

Bulletin !

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

Thought for the month:

We cannot all do great things, but we can
do small things with great love

Mother Theresa

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy 2023

Here are some *brocantes* in this area - but double-check beforehand, if possible, at www.brocabrac.fr in case of any cancellations ['35' = area; ± = number of stalls expected]:

Thursdays	Rennes (35)	Weekly <i>brocante</i> around the Halles Centrales – La Criée, ±30)
(5 th , 12 th , 19 th , 26 th)		
Sun. 8 th	Rennes (35)	‘ <i>Les puces de Rennes</i> ’ – monthly <i>brocante</i> in Mall François Mitterand, ± 30
Sun. 22 nd	Granville (50)	Monthly <i>Marché d’Antiquités/Brocante</i> in Cours Jonville, ±30
Sun. 29 th	Rennes (35)	<i>brocante retro vintage</i> , in Halle Martenot, ±70

‘*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

Traditionally, I do not recommend a restaurant in January as I feel most of us have eaten more than our fair share over the last few weeks! But I will have more recommendations in February.

Cancer Support France Nord - events

Quiz Night on Fri. 6th, starting at 20h, in the bar '*Le Viking*' in Notre-Dame du Touchet (50). Teams of 6, but if you are unable to make up a team, no problem, do go and take part. Price: 3€ per person. They look forward to seeing you.

Monthly Brunch on Weds. 11th and 25th at the Salle des Fêtes in Notre-Dame du Touchet. Doors open at 10h. Last orders 12h30.

Annual General Meeting – Cancer Support France Nord will be holding their AGM on Fri. 27th at the bar '*Le Viking*' at 10h30, coffee will be available from 10h. The AGM is open to all who would like to attend, although only members of Cancer Support France Nord are eligible to vote.

For more info please contact nord@cancersupportfrance.org

Winter sales in France

Winter Sales in France are in January (with Summer Sales in July) and they are normally on the second Wednesday of the month, so this year they will start on Wed. 11th.

The '*Bar des Sports*' in Gorron has new owners

After 18 years running the Bar des Sports at 19 Place du Général Barrabé, Gilles and Christine Menant have retired and have 'passed the baton' to Sonia and Vincent Crochet. Vincent, originally from Saint-Hilaire du Harcouët, was pleased to find this business opportunity as he has family already living in Gorron. Sonia will be working at the Bar just on weekends to start with, as she works in Saint-Hilaire during the week. They will be continuing with the *tabac*, PMU & supplying local papers but will not be doing any food at the moment. Their opening hours will be: Tues. to Thurs. 6h30–20h; Fridays 6h30–21h, Sats. 7h–21h & Suns. 8h–13h.

Le Jardin Public in Fougères (35)

Another chance to walk off the excesses of the season! Situated at the base of the château you can discover the secrets of these lovely gardens which offer a view on the medieval quarter and the château. There are actually 3 gardens - an English-style garden, a French-style garden with geometric forms, and a botanical garden - each with its own character. The gardens were formed in 1760, originally just a tree-lined walk, and were renovated in 1865 by *la Société d'Horticulture de Fougères*, with the idea of creating a natural, enjoyable space for the people of the town. You will also find picnic areas and there are often exhibitions on site.

Something you didn't know you didn't know . . .

Although the first Underground line was opened in London in 1863, it had a steam engine which made a lot of noise and smoke. Other cities, such as New York, Chicago, Budapest and Vienna, adopted the electric traction engine. However, it wasn't until 1900 that Fulgence Bienvenüe built the first Metro line in Paris. In memory of this, the station 'Montparnasse-Bienvenüe' is named after him.

Illuminations in Bagnoles de l'Orne (61)

As with many towns and villages, you can still enjoy the Christmas lights in Bagnoles de l'Orne until 8th Jan., especially at l'Eglise Sainte Madeleine, the Centre d'Animation et de Congrès, Place Meliodon and l'Eglise Sacré-Coeur.

Something for all the family – Château and town of Fougères (35)

The Chateau de Fougères dominates the medieval quarter of the town. It is an imposing medieval castle with 13 towers, built in the 12th century then reinforced in the 15th century. The castle is said to be the largest in Europe and is certainly one of the most attractive. [However, it is closed in January, but open for the rest of the year (www.chateau-fougeres.com)]. The walk along the ramparts allows you to appreciate the size and layout of the castle as well as having nice views across the town.

In the town, the medieval quarter has lots of beautiful half-timbered buildings, many dating from the 16th & 17th centuries. The rue de la Pinterie used to be the main street between the castle and the upper town. On this street is the *Jardin des Ramparts* from where you can admire the views of the château and the medieval quarter. Then, from here you can take the Ruelle de Vaux on the left to see the ramparts.

Taking photos / videos of your valuables

A reminder that we are advised to take photos of our valuables in case of theft, fire or other damage for insurance identification purposes. However, unless you can prove that the item was actually in the insured house it may not be covered in any claim you make on your insurance policy. So, while taking the individual photos it is a good idea to make a video showing the items 'in situ' to use as proof '*au cas où*' (just in case).

