
Bulletin !

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

Thought for the month:

Don't wait for the light to appear at the end of the tunnel.
Stride down there . . . and light the bloomin' thing yourself!

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2026

There are traditionally very few *vide-greniers* (v-g) at this time of year, but they should start again next month. But you can always go to *brocabrac.fr* in case there are any last-minute events planned around your area.

'*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 *un santon* (figurine) – and the person who gets the slice with the *le santon* is declared 'king' and so crowned.

Le Jardin Public in Fougères (35)

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.

Eating out - *La Maison du Couscous*

If you fancy a change from turkey (!) the '*Maison de Couscous*' at 6 rue du Bassin in Saint-Hilaire-du-Harcouët (50, near the market place) has a very good menu, attentive staff (some speaking English!) with a friendly atmosphere. They specialise in Moroccan and Mediterranean food, with couscous, grilled meat and tajines. Take-away is available. Open daily, except on Mondays. Tel: 02 33 91 96 54 or 06 80 71 13 65.

A magical spectacle in Laval (53)

Until 4th January, from 19h until midnight on Place du 11 Novembre in Laval (53), you can be amazed by this wondrous show with 1,000 lights! Enormous lanterns come to life – fantastic animals, vibrant flowers, luminous butterflies and magical mushrooms animate the space, like an enchanted garden. These luminous creations invite young and not-so-young to wander through a fantastic world. A new and magical event. Free.

Lions Club de Domfront have planted 50,000 tulip bulbs

Last November, 12 members of the Lions Club de Domfront and volunteers planted 50,000 tulip bulbs in fields in Saint-Mars d'Egrenne. The flowers will be picked at the beginning of April and they will be on sale from 5th to 25th April at the entrance to supermarkets and other large businesses. This event has been organised since 2015 and the proceeds will go to cancer centres (*Centre Anticancereux François-Baclesse* and associations *Enfant Cancer Santé* and *Cadet Roussel*).

Diner croisière (Dinner Cruise) : Harmonie de Laval (53)

Sat. 3rd, 20h–22h30 - on this harmonious dinner cruise you can see the illuminations from a privileged view on the Mayenne river. Share an exceptional moment during this riverboat trip. The pianist's musical accompaniment will perfectly complement the chef's festive menu - a unique interlude. Depart from Quai André Pinçon, 84 avenue Robert Buron in Laval (in front of Cinéville.). Tickets are 72€, under 12s: 36€ (children's menu on request), with a 5-course meal including a glass of sparkling wine, water, wine with the meal & coffee. (Sailing is subject to a minimum of 25 people and favourable weather conditions). Tickets are available from Laval Tourisme (02 43 49 45 26)

Or:

Sat. 3rd & Sun. 4th, 16h to 18h - a river cruise to see the illuminations in Laval aboard the 'Vallis Guidonic' and enjoy the captain's commentary (in French and possibly English) of the view from the river. Tickets: 11€, under 8s free. (Subject to weather conditions, as above). Tickets available as above.

Quiz Night in Perrou (61)

On Sat. 17th will be the **French and English Quiz** with your hosts Lorraine, Mike and Michelle. 18€ - which includes a 2-course dinner. Starts at 19h. For more details: 07 44 70 53 89; vintagebarperrou@outlook.com; facebook: vintage'barperrou.

Art'Bo - amateur artists' exhibition.

On Weds. & Sats., 10h to 12h30, during January & February at Place de la Mairie in Gorron (53) there are paintings, sculptures, cardboard art, pastels, quilling, etc. Whether you are simply curious, an art enthusiast or just browsing, do go in and be amazed.

Something you didn't know you didn't know !

