

LE THIRTY-FOUR

No 1
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Events, information, contacts and services - everything you need for life in the Hérault - in English!
Votre accès à la communauté étrangère - en Anglais !
6000 copies distributed this month



Your Guide to Summer Living in the Hérault



Welcome to Le Thirty-Four!

Summer is here and we have prepared Le Thirty-Four to bring you the best of the huge amount of things that you can do in this wonderful department. Whether it rains or the sun shines you will find plenty to do in this our very first issue.

Le Thirty-Four includes local events, town by town features, a house and garden section, property market features, lifestyle and integration issues, local contacts, services, directories, and all the information the newcomer and foreign resident might need for life in France.

In the Living in the Hérault section, check out why you should visit some of the major towns of the Languedoc-Roussillon region and what we think are the best things about each of them. If you are a homeowner have a look at our House and Garden section to find out what Gill Pound suggests you should be doing in the garden this month and let Nigel Howard from www.mysolarshop.co.uk show you how to build your own DIY solar panel water heater.

You can also make a contribution to our discussion board by signing up on our website at www.lethirtyfour.com. We have put the discussion board in place to enable you to contribute your views, ideas and needs, so please feel free to use it. If you visit a restaurant or activity, why not tell us about it on the Discussion Board at www.lethirtyfour.com – there is nothing better, after all, than a personal recommendation.

If you want to get in touch with us hit the Contact Us link on our website, call us on 0468 95 89 07 or write to us at the address below. Above all enjoy the issue, we hope it gives you some good ideas to fill these long summer days come rain or shine.

Alison Tully
EDITOR

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Meet the team

who are we?

We are a small but dedicated team here at Le Thirty-Four. Dedicated that is to producing a monthly magazine for the ever-growing number of English speaking people that live in the Hérault, containing all the information they need to make the most of life in France.

To help us, we have teamed up with The Languedoc Page (www.the-languedoc-page.com). Founded in 2002, it is the most visited English language website covering Languedoc and we believe its established local knowledge and insights will make Le Thirty-Four a 'must read' for Anglophones in the Hérault.

This is your opportunity to learn a little about us but we would also like to know more about you. What do you like (or dislike) about living in the Hérault? What information would you find useful in the magazine? We are keen to hear from you and your letters about life in the region and ideas for future articles are always welcome. You can write to us at the address on the opposite page or email us at office@lemag-group.com.

Le Thirty-Four is produced by the Le Mag Group – the largest publisher in the English language in Languedoc Roussillon. In addition to Le Thirty-Four, we also currently produce Le Eleven for readers in the Aude, Le Sixty-Six for readers in the Pyrénées Orientales and Le Forty-Six for readers in the Lot.

Le Thirty-Four team members

Dominic Manley, Publisher

Dominic is English and has lived in Languedoc Roussillon for 5 years. He speaks French and describes himself as being enthusiastic about mountain hiking, fishing, biking, swimming and gardening.



Alison Tully, Editor

Alison moved from the UK to this part of France fairly recently and is trying to improve her French. She enjoys reading, gardening, cooking and walking. Since moving here she has also taken up music again and has joined two local Anglo-French choirs as a way of meeting people. This has proved to be a real challenge as they regularly sing in Catalan, Spanish, Italian and Latin as well as English and French!



Vicky Norbury, Advertising Sales Manager

Vicky is English and came to France 6 years ago with her husband and two children, then aged one and six, not speaking one word of French. They have integrated and adapted to the true French way of life and today both her children who are now seven & 13 are bilingual. Vicky says she is too, but as they say in French avec 'les mignonnes errors'. Vicky enjoys going horse riding at the weekends, having previously owned her own horse.



Julien Aranda, Advertising Sales

Julien is French with Catalan origins and has always lived in the Pyrénées Orientales, which he loves. He is also passionate about travelling, especially to South America and in addition to his native French, speaks English, German, Spanish and a little Catalan. He is very active and enjoys climbing, diving, VTT (mountain biking), paragliding and hiking and he also plays the piano and the guitar. Being just 24 years old, he also likes to party with his friends!