Defi Solidaire (Solidarity Challenge)

The town of Bagnoles de l'Orne (61) organises a rally that is open to the public – trail gathering, Nordic walking (*marche nordic*), hiking. The 8km course takes part of the circuit of the French Cyclo-Cross Championships which take place on 14th & 15th January in Bagnoles. Meet at 9am for walkers; 9h30 for runners. Galettes and hot drinks will be served on arrival. Reservations and more information are available at the *Mairie* (located in the Château, Allée Aloïs Monnet) or the Tourist Office (02 33 37 85 66). Free.

Tennis : 4th Men's International in Bagnoles de l'Orne (61)

From 22nd to 29th, organised by the Tennis Club Bagnolais, this international event takes place at the Maxime Merlin Tennis Complex on rue Plassard. More info from the Tourist Office (02 33 37 85 66; www.bagnolesdelorne.com).

Lest We Forget

Fougerolles-du-Plessis (53) nearly suffered the same fate as Oradour-sur-Glane – it was almost completely destroyed. At 6h on 28th July 1944, German vehicles approached the town and blocked all the routes out. As with Oradour-sur-Glane and in the Ukraine, it was to be a classic ‘circling’ of the village, ending the same way – women and children in the church, the men rounded up and shot in the barns, the village burned. All men between 18 and 55 were interrogated and tortured for information, and the Germans then found hidden weapons in a field so set fire to nearby farms. However, the ending was not the same – it is thought that as the Americans had gained ground south of Saint-Lo and were heading towards Avranches (‘Operation Cobra’), on the night of 27th / 28th the Germans were suddenly recalled to Mortain to help in their counter-attack, but not before shooting 4 men and leaving their bodies in the quarry. The village was spared, but they still mourn the loss of their sons and each July a service is held in memory of those 4 men.

Hiking around Bagnoles de l’Orne (61)

Whether you take the famous GR22 which leads to Mont-Saint-Michel, or the paths around Bagnoles de l’Orne, the hiking trails offer multiple circuits to explore the Normandy countryside. Excellent for maintaining your physical condition, hiking can be practised independently or with a guide.

Different loops of 10 to 12 kms for 3 hours of walking in the forest or in the Normandy *bocage*, there are beautiful routes combining nature and discovery of the heritage. From medium to difficult level, accompanied outings are aimed at good walkers. More info on these and other walks are available at the Bagnoles de l’Orne Tourist Office (www.bagnolesdelorne.com).

Outdoor fitness equipment

Again in Bagnoles de l’Orne, you can develop your endurance, work your muscles, tone your back, with the equipment installed in the *Jardins du Lac* and the square of the *piscine* (swimming pool). The 10 weight-training cardio and relaxation machines are accessible to all and are free.

Each device (including 2 accessible to people with disabilities) has a panel in 4 languages providing info & advice on posture, breathing, etc.

Cheese of the Month – Comté

Also called *Gruyère de Comté*, this is the richest and most popular cheese in France, along with Beaufort (see next month’s Bulletin). Traditionally it is produced in the Jura mountains where farmers bring their milk down to the *co-operatives*. It takes 530 litres of milk – the daily production of around 30 cows – to make one *Comté* weighing 45 kg. The surface is broad and flat with a moist, cool, grey, yellow & ochre rind. It is firm and supple, melts in the mouth and leaves a sweet taste with a nutty & caramelised flavour. The eyes (holes) of the *Comté* can be the size of a pea to a small cherry. *Comté* is a nourishing and versatile cheese – it is good cut into cubes with an aperitif, in a sandwich, a salad, with fruit, in a *croque-monsieur* or in a fondue. Recommended wines – light red: Beaujolais; white: Sancerre; sweet white: Vin de Paille.

Feeding the birds in winter

We can all help our feathered friends by providing food in winter. We may choose *un distributeur de graines* (seed dispenser) or *un support bloc/boules de graines* (block support/fat balls). A generic term for a feeder is *un nourisseur*, while a bird box is called *un nichoir*. Generic bird food is called *aliments pour oiseaux* – look out also for *un mélange de graines* (bird seed mix). Most of these products are widely available in garden centres and home improvement stores.

English films in Gorron (53) cinema

There will be 2 English (Version Original) films in January. [Please go to Allo'Cine, or others, for more details]:

Monday 9th - 'Avatar : The Way of Water' [Directed by James Cameron, with Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Sigourney Weaver]

Monday 16th - 'She Said' [Directed by Maria Schroder, with Carey Mulligan, Zoe Kazan, Patricia Clarkson]

The films start at 8pm and tickets (5,50€) are available at the cinema (beside the church) from 7.30pm on the night. As always, the '*Bar de la Mairie*' at the bottom of the hill serves pre-film refreshments, including a plate of cheese and/or meat with a glass of wine/beer, for 8€.

It might be advisable to check on www.gorron-cinemas.fr before setting off in case of any changes.

And finally,

Notice in a veterinary's waiting room: I'LL BE BACK IN 5 MINUTES. **SIT!**

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January is a quiet month, activity-wise, but in here are some ideas for getting out in the fresh air (weather permitting, of course) and maybe concentrating on fitness after the festivities! I hope you have a great January.

Judy Skinner

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