

Bulletin !

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

Thought for the month:
 Life is a great big canvas.
 Throw all the paint you can on it

Here are some *vide-greniers* (v-g) & *brocantes* in this area, but double-check beforehand, if possible, at www.brocabrac.fr in case of any last-minute cancellations.

[‘35’ = area; ± = number of stalls expected]:

Sun. 2 nd	Dinard (35)	<i>brocante</i> in Place du Marché, 8h30 to 17h. ±70
Sat. 8 th	La Ferté-Macé (61)	v-g in the Salle Guy Rossolini, Blvd André Hamonic, 8h-18h; food on site. ±70

Vide-maisons (house clearances):

W/e 1 st /2 nd	Lassay-les-Châteaux (53)	at 28 rue d’Ambrières, 9h-17h
W/e 15 th /16 th	Mantilly (61)	at 374 Le Brisson, 9h-17h

Market in Dol-de-Bretagne (35)

On each Saturday, from 8h30 to 13h, this weekly market has around 100 stalls. Look for local signs for its location (possibly along the main street).

Also in Dol-de-Bretagne:

Every Tuesday, all year, from 16h to 20h is a friendly and atmospheric organic (bio) market in Les Halles, Place Châteaubriand – under the magnificent *Halles* (covered market) which was built in 1879. The market offers you the chance to meet artisans and discover local producers and their organic products.

Eating out - LA TTABLEE

'*La Ttablee de la Charentonne*' (and no, it's the right spelling!) at 406 rue de Rennes (on the N12 near Mayenne, with a cow outside! - almost opposite the builders merchants) is a restaurant and a food shop, with the sign '*Les Eleveurs*' above the entrance. There are 2 meal options, with free coffee: a *formule*: with buffet *entrée*, *suggestion du jour* & dessert for 13,50€; or you can have the buffet *entrée* and choose your meat and/or vegetables from the shop attached and cook it yourself on the grill provided, for 8€ plus the cost of your choice of the meat and/or vegetables. A unique experience!

Soirée Carnaval in Colombières-du Plessis (53)

On Fri. 21st from 19h30 at the bar restaurant '*Ô Village*' at 3 route de Gorron: go and celebrate Carnival in costume and sequins, organised by the *Ô Village* bar restaurant. Dress up in your craziest costume and celebrate with family and friends – and take part in the election of the King and Queen of Carnival. Food available on site. Reservation recommended: 02 43 32 33 40 (some English spoken).

Bank holidays in France in 2025

It's a good year for *jours fériés* (fête days) in France, with almost all falling on weekdays, meaning that French workers will enjoy a day off work. Even better, 4 of the *jours fériés* fall on a Thursday this year, providing the opportunity to '*faire le pont*' (lit. 'make the bridge') by including the Friday and enjoying a 4-day weekend!

Meeting points at the *Refuge de l'Arche*

On Mon. 10th to Fri. 14th, 14h30 to 15h30, you can meet up at the *Refuge de l'Arche* animal sanctuary, 13 rue Félix Marchand in Château-Gontier (53) during the winter holidays, learning about different animals and birds each day. Raising awareness among visitors, young and old, about the fate of animals held in captivity is the primary objective of the *Refuge de l'Arche*. The tour will show you how these animals live, what the particularities of the species are, and the stories of the individuals. More info at www.refuge-arche.org

French postage increases

Postage prices increased in France by almost 7% from January 1st. In practice this means a standard letter will now cost €1,39 (10c more than in 2024) while an international letter will cost €2,10, up from the 2024 price of €1,96.

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

When in 2009 Nicholas Sarkozy bestowed the title of knight of the *Ordre National de la Legion d'Honneur* to 'Harry Potter' writer J K Rowling, he was rewarding the second member of her family. Her French great-grandfather received it in 1924 for his courage in the Battle of Verdun.

Guided tour of an *artisanale chocolaterie*

On Sat. 8th & Thurs. 13th, 15h to 16h15, there is a guided tour (in French) of the BIM Artisanal Chocolate Factory where you can discover their daily life through a gourmet tour. This chocolate factory transforms the fair trade and organic cocoa bean into a chocolate with unique aromatic notes. During the visit, Charline will present (with tasting) the different stages of the production – quality control of the beans, roasting, crushing, winnowing, grinding and tempering. A minimum of 6 visitors are required for this tour to happen. Tickets: 8€, children 4 to 10 yrs: 5€, under 4s free. Reserve by phone: 02 43 01 43 60 on Mon. to Fri. 14h-17h, or buy on arrival (before 14h30).

What is a ‘*ville fleuri*’ and how does a town get this label?

Created in 1959, the ‘*Villes et Villages Fleuris*’ label is designed to encourage towns and villages to dedicate more public space to vegetation. A commune can be awarded anywhere between one and four flower symbols. The first 3 are attributed by the region, while the fourth is decided by a national council. By last year, 4,626 communes have the label, while 277 have the four flowers.

