
Bulletin !

An informal look at life in this part of France and a selection of things to see and do

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Thought for the month:

Save the planet. It's the only one with chocolate!



Bonne Année et Bonne Santé



This is a quiet time of the year, but there are a few Sunday *brocantes* around:

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|----------------------|------------------------|--|
| Sun 3 rd | St Pierre-s/Dives (14) | Monthly <i>antiquitiés/brocante</i> in the <i>Halle Medieval</i> ,
rue Paul Canta, 9h-18h |
| Sun 10 th | Saint Lô (50) | <i>Brocante des Collections</i> at Foirail, 8h-18h |
| Sun 24 th | Granville (50) | Monthly <i>brocante</i> , ± 50 stalls |
| “ | Evron (53) | <i>Marché artisanale & foire à tout</i> , ±50 stalls |

Visit www.brocabrac.fr as it is being constantly updated with *brocantes/ vide-greniers*

‘La galette des rois’ – a tasty tradition

A seasonal reminder that France celebrates Epiphany each year on the second Sunday after Christmas with the *galette des rois* – a traditional puff pastry cake filled with *frangipane*, a thick almond cream. This tradition traces its roots back to the Middle Ages when the last piece of the cake, often called the ‘piece for the poor’ was reserved and given to the first needy person knocking at the door. Inside is a little surprise – these days a *santon* (figurine) – and the person who gets the slice with *le santon* is declared the king and so crowned.

Eating out

'*Le Lion d'Or*' in Saint-Hilaire du Harcouët (50) is a *Logis* restaurant and hotel, on the western edge of the town. Smart decor and excellent food. Friendly and efficient staff, with some English spoken. Especially good for special occasions. Plenty of parking alongside. Restaurant open mid-day and evenings. 02 33 89 55 83. www.hotelleliondor.com

Walking

With its gorges and meanderings, its rocky summits and rolling hills, the Orne valley is the central feature of the lovely *Suisse Normande* region and it makes a good touring base. The little village of La Forêt-Auvray, east of Flers, stands on a hill high above the rocky *Gorges de St Aubert* which funnels the river Orne on its way to Pont-d'Ouilly. It is a snug little place, full of old stone houses clustered around a small central square, where a small covered market is a popular sheltering spot for locals and walkers passing through on the GR36 long-distance footpath. Close by on the banks of the Orne lies the fortress of la Forêt-Auvray, and 4km downstream is the great view-point, the *Roche d'Oëtre*, dominating the valley from a steep cliff high above the river Rouvre.

Buy fresh *huitres* and *moules* in Martigné-sur-Mayenne (53)

Every Wednesday from 16h to 20h in Place de l'Eglise in Martigné-sur-Mayenne, Mickaël Lemoine sells oysters and mussels that have come fresh from the bays of Cancale and Mont Saint Michel. He is very popular, so if you can't see the stall just look for the queue!

The oldest inn in France

The oldest surviving inn in France is *La Couronne* in Rouen. When Jeanne d'Arc was burnt in the Place du Vieux Marché in 1431, it had already been in business for 86 years!

Manoir de l'automobile et des vieux métiers

You will find more than 200 vehicles (including F1) in 15,000m² of exhibition space at this museum on Route de Lieuron, Lohéac (35, SE of Rennes). More than a century of history of automobiles and ancient trades. Definitely worth a day trip out! Open all year, daily (but not Mons.) 10h-13h & 14h-19h www.manoir-automobile.fr

And while you are in that area:-

Places to eat in Lohéac (35)

As well as visiting the *Manoir de l'Automobile*, you can visit this Breton village (pop. 675, called 'Lohéaciens') where there are 4 restaurants. One of these is a *crêperie/grill* called *La Manivelle* (translation: the starting handle) at 6 rue de la Poste, or in an 18th century building at 5 rue du Stade is *Le Relais des Arcandières* (www.relais-des-arcandieres.com)

Something you didn't know you didn't know . . . about French bread!

Every second, 190 baguettes are consumed around France! There are many stories as to its invention - one is that it was created after the Revolution, following a disastrous harvest, when the new leaders decided there should be one loaf for everyone instead of white for the rich, rye for the poor. The bakers were ordered to cook a *pain de l'égalité* which was a long bread to replace the customary round loaves. It is also said that it was invented by Napoleon's soldiers as its shape made it easier to place inside their uniforms, making it more transportable. It used to be found only in the towns and was not available everywhere until the 20th century.

