  
 "Train + Bike" Travel Enquiries  
 Gare SNCF  
 Perpignan  
 Tel 04 68 51 10 44  
 Agence MBK  
 Benassis Lucien  
 22 Bd Charles de Gaulle  
 11500 Quillan  
 Tel: 04 68 20 18 91  
 1/2 day 60.00ff  
 1 day 100.00ff  
 1 week 500.00ff  
 100 Francs for Delivery or Retrieval  
 Jean Dejean  
 Garage Citroen  
 Route de Carcassonne  
 11500 Quillan 84  
 Tel: 04 68 20 04 27  
 Route de Pieusse  
 11300 Limoux  
 Tel: 04 68 31 29 84  
 Le St Pierre - Hotel Restaurant

Avenue Jean Moulin  
 66220 St Paul de Fenouillet  
 Tel: 04 68 59 14 55  
 Centre Comerciale Super K at St Génis des Fontaines  
 Try and book in advance to avoid disappointment

### **Moped Hire**

Locamoto  
 Boulevard des Albères  
 Argelès sur mer  
 Pedalo Hire  
 Les Angles  
 Base nautique La Bonne Barquette Tel 04 68 04 46 45  
 Base nautique L'Ourson Tel 04 68 04 49 45  
 Argelès sur Mer  
 Various Beach Clubs: "Al Roc" (Plage du Racou) "Gym Club" (Plage du Racou) "Mamouth" (plage Sud 1) "Miramar" (Centre plage) "Eldorado" (Nord) "Acapulco" (plage Nord) "Club Mickey" (plage des Pins) "Club Point Bleu" (Nord III) "Sun Beach" "Olympic" (Nord-Sud)  
 Port Le Barcarès, Locazur Cap Coudalère  
 Tel: 04 68 86 23 46  
 Various seasonal hire points are on the beach. Information from  
 The Tourist Office on 04 68 86 16 56  
 Osseja  
 Base nautique Tel 04 68 04 53 86  
 From 15 May to 15 Sept  
 Puyvalador  
 Base nautique Tel 04 68 04 40 64  
 Villeneuve De la Raho  
 Lac de Villeneuve Tel 04 68 55 92 78  
 July and August.

### **Moto Cross**

Port Le Barcarès  
 Espace Loisirs Mécaniques Tel 04 68 86 10 30

---

## **TAXIS & HOTELS**

### **Blagnac (Toulouse Airport)**

#### **Taxi**

Allo Taxi Blagnac 05 62 22 18 18  
 Blagnac Taxi 05 61 71 47 40  
 Taxi 05 61 30 02 54

#### **Hotels**

Hôtel Formule 1 - 05 61 30 00 99

av Didier Daurat

### Perpignan Taxis

66 Perpignan

- A.A.G Taxi 04 68 67 05 61 96
- 1 pl Gare
- A.B.C Taxi 04 68 67 05 61 83
- Gare Aéroport
- A.B.S. Taxi 04 68 67 60 78
- Gare Aéroport
- Accueil Perpignan Taxi 04 68 35 15 15
- 8Bis r St Joseph

### Laroque des Albères

#### Taxi

Taxi Cador Tel 04 68 89 03 06

---

## GLOSSARY

**Les agouilles** - old irrigation canals in Roussillon

**La cave co-opérative** - cellar of the wine cooperative (cave is written throughout in italics to distinguish from caves as in caverns)

**Le col** - mountain pass

**Prats** - meadows

**Aplechs** - Pilgrimages (lasting one day as in the Spanish Romería.

**Mas** - Southern French farm buildings, farm house.

**Table d'hôte** - dish of the day. In small country restaurants, e.g. the hotel in Caudiès de Fenouillèdes, you tell them you are coming in the morning and they prepare you a meal in the evening. No menu, they decide!

**Mezzanine** - low ceilinged open gallery, usual used as a bedroom, between ground and first floor

**Plan d'eau** - water reservoir or basin for fighting forest fires which can be used for swimming

**Goigs** - short songs of praise aimed at statues of the virgin during Easter processions. (Spanish Saeta).

---

## FRENCH PHONES

**All French phones numbers** have ten digits and you have to dial all 10 digits even if you are dialling next door, there are no area codes. As elsewhere in Europe, the first digit is 0 and this digit is dropped when dialling in from abroad. So, for example:

**To Phone the Café Shamroc** in Laroque des Albères, from anywhere in France, dial 04 68 89 76 08.

From abroad drop the initial 0. So, for example, from the GB, dial the International Code 00, then 33 for France, then 4 68 89 76 08.

**NOTE** It is becoming increasingly difficult to find coin phone boxes. Buy a phonecard in any Tabac and many petrol stations.

### Mobile Phones

**Roussillon** is now well covered by GSM networks and your British mobile with roaming facilities will work reasonably well if there isn't a mountain in the way.

All French mobile phones are ten digits long and begin with 06.

---

## MISCELLANEOUS

**When** you have breakfast in a bar in country districts in this part of France you buy your croissants first in the boulangerie and take them into the bar to eat with your coffee or wine.

### Danger of forest fires

**Because** of the dry vegetation in summer forest fires are a real nightmare and spread rapidly. Do not light open fires or barbecues in the forest. Do not discard cigarette ends from the car or leave glass laying around. If you suspect a fire telephone the fire brigade immediately. Never block access roads or forestry roads with your car.

### Toads etc

**"On** a dual carriageway with a traffic flow of 1 car per minute in each direction, 9 out of every 10 toads crossing will die" (Sign in an aire de repos on the motorway through the Sologne nature reserve, where they have built special toad tunnels underneath the road). In an average year, 18,000 deer, 850 sangliers and 6 people (with 700 injured) are killed in collisions with animals on French roads.