Angelique Moutaillier, Advertising Sales

Angelique is French but also speaks a little English. She came originally from the Paris area and moved to the Pyrénées Orientales 10 years ago. She has two children, Mathias who is 11 and Marie who is three and spends most of her spare time looking after them. Angelique and her husband decided to move here to give their children a better quality of life in a more pleasant environment with the sea and the mountains.





'Allégories' statues by Allan McCollum outside the Corum

The best of... Montpellier

by Helen Bevis

Montpellier never fails to inspire me. Whether it's the incredible festival scene – theatre, wine, dance, literature, beach volleyball, you name it – or just the buzz of weaving in and out of its architectural gems it is one of those cities that truly has something for everyone. Montpellier is a city for people who enjoy life, culture and living.

The obvious place to start in Montpellier is the main square of La Place de la Comedie. It can be elegant, brash, overwhelming and breathtaking, all within the space of a few hours. I love the way it catches the light, mingling golden limestone, city-grey shutters and the azure sky. Soaring classical architecture adds to this sensorial immersion in French city life. Yet I also love leaving it behind me and heading off into those enticing back streets of Montpellier's old town, or l'Ecusson as it's known. Immediately the pace changes, the madding crowds are behind you and Montpellier is at your feet, waiting to become an intimate friend.

Highlights:

❖ **The Musée Fabre:** recently refurbished and now achingly beautiful. The building is like a jewelled labyrinth, with highlights including Soulages' testimony to black, in a purpose-built space, which just radiates serenity.



❖ **Place de la Canourgue:** the original 'place de la comedie' of Montpellier. Not only is this a fabulous spot, but the cafes are buzzing, the shops full of rich pickings and you're a short hop from the curious St Peter's cathedral with its astounding stone canopy. If your feet are itching to explore further then march them up the chic Rue Foch through Montpellier's 'Arc de Triomphe' towards the Place du Peyrou, with its breathtaking view north towards the emblematic St Loup.



❖ **Wine bars:** check out one of the many that have recently opened in Montpellier. They are just the spot for sampling some of the luscious Languedoc wines, as well as mingling with Montpellier's in-crowd. Why not try L'Atelier on rue Rebuffy or Le Times on rue Teissiers.

❖ **Eating:** If you're hungry after all this splendour, Les Bains on rue Richelieu well deserves its reputation as a classy place to dine. Elsewhere, Le Oignon Givré at the bottom of Rue de l'Université is worth the trek for a younger crowd and well priced lunch menu. Meanwhile, follow your nose; Montpellier has no shortage of gorgeous restaurants for al fresco dining.

❖ **Small squares, hidden cafés and elegant charm.** Need I say more? For modern architecture head to the Antigone quartier for a post-modernist feast.

❖ **Check out the painted bollards in the Saint Roch quartier!** This was already a great place, chock full of excellent bars and restaurants, but local artists decided this wasn't enough. So to cheer things up even more, they painted all those little annoying bollards on the road. Flora and fauna rule the day, with a hairdresser even donating enough hair to create a hirsute little chap.

❖ **Trick of the light, or real?** Look out for the immense trompe l'oeil showing scenes from daily life that are appearing around the city, breathing life into previously blank walls. My favourite is the real/unreal café opposite Saint Roch church. Its audacious trickery is stunning.



Montpellier trivia...

The silver 'Allégories' statues by Allan McCollum outside the Corum were originally in bright primary colours until a few years ago when someone covered them in silver paint. They have remained so ever since, arguably looking much better than they did in the first place. Local gossips say that everyone prefers them like this, so no one is in a hurry to clean them up!

Helen Bevis lives in a village just outside Montpellier and has been in France for over 7 years. In the UK she was a curator of Decorative Art and now writes about ceramics and French life.