'Aux Délices de Lassay' re-opens

This *patissier/boulangerie* at 4 rue Sainte-Sauveur in Lassay-les-Châteaux had been closed following a fire last June. It has now re-opened with a more attractive front window and a larger, modernised shop decorated with wrought iron and wood. Quality products are offered including a range of chocolates (including the famous *Pavé de Lassay*) and local *artisanale* bread made with flour from a local mill.

French postal rates to change on 1st January

Domestic postal rates will change both up and down from 1st Jan. 2016. Small packets (*Colissimo*) up to 2kgs will fall by up to 10%, e.g.: the 0-250g will drop from 5,50€ to 4,90€. Letter rates in France will increase by an average 3.6% - e.g.: *Priorité*: 76c to 80c, *Lettre Verte*: 68c to 70c.

There is also a new booklet of postage stamps to simplify posting. Regardless of the weight of the item a single stamp booklet will be enough to cover the postage. Customers will just need to stick the number of stamps corresponding to the weight of the letter: 1 stamp for a letter under 20g, 2 stamps for an item between 20g & 100g, 4 stamps between 100g & 250g, 6 stamps between 250g & 500g, 8 stamps over 500g up to 3kgs.

Electronic waste mountain is growing

On average, each person in France throws away 22.3kg of electronic goods a year. Just 15% of this waste is recycled but it is estimated that all the mobile phones, computers, white goods and circuit boards contain about €48billion of gold, copper, nickel and steel – and tonnes of toxic substances such as cadmium, mercury, chrome and lead glass. Shops have an obligation to take away old electronic goods if they are delivering a replacement and larger stores must have bins for the public to dispose of small electronic goods such as phones, hairdryers or cables & chargers.

Anti-litter laws have also been tightened so anyone dumping rubbish on the street faces a new 450€ fine instead of 150€; owners who let dogs foul pavements will be fined 68€, and the same for smokers who drop butts.

Entertainment

Wed. 20th at the *mediathèque*, 1 rue Saint François in Landivy (53): ‘À Table!’ – the ‘*Compagnie A*’ from Angers offers an evening of fun with the discovery and initiation into the art of puppetry. Free.

Sat. 16th at 20h30h in *Espace Clair de Lune* in Ernée (53): “Yom Back to the Klezmer” – Yom (clarinet), accompanied by accordion and tambour – jazz and traditional music including Hungarian, Greek, oriental. Tickets 11€, children 6€. More info from: www.cc-lernee.fr/culture

Thurs. 21st at 20h30 in the Theatre d’Avranches: “*Percut’elles*” – 3 talented young women with percussion – including Chinese cymbals, bongos, glockenspiel. An evening of music - poetic and mysterious, spiritual and sprightly. More info from www.ville-granville.fr

Concerts

♪ Fri. 8th at 20h30 in *l’Espace Aumallerie* in Fougères (35) – the legendary Nana Mouskouri on her “Happy Birthday Tour”. Tickets (55€ or 60€) are available from the Fougères Tourist Office (www.ot-fougeres.fr)

♪ Sat. 6th at 20h30 in *l’Archipel* in Granville (50): ‘*le classique selon Zygel*’ – Jean-François Zygel and *l’Orchestre Regional de Normandie*. Tickets 26€, children 20€. More info from Granville Tourist Office (www.ville-granville.fr)

♪ Sat. 23rd at 20h30 and on Sun. 24th at 16h30: in *l’Archipel*, Granville (50): *l’Orchestre d’Harmonie du Cap Lihon*. Free. More info: www.ville-granville.fr

And now for something completely different . . . !

For those of us who need cheering up during the coming wintry days, on the first Thursday of each month at 21h you can enjoy a session of traditional Irish music at O’Regan’s Pub, at 48 rue du Pont de Mayenne, Laval (53). Free. (02 43 53 37 22)

Gorron cinema

80 people (a record number) came to see ‘Spectre’ in December in Gorron cinema! A great film and a cosy, comfortable place in which to watch it! The English film in Gorron in January is on Monday 25th: ‘Bridge of Spies’, starring Tom Hanks.