### Door Handles

**Most** French doorhandles are a nightmare to the uninitiated! You put the key in and it won't turn. The reason is that they are quite sophisticated and don't have a simple barrell lock. Unlocking them is easy but to lock them

you have to first lift the lever upwards, to the vertical position, then return to normal position before turning the key.

### WC's

If an elephant stood on an average British WC flushing mechanism handle it would do its business and return to its original position without too much fuss or complaint. We do not really have to think about British WC flushing mechanism handles. They are there, they do what they are meant to do, they are not central to our existence. I could go on but I would begin to sound like John Cleese's parrot sketch.

It came in a flash (or was it a flush?) There are many differences between life in France and life in Britain. The health system is better here, the bureaucracy worse, but the greatest difference is to be found in the humble WC flushing mechanism. To put it bluntly, in France, it's crap. (Important digression: see <http://www.plumbingsupply.com/pmthomas.html>)

I am writing this because I really do not want ever again to spend an evening sitting the wrong way round on a toilet seat struggling to reconstitute tiny bits of dissembled plastic invented in 1936 by some amateur design engineer who was obviously underpaid, undermotivated and a sadist to boot.

Be warned, heretoforeward I shall take very unkindly to anyone who calls me saying "it came away in my hand" Treat it as the French have learnt to treat it from an early age i.e. extremely gently, and all should be well.

First ascertain whether it's one that you push or one that you pull. Do this by manipulating it very gently with your fingers. Most of them will wiggle in all directions anyway because they never fit properly, but its real nature should become obvious within a few seconds.

Then operate it as is should be operated. Do it with delicacy and finesse, with a light fingered touch worthy of a surgeon on an operating table. Respect its frailty, its fragility, its appalling design and its idiosyncrasies. The world will be a better place and I will be able to spend my evenings as god intended.

And lastly, please leave all elephants firmly tied up at home, you never know....

### Any further questions?

We'll be pleased to find an answer, just gives us a ring: 04 68 53 34 47

Thanks to Tim Buckfield in London, Nicky Faure and Bob Larcher in France, and Andreas Reda in Germany for helping to put this Information Pack together. ©1996 CCA Ltd.

\*\* Please note that all information is believed to be correct at the time of publication. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies and inclusion does not imply any endorsement. \*\*



# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION CHECK

Name
Address

Property \_\_\_\_\_ Holiday Ref. No: \_\_\_\_\_

We would be very grateful if you would take five minutes to complete the following in order to help us maintain and improve our service. Email, fax or post it to the address below.

What were your first impressions? Delighted \_\_\_\_\_ Good \_\_\_\_\_ Disappointed \_\_\_\_\_

Did the property fit the description in the brochure? \_\_\_\_\_

Any changes you would recommend to the brochure description? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the property suitable for your needs ? If, not, why not \_\_\_\_\_

Did you feel it was reasonably priced for the facilities available and for its type? \_\_\_\_\_

Any other comments \_\_\_\_\_

Was this your first visit to this region? \_\_\_\_\_ Will you come again? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you most enjoy? \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, please rate your overall feelings about your holiday on a scale of 10 (high) to 1.

All our houses start on a Saturday. What is your preferred start day ? \_\_\_\_\_

USE THE BACK OF THIS FORM FOR ANY FURTHER COMMENTS AND THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF ANY FRIENDS WHO MIGHT ALSO LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT US.  
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND THANK YOU FOR TRAVELLING WITH COUNTRY COUSINS chez CAN COSINS  
PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: pete@countrycousins.co.uk  
OR FAX :+33 (0)820 568 908 OR BY POST TO: 3 IMP DE LA FONTAINE, 66300 THUIR, FRANCE

Were the arrival instruction correct and clear?

.....

## REPAYMENT OF THE DAMAGE DEPOSIT BY BANK TRANSFER (EU)

If you paid **all** or **part** of your holiday by **CARD** you need read no further, we already have everything we need to return your Damage Deposit.

If you didn't pay anything by **CARD**  
we cannot pay back your Damage Deposit by **CARD**,  
we need the **details** of your **Current Account**. in the form of an **IBAN** and a **SWIFT BIC**.  
If you don't know what your **IBAN** and **SWIFT BIC** are ask your bank, or go onto your bank's website, some banks have this information generatable there.

PROPERTY REF: \_\_\_\_\_ START DATE \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ HOLIDAY NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Account Holder Name: \_\_\_\_\_

IBAN : \_\_\_\_\_

SWIFTBIC \_\_\_\_\_

---

Si vous avez payé le **Dépôt de Garantie** par **CARTE** nous disposons déjà de tout ce qu'il faut pour effectuer le remboursement, si non, veuillez nous faire parvenir votre **RIB** (comptes française) **OU** votre **IBAN** et **SWIFTBIC** (comptes ailleurs).

REF DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ : \_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>ER</sup> JOUR \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ NO DE VACANCE \_\_\_\_\_

Titulaire du Compte : \_\_\_\_\_

No. du Compte: \_\_\_\_\_

Code Établissement/Banque : \_\_\_\_\_ Code Guichet : \_\_\_\_\_ Clé RIB : \_\_\_\_\_

IBAN : \_\_\_\_\_ SWIFTBIC \_\_\_\_\_

---



**COUNTRY COUSINS *chez* CAN COSINS**  
**[www.countrycousins.co.uk](http://www.countrycousins.co.uk)**  
**[mainbox1@countrycousins.co.uk](mailto:mainbox1@countrycousins.co.uk)**  
**Tel: +33 (0)9 75 17 01 35**  
**Fax: +33 (0)820 568 908**