MUSIC, DANCE, ENTERTAINMENT

Montpellier Dance Festival 2008, 22 June–5 July 2008, Montpellier

Now in its 28th season, Montpellier Dance is the ultimate gathering for all dance styles from all cultures with shows full of surprises. For more information call toll-free on 0800 600740 or visit www.montpellierdanse.com

Radio France and Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon Festival 2008, 14–31 July 2008

This, the 24th year of the Festival will see an exceptional and prestigious program including Symphonic and Lyric music, chamber music, jazz concert, music of-the-moment, operas and exhibitions. For more information, call 0467 020201 or visit www.festivalradiofrancemontpellier.com

Garden Time in Languedoc-Roussillon, 1 May to 31 October 2008

Garden Time in Languedoc-Roussillon is a joint effort by owners and associations to help visitors discover the region's parks and gardens. More than 70 gardens are open to visit and there will be more than 350 events on the programme in this 2008 season (nature talks, discovery workshops, shows, exhibitions, guided tours, theatre, dance, concerts, plant sales etc). For information on the open gardens and events, visit the Friends of Languedoc-Roussillon parks and gardens website at: www.jardinslanguedoc.com

Fireworks at Cap d'Agde, 10–14 July at 11pm

Cap d'Agde stages five nights of spectacular firework action to rival any in the world - the annual Soirées Pyrotechniques. Villagers and tourists alike gather together to marvel at the displays

Tour de France 2008, 5–27 July 2008, Narbonne to Nîmes stage Friday 18 July

The best cyclists compete each year in the world's most famous cycle race. The 95th race sets out from Brest in Brittany and covers 21 stages and 3500km of rural, mountainous and coastal terrain, before the final sprint to the finish line down Paris' Champs-Élysées. The 13th stage starts in Narbonne and finishes in Nîmes on Friday 18 July. For more information, visit the official Tour de France website at www.letour.fr

Béziers

Festa d'oc, July

Occitania, the Land of the Troubadours, in festive mood, shows its vitality, its modernity, it's openness to other cultures. A meeting place for Mediterranean voices and influences, crossed with Latin rhythms. Occitan Béziers plays host to the world.

A night of secrets, July & August

Just follow the crowd as this night time spectacle wanders through the streets and feel legend and reality merge together as if by magic. Laugh and be moved by the enthusiasm and colour of this Béziers, proud and resistant, human and endearing. For more information visit the Béziers Tourist Information Office.

Sète

Le grand pardon de la Saint Pierre - St Pierre's Feast, From 4 to 7 July 2008

Saint Pierre's atonement day, also known as the Fisherman's Feast, is very popular in Sète. Friday evening, a statue of Saint Pierre, the fishermen's patron saint, is put into a rowboat which is carried on the fishermen's shoulders, from the 'Pénitents' chapel to the 'Décanale Saint Louis' (church).



what's on...

This night procession is followed by the fishermen's children in traditional costume. Sunday, a procession of decorated trawlers takes the statue of St Pierre out of the port into the open sea to honour those who disappeared at sea. All week-end, there is a fair and traditional jousts on the canals, in the district of 'La Marine' and around the old port. For more information, call 0467 747171.

Festival Jazz à Sète – Jazz Festival, from 8 to 13 July 2008

This festival, initiated by Louis Martinez (musician) and his team, has over the years become a major event for jazz amateurs in the South of France. For further information visit www.jazzasete.com

Les Estivales, Montpellier, July-August 2008

Every Friday from 6pm to midnight on the Esplanade. Local wines, tasting, books, meetings etc.

Le FERIA de la Pétanque, Esplanade, Nîmes, 23–26 July 2008

Nothing is more evocative of the south of France than the sight of men playing pétanque in the village. Nîmes celebrates this relaxed game with a five-day festival, which is an international event with teams from across the pétanque-playing world coming together for a knockout championship.

There are also competitions for bowlers whose standard of play is less than international as well as free performances and entertainment from 10pm every night.

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first 3 correct solutions to the crossword and word puzzle each win a pair of tickets

MARKETS

Bassan market (every Tuesday and Friday)

Morning market held on the Promenade.

Beaulieu market (every Wednesday and Saturday)

General market held in the mornings in the village.

Bessan market (every Tuesday)

General market held in the morning in place de la Mairie.

Béziers

Flower Market (every Friday)

All day Flower Market at les Allées Paul Riquet.