The 60 or so criteria also include actions taken to preserve biodiversity, related promotion and activities aimed at residents and tourists, and other actions to improve the quality of public spaces, whether street furniture or cleanliness. Each year 2,000 judges travel the country evaluating and giving advice to participants. Towns must pay between 5€ and 1,500€ to participate, depending on their size.

Quiz Night at ‘The Vintage Bar’ in Perrou (61)

Sat. 22nd at 19h (7pm), this quiz is in English and French (each team comprises 2 French and 2 English). A welcome drink and 2-course meal is included in the price of 16€ per person. For enquiries & reservations contact Michelle Dupin (06 88 74 14 43) or Lorraine Hunt (06 02 20 58 03). Payment in advance please. Entries are limited so don’t delay.

Advance notice - Bee Festival in Gorrion (53) in May

The town of Gorrion is aiming for a third ‘*Api-cité*’ award for its dedication to bees and bee-keeping. It has already attained 2 ‘*Api-cité*’ labels – these are awarded to towns that are actively protecting bees, producing honey and promoting *api-culture* (the science of bee-keeping). In 2024, with one communal *ruche* (beehive) 25k of honey was produced, thanks also to the biodiversity around the Parc de la Colmont with its *prairie fleurie* and *eco-pâturage*. The aim is to add a second *ruche* in Spring this year.

Members of the *EPI du Bocage* are organising a *fête de l’abeille* (bee festival) in May in Gorrion and are requesting for people to save their large tins or jars of preserve (850ml or medium size) and metal bottle caps and to take them at any time from now on to the *Mairie*. These may be turned into the large bees that will decorate the town! The *Mairie* is open Mondays to Fridays 8h30 to 12h15 & 13h30 to 17h30, but is closed on Thursday mornings and at 17h on Fridays.

Entertainment & Concerts

Chorale Chantemayne in Mayenne (53)

On Sat. 2nd at 16h in the the Théâtre de Mayenne, 7 Place Juhel (beside the Château) in Mayenne town: “*40 Ans de la Chorale Chantemayne*”. The choir celebrates its 40 years under the direction of choir director Fabienne Geslot. Free.

Coup d’Choeur in Mayenne (53)

This concert is not to be missed! The 200-strong *Coup d’Choeur* vocal group will be singing on Sat. 22nd at 20h30 in the Théâtre de Mayenne, 7 Place Juhel (see the address above). They will be presenting their new show: ‘*Allo Le Monde*’, with their famous harmony and humour. Tickets 18€. For more info: www.coupdchoeur.org

Bob Marley – 80th Anniversary Concert

On Wed. 5th at 20h30 at *La Nouvelle Vague* (The New Wave), rue des Acadiens, Saint Malo (35) the *Departement Musique Actuelles du Conservatoire* invite you to celebrate with them the 80th anniversary of the birth of Bob Marley. Music, good humour, reggae - nothing better to have a good time around this sensational artist. Access for the disabled. For more info go to www.lanouvellevague.org or on facebook.

English films in Gorron (53) cinema

The next English (VO) film in Gorron cinema in February will be:

- * Monday 3rd at 20h: ‘**Nosferatu**’ – directed by Robert Eggers
with Lily-Rose Depp, Nicholas Hoult, Bill Skarggård

The film starts 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 Blvd Faverie serves pre-film refreshments, including a platter 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 last-minute changes to the film].

English films in Ernée (53) cinema

At the CinéMajestic in Ernée there are two films this month in English (with French subtitles). Tickets are €6 for adults, €4.50 for children.

- * Thurs. 6th at 20h30: ‘**The Room Next Door**’ – with Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore
- * Thurs. 20th at 20h30: ‘**Baby Girl**’ – with Nicole Kidman, Harris Dickinson

If you have any suggestions for movies you would like to see in Ernée, please feel free to email the manager Armande Léon. His email address is responsable.cinemajestic@ville-erne.fr

Sport & Leisure Activities

Pays Fertois Centre Aquatique (aquatic centre)

At rue des 5 Frères Robinet, La Ferté-Macé (61) this new generation sports and leisure pool is dedicated to sport, relaxation and leisure for the whole family. Open all year round, 7 days a week, it has a very complete aquatic area, including a sports pool for swimmers and bathers, a balneo-pool for relaxation and rest, a paddling pool and a slide. Also a sauna, hammam and jacuzzi. For open hours and tariffs: www.centreaquatiquedupaysfertois.fr

Randonnée pedestre (walk) around Pontmain (53)

On Tues. 4th at 13h30, the *Association des Randonneurs du Bocage 53* offers an accompanied 9km walk around Pontmain and its surroundings. Depart from the Place Haute de la Mairie at 13h30. 1€ is requested from non-members of the club.

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And finally:

The healthiest part of a doughnut is the hole. Unfortunately you have to eat through the rest of the doughnut to get there!

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That's all for this month. Some events are a further away than usual, but they are well worth getting in the car and venturing further afield! Have a great February.

Judy Skinner

e-mail: judithsk@free.fr