Art classes

If you have promised yourself some quality time this winter, art sessions in Joe Morgan's studio in Fougerolles-du-Plessis (53) will offer you techniques, encouragement and creativity. Watercolours and Acrylics on Thursdays and Fridays. Sessions are two hours in duration and cost 12€. All abilities welcome. Call Joe on 02 43 13 06 72 for availability

Exhibition of local artists

Until 8th Feb., at the *Maison des Association de Fougères (35)* ‘*Les Ateliers*’ – an exhibition of paintings by artists of the Pays du Fougères. Free entry

Lest We Forget

Victor Triham, from Larchamp (53), was a prisoner for almost all of WW1. He died in August 1944 and had written of his war experiences in a notebook. Called up on 4th August 1914 to help halt the German advance, his unit was captured 21 days later, and after enduring a 52-hour train journey they arrived in Munster. It was several weeks before water and shelter were organised for them in a village 7 kms away and the 15,000 captured soldiers were almost starving. The camp was so overcrowded that some officers had to share quarters with enlisted men. Managing to avoid heavy agricultural labour, his job was re-sealing letters after they were censored by the Germans. However, in Jan. 1917 he was made to dig trenches until illness eventually led to his being sent to a camp on the Swiss border where the conditions were much better. Armistice was declared on 11th November but it was 2nd December before they were repatriated, and the little Swiss town organised a ceremony of farewell for the departing French soldiers.

Exhibition of paintings and meeting the artist

From 4th Jan to 26th Feb., in the foyer de *l'Archipel* in Granville (50): an exhibition of paintings by Gilles Lebreton on the theme of dance and movement. Free. You can also meet the artist there on Thurs. 14th Jan. from 18h. More info: www.ville-granville.fr.

Exhibition in partnership with Amnesty International

Until 27th Feb., the exhibition *Dignité, droits humains et pauvreté* is at the *Memorial des Déportés de la Mayenne*, 23 rue Ambroise de Loré, Mayenne (53). Entry 4€, children 2€. Books available also in English & German. Open Tues. to Sats. 14h-18h. More info from the Mayenne Tourist Office (for contact details, see page 7)

Some weekly markets - in the Orne (61)

Day of the week	Location
Mondays	Briouze, Remalard, Vimoutiers (afternoon)
Tuesdays	Alençon, Athis de l'Orne, Bagnoles de l'Orne, Couterne, Argentan, l'Aigle, Souigny-la-Trappe
Wednesdays	Bagnoles de l'Orne, Carrouges, Flers, Le Mêle-sur-Sarthe, Le Theil-sur-Huisne, Longny-au-Perche
Thursdays	Alençon, Ceaucé, La Ferté-Macé, Putanges-Pont-Ecrepin, Bellême, Bretoncelles, Trun, La Ferté-Fresnel
Fridays	Argentan, Domfront, Bagnoles de l'Orne, La Chapelle d'Andaine, Ecouché, Condé-sur-Huisne, Courtomer
Saturdays	Bagnoles de l'Orne, Flers, Gacé (afternoon), Tinchebray, Bertoncelles, Mortagne-au-Perche, Rânes
Sundays	Alençon, Argentan, Ceton, Courtomer, Mortrée

Next month: some weekly markets in the Manche (50) region

New Business : ‘*La Maison des Beaux Cadeaux*’

Opening on Sat. 9th Jan., at 8 place du Mairie in Gorrion (53), just behind the *mairie*, this is a unique boutique where you will find unusual, quality gifts made by local and neighbouring *créateurs*. Personalised, hand-made gifts to order, also beautiful stained glass. For more info contact Stephanie on 06 72 34 38 11.

Un ‘coup de chapeau’ (raising one’s hat) to the Mayennais

A ‘pat on the back’ for the people of the Mayenne *département* for their generosity. During the last weekend in November when the *Collecte de la Banque Alimentaire* had set up 70 collection points for food donations (at larger supermarkets and food outlets) 57 tonnes of food was received. Throughout France, some 12,000 tonnes was donated, and this food will be distributed to families in need.

Exhibition of sculptures and paintings

Until 11th Jan. - an exhibition of works by artist Qiang Ma at the *Centre Socio-culturel “La Trait d’Union”*, 32 rue du Montaigu, Evron (53). www.mayenne-tourisme.com

Cheese of the Month : *Sainte-Maure de Touraine*

Goats have been bred in the Touraine since the Carolingian era (8th & 9th centuries) and this AOC-protected soft goat’s cheese is produced by just a handful of local *fromageries* and matured for 10 days. It goes well with a light red local wine such as Chinon or Cabernet d’Anjou, or just a dry Touraine white.

Recognising the cattle breeds in France

Abondance: colour: female - golden brown with a white head, abdomen and parts of the leg; male - chestnut red and a bit of white on the head.

The *Abondance* is a breed originating in the high valleys of Haute-Savoie. It was bred by monks during the 1100s, and was originally called the *Chablaisienne*. There are around 150,000 head currently in France. The cattle have also been exported to North America, Britain, New Zealand, Iraq and Africa. A medium-sized animal, they are very durable - able to withstand extreme weather and temperatures. They breed easily, produce large quantities of milk, have a long life and their meat is popular.

Phoenix Auto Moto Club of Désertines – New Year Meeting

The New Year meeting of the Phoenix Auto Moto Club – vintage/classic cars and motorbikes, celebrating its 8th year - will be held on Sun. 3rd Jan at ‘the Red Lion’ in Désertines. Trophies for Best Car and Best Motorbike competition. A friendly meeting with bar/ restaurant & music. For more info contact Tony on 02 43 32 14 74.

Sport & Leisure Activities

Walking

☞ Wed. 6th: 9km walk from Château-Gontier (53) to Chambellay (49). Meet at Quai d'Alsace in Château Gontier at 13h30. 1€ non-members. (*Club Randonnée des Mil'Pat*).

☞ Tues. 26th: a walk organised by *St James Randonne* from Saint James (50) to Huisnes-sur-Mer (50). Depart at 14h from the Place du Champ de Foire in Saint James, 1,50€ for non-members. More info: www.saintjamestourisme.fr

Swimming

To help remove those added 'festive' inches, the Centre Aquatique "*l'Aquatis*" on Blvd Nelson Mandela in Fougères (35) offers 1,300m² of pools and activities, inside and out. For opening hours go to www.ot-fougeres.fr. Adults: 5,50€, ages 4-17: 3,70€

Local Tourist Offices

Here are contact details for some local Tourist Offices. It is always a good idea to visit them regularly, as they have up-to-date details of events, places of interest, opening times, etc., and can also advise on other things such as hotels, travel, etc. Many have some English speaking staff, and they will be able to advise you on other events in your area:

Gorron	(53)	www.cc-bocagemayennais.fr	02 43 08 48 30
Mayenne	(53)	www.mayenne-tourisme.com	02 43 04 19 37
Bagnoles de l'Orne	(61)	www.bagnolesdelorne.com	02 33 37 85 66
Domfront	(61)	www.ot-domfront.com	02 33 38 53 97
Mortain	(50)	www.ville-mortain.fr	02 33 59 19 74
St Hilaire du Harcouët	(50)	www.st-hilaire.fr	02 33 79 38 88
Fougères	(35)	www.ot-fougeres.fr	02 99 94 12 20

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That's all for this month. January is a quieter month while we all recover from the excesses of December! However, weather permitting, it is still good to get out and enjoy visiting the surrounding areas.

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Events by the day

January 2016

Date	Event	Place	Page
Sun. 3 rd	Phoenix Auto Moto Club meeting	Désertines	7
Wed. 6 th	Walk to Chambellay	Château Gontier	7
Fri. 8 th	Nana Mouskouri in concert	Fougères	4
Sat. 9 th	' <i>Le classique selon Zygel</i> ' concert	Granville	4
Sat. 16 th	'Yom Back to the Klezmer'	Ernée	4
Wed. 20 th	' <i>A Table!</i> ' - the art of puppetry	Landivy	4
Thurs. 21 st	'Percut'elles' percussion group	Avranches	4
Sat. 23 rd	l'Orch. d'Harmonie du Cap Lihon	Granville	4
Sun. 24 th	l'Orch. d'Harmonie du Cap Lihon	Granville	4
“	<i>Marché artisanal & foire à tout</i>	Evron	1
“	Monthly brocante	Granville	1
Mon. 25 th	English film 'Bridge of Spies'	Gorron	4
Tue. 26 th	Walk: St James to Huisnes-s/Mer	Saint James	7