On the 8th May 2025 the new Pope was elected from 133 cardinals. Monseigneur Robert Francis, who has taken the name of Léon XIV, is the 267th Pope since Saint Pierre. In 1271, it took 1,006 days to elect Grégoire X (and the citizens reduced their bread, water and roofing to try and speed up the process!) and the fastest was in 1506 to elect Jules II (10 hours). The most used name is Jean (23 Popes with that name) followed by Grégoire (16) then Benoit and Clément, (both 14). The least used name is Jean-Paul (2) and François (1).

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 yours, or 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*', and even wearing your jewellery, to use as proof '*au cas où*' (just in case).

Circus family in the Parc de la Colmont, Gorron (53)

For the past 29 years, the circus troupe Venissia, owned by the Dumas family, have overwintered in Gorron. It is a family business with a dozen people working there, including 7 circus artists with juggling, rope gymnastics & trapeze, and there are a few domestic animals (performing dogs, miniature horses). Their main aim is to make people laugh. Each year the family invite children and adults to join their initiation classes for circus acts, puppet theatre and applying children's facial make-up. They spend the winter months practising new acts, and in the past have put on a couple of shows in the huge red and yellow circular tent which can hold 300 people. They pack up and leave on the 31st January – and leave the space so tidy and clean you would never know they had been!

Entertainment & Concerts

Jazz concert

Fri. 23rd at 20h30 in the Théâtre de Mayenne, Place Juhel (near the château), the Rotary Club de Mayenne organises an evening of jazz, with proceeds to PolioPlus for the fight against polio. Tickets: 15€, (children free) available at helloasso.com

Fri. 23rd at 20h30 in the Salle Polyvalente in Javron-les-Chapelles (61): '**Marsh Mallow**': 4 musicians and singer with a journey through time - from the golden age of blues and jazz in the style of Billie Holiday and Nat King Cole. Tickets 10€, children 6€, available from the Mayenne Tourist Office (02 43 0419 37).

Concerts - 'My Virtuoso Region'

This is a classical music festival organised by the Pays de la Loire Région. Tickets range from 2€ to 12€ and many are free.

On Sat. 17th, 19h to 19h45 at 20 bis rue Principale in Contest (53): doors open at 18h30. Free. There are places for people with reduced mobility, or on reservation. More info at eventbrite.fr

Sun. 18th, 10h30 to 11h at Place du Château in Ambrières-les-Vallées (53). Free.

Tues. 20th, 19h to 19h45 at rue du Verger, Sainte-Suzanne (53). Free.

Weekly markets in the *Mayenne département* (53)

Day of the week	Location
Mondays	Craon, Mayenne, Villaines-la-Juhel
Tuesdays	Ernée, Laval (centre), Montsûrs
Wednesdays	Cossé-le-Vivien, Gorron, Lassay-les-Châteaux
Thursdays	Andouillé, Château-Gontier, Evron
Fridays	Fougerolles-du-Plessis, Javron-les-Chapelles, Meslay-du-Maine
Saturdays	Ambrières-les-Vallées, Mayenne
Sundays	Bazouges, Bourgneuf-la-Forêt, Laval (St Nicholas)

It is wise to double check before going, as these can change without notice. Next month: the weekly markets in the Orne (61) département

Sport & Leisure Activities

Randonnées de Villaines-la-Juhel (61)

On Sun. 11th this 9km walk departs at 13h30 for a walk around the village and nearby countryside. Meet at the Mairie car park by 13h30. (Sorry, no dogs are allowed on this walk).

Randonneurs du dimanche (Sunday walkers)

Sun. 18th - departure from Place de l'Eglise in Montaudin (53) at 13h30 for a 9km walk through Montaudin and it's surroundings. At the finish, *Galettes des Roi* will be available (on prior reservation). 3€ will be requested from non-members of *Randonneurs du Bocage53*.

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And finally:

.You never appreciate what you have until it's gone. Toilet paper is a good example!

And not only but also:

The oldest computer was owned by Adam and Eve. It was an Apple, with very limited memory, just one byte and everything crashed.

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That's all for this month. Have a great one.

Judy Skinner

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