Marché du Champ de Mars (Place du 14 juillet)

Friday from 7am to 1pm (all produce)

Marché Place David d'Angers

Friday from 7am to 1pm (food)

Marché de la Devèze

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, from 7am to 1pm (all produce)

Marché au Bois (Place du 11 Novembre)

Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, from 7am to 1pm

Marché Emile Zola (place Emile Zola)

Tuesday from 7am to 1pm (food)

Marché de l'Iranget (Place de l'Iranget)

Wednesday from 7am to 1pm

Marché du Pourtour, Les Halles

Tuesday, Sunday from 7am to 1pm

Marché de la Place de La Madeleine

Sunday from 7am to 1pm (local produce)

Marché de la Place de la Madeleine

Saturday from 7am to 1pm (car-boot sale)

Secondhand Market (Allées Paul Riquet)

Every 1st Sunday of the month

Castelnaud le Lez market (Every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday)

General market in the morning in Place Joseph Doumergue.

Creissan (every Tuesday)

General market in the morning in the village.

Ganges (every Friday)

Regional produce market in the morning in front of the church.

Lunel (Every Saturday)

Flea market held in the morning on avenue Abrivados.

Marseillan (Every Tuesday)

General market in Marseillan on Tuesdays.

Montagnac (every Friday)

Montpellier

The main markets: (food, clothing, accessories and flowers)

Marché des Arceaux: Boulevard des Arceaux. Tuesday to Saturday from 7am to 1pm.

Historic centre: Place de la Comédie. Monday to Thursday from 7am to 1pm. Friday and Saturday from 7am to 7pm.

Paillade: Avenue Heidelberg. Daily from 7am to 1pm.

Quartier Figuerolles: Place Roger Salengro. Daily from 7am to 1pm.

Cinema:

In Cinemas from 2 July, look out for The Chronicles of Narnia – Chapter 2; The Caspian Prince

The best of... Carcassonne

by Frank Dillon

Frank Dillon and his wife Lorraine, travelled to Carcassonne on a mission – to find a holiday home from home with guaranteed sun but as they discovered, Carcassonne has much more to offer.

Like millions of others, our first views of the fortress that is La Cité took our breath away. But Carcassonne we came to realise, is about so much more than just a fairytale castle.

I'm a city boy at heart and I like to be where the buzz is. We found an apartment in Carcassonne just around the corner from Place Carnot in the centre of the Bastide, a chequer board of narrow streets built in the 13th century. It has everything we want – a central location but not noisy, and oozing with character.

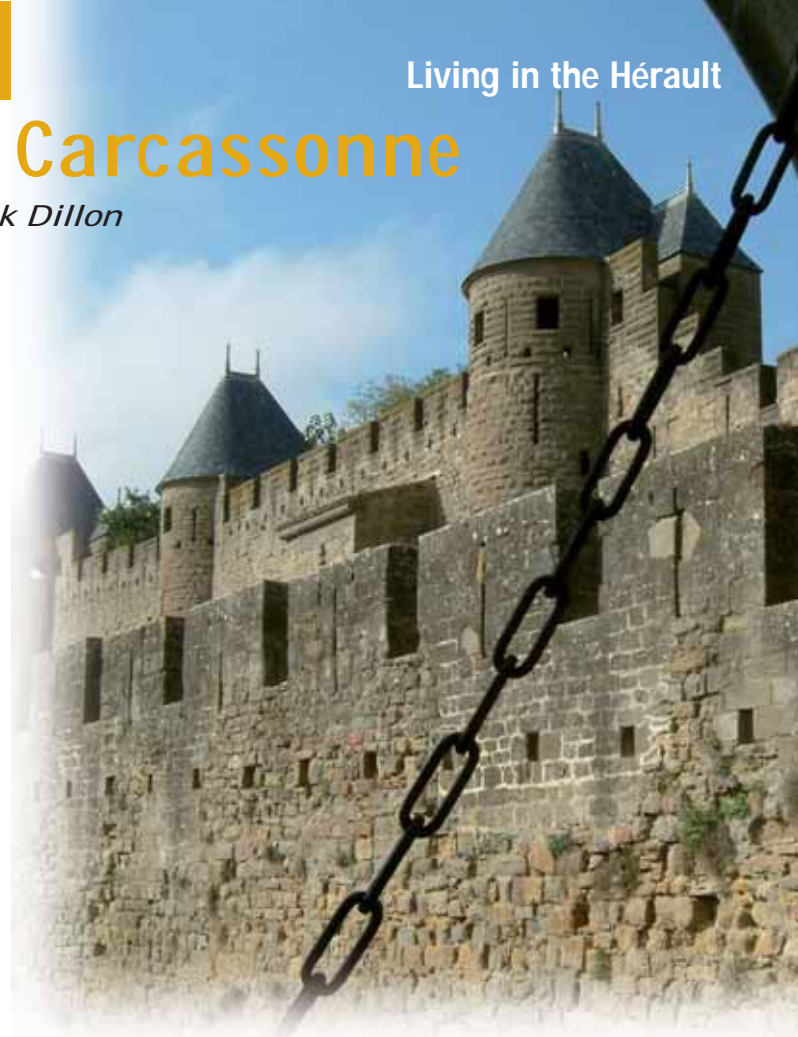
Highlights:

❖ **The market:** On a Saturday morning, Place Carnot is a sea of colour when local farmers and artisan food producers take over the square for a huge outdoor market. Brass bands play and there is a carnival atmosphere in the sunshine. You can buy all manner of locally produced fruit and vegetables but so much more as well including breads, pastry, fish, cheeses and charcuterie.

On our first visit, we struck up a conversation – en Anglais - with a very nice lady who was selling wine at a stall. It was fun and a novel experience for us to sample proper wine chatting to the person who made it. She poured us liberal free glasses of a selection of her tipples and inquired if we were hungry. Then she plugged in a microwave and served us free hot crêpes. We simply couldn't walk away from her without buying a bottle. Maybe it was the alcohol but we left the square with a warm glow that morning!



❖ **The café bars:** We've come to know and really like "La Cité Des Aromes", a café bar on the corner of the square run by Matthieu and his wife Isabelle. Another bar we like is "Le Saillan" on Rue de Verdun near the indoor market, Les Halles. There's a real buzz here on a Saturday lunchtime when the locals chill out. We've come to realise that the Bastide or old town is full of life and character and a few characters too! I came across one guidebook that said that apart from La Cité, there was nothing much else to see or do in Carcassonne. I beg to disagree!



❖ **Canal du Midi:** A five minute stroll from our apartment and we're on the banks of the Canal du Midi, a magnificent feat of engineering from the 17th century linking The Atlantic to the Mediterranean. You can take a pleasure trip on the water or cycle or walk its tow-paths shaded with plane trees.

❖ **The beach!** Many of our friends ask us if Carcassonne has a beach and of course it has, though not by the sea! 'Lac de la Cavayère' is just a short bus ride from the town and fulfils the need of locals and tourists to cool down in the summer months. It even has its own lifeguards!

❖ **La Cité:** I've barely mentioned La Cité, the largest walled city in Europe and the magnet that draws most visitors to Carcassonne. It gets crowded in summer when tourists flock here in their millions but it has a rich history with its origins in pre-Christian times. It looks like a giant movie set and has featured as a backdrop to many action adventure feature films.

If we ever get bored of Carcassonne, the train station beside the canal can take us just about anywhere we want to go – Paris, Montpellier or even Barcelona ultimately – or we can hire a car and get to the Mediterranean coast or the Pyrennes in around an hour. Somehow, I don't think we will get bored, however. We're only starting our adventure in Carcassonne but we're already well and truly smitten!



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MARKETS

Montpellier Theme markets:

Second hand book fair: Esplanade Charles de Gaulle, 4th Saturday of every month

Flower market: Esplanade Charles de Gaulle, Monday to Saturday from 7am to 7pm

Flea market and bric a brac: Espace Mosson, Sunday from 6am to 1pm

Farmers market: Avenue Samuel Champlain, Sunday from 8am to 1pm

Montpeyroux (every Thursday)

General market in the morning in Les Halles.

Pézenas (every Saturday) – Organic Farmers' Market on the Place Gambetta 08:00-13:00 with local farmers.

Palavas les Flots (every Saturday)

Flower and flea market in the morning in the Arènes car park.

Paulhan (every Sunday)

Small flea market in the Place de la Gare in the morning.

Saint Christol (every Friday)

Food market held in the morning in the Place des Chevaliers de Malte.

Sète

Flea Market (every Sunday) In Place de la République during the morning.

Organic and local market (every Thursday)

At Plan de la corniche and rue de Provence.

Marche regional (every day)

Every morning at the Halles Centrales, rue Gambetta 06:00-14:00. Local products, fish, shells, flowers.

Produits régionaux (every Monday) Local products market in the morning at place Marius Bonneton, Ile de Thau.

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“Perpignan has been French for only three Centuries”. This is what I say to foreigners when I welcome them to ALFMED! Why such an introduction? It is simply to explain how one can have this curious impression of the region made up of accents of a southern French City mixed with a Catalan history.

Situated on the doorstep of Barcelona – its Catalan cousin – and protected by the Pyrénées mountain chain in the South and the Cathar castles in the North, the region has managed to keep its traditions and landscapes. Perpignan – founded by the Romans and once the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Majorca – enchants its visitors with its palm tree lined squares, its sunny terraces and narrow streets, and its very special untarnished Mediterranean charm.

Highlights:

Let's talk about gastronomy, history and bubbles!!

❖ **The best authentic local cuisine** (and a secret gem):

Take the road through the Cathar territory and explore the Maury region. Nestled in the Fenouillèdes, discover the magnificent Chateau de Jau, a winery restaurant surrounded by cliffs and vineyards. Sit on the terrace shaded by a centenary mulberry tree and enjoy the same unique menu that has been served here for nearly 10 years! The traditional meals are served with a range of wines from the Chateau.

❖ **Best souvenirs:** Maison Quinta. Founded 30 years ago and located in an old mansion in the historic centre of Perpignan, this is THE place to find an individual and very 'chic' souvenir.

❖ **Best view:** Collioure, not surprising, eh? But you can see Collioure from two other angles apart from the typical tourist view. You can follow the Painters frames of MA2F that show you the view through golden frames over 12 locations and appreciate some famous painters' reproduction of them... and take the time to learn about Fauvism! Collioure can also be discovered from a larger perspective. Climb up the olive hill of the Pams Museum and you'll be fascinated by the bay and its inspiring light.

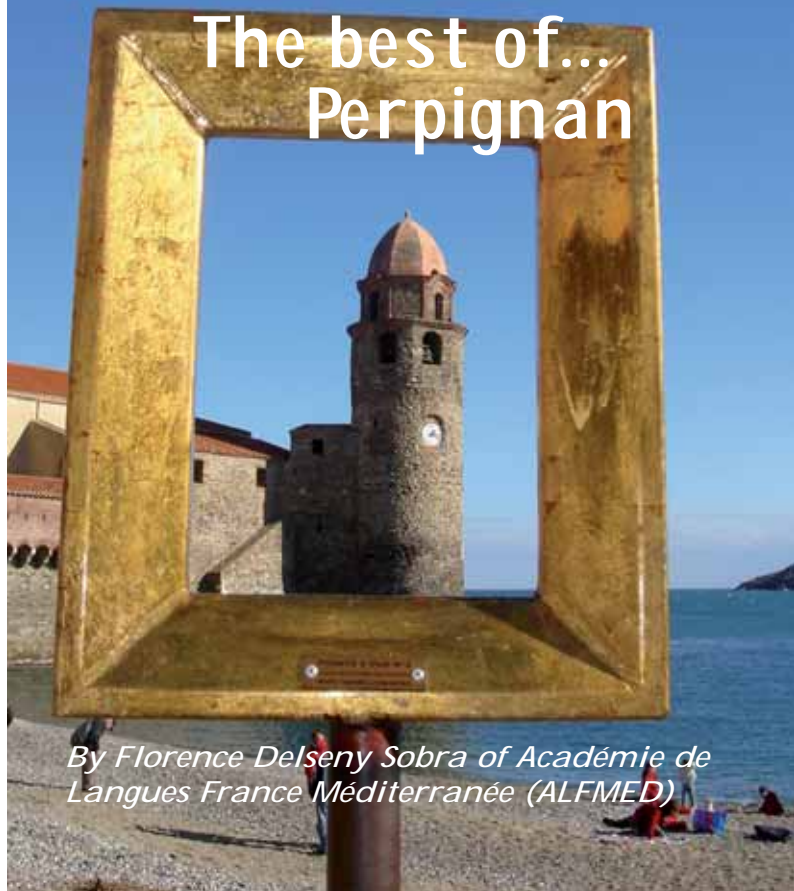
❖ **Best architecture:** Perpignan's historic centre has to be explored. Walk past the Cathedral and the reborn Campo Santo and go down the street "Rue de la Revolution Française". You'll be charmed by the paved square adorned by a Salamander fountain.

❖ **Best night out:** 'Le bar à bulles' (bubbles bar) in Canet-Plage, a very hip spot where people meet at night and have a glass of the bubbly Nayandeï!

And finally, if you are still searching for a hidden beach restaurant, ZAZA club is the best place. Tucked away on one of the wild beaches of Torreilles, the place is magic at night – facing the sea, with very good Catalan tapas and wines, wood decks and a French DJ. It is THE place to meet French people and sail through the night. And if you sleep on the beach don't be surprised in the morning – it is a naturist beach! But only during the daytime!

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The best of... Perpignan



By Florence Delseny Sobra of Académie de Langues France Méditerranée (ALFMED)

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In the garden – July



First of all – a big big thank you to everyone who came to our second open weekend (Portes Ouvertes) in mid June. It was great to see and talk to so many people, and, a big thank you from the Association pour le Developpement de Soins Palliatifs dans l'Aude who were happy with the funds raised by the raffle.

For those who dare to risk to plant now we are still offering 20% discount on a range of plants, but, in any event – do come and visit the garden here during the summer months and observe what is in flower.

The summer months are much less busy in the garden – time to relax and enjoy it!



During July think about the following:

- ✿ Continue to keep an eye out for damage by slugs, snails, insects etc and take appropriate action
- ✿ Continue deadheading perennials after flowering to encourage a second flowering spell
- ✿ Vigorous climbers such as wisteria and trumpet vines may need some pruning from time to time over the summer
- ✿ Clip back aromatics such as santolina and lavender after flowering
- ✿ Keep an eye on the watering requirements of your garden, recently planted items (especially if they were planted this spring) particularly need looking after even if they are drought resistant once established.

The summer can be a time when there is not so much colour in the garden, especially as one tends to buy plants in the spring and to buy plants that are in flower. One lovely, drought resistant plant that is in full flower at the moment is *Nepeta tuberosa*, lovely furry foliage is followed by these spikes of purple flowers; it is herbaceous ie it disappears totally in winter but comes up again the following spring.

With Hidden Gardens, Hidden France we are offering a three day garden tour on the edge of the Cevennes from the 1st to the 3rd September; the programme includes a number of gardens which bear the Jardin Remarquable label awarded by the French Ministry of Culture, including the famous Bambouseraie de Prafrance. Details from info@hiddengardensfrance.com

For further information contact Gill Pound at La Petite Pépinière de Caunes (shrubs and perennials, ornamental grasses, unusual plants and plants for dry climates), 21, Avenue de la Montagne Noire, 11160, Caunes-Minervois. Tel: 04 68 78 43 81.

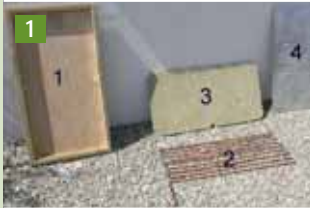







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DIY Solar Panel Project - For Water Heating

 <p>1</p>	<p>The picture on the left shows 4 of the main components that make up the panel with the exception of a sheet of glass/Perspex.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Wooden tray 1000 x 500 x 65mm 2) Snake of 12mm copper pipe 3) Slab of Rockwool insulation 4) 2mm thick aluminium plate
 <p>2</p>	<p>Paint the wooden tray thoroughly with wood preservative to protect it from insects and the weather. Each corner of the wooden tray has a small 20mm thick triangle of wood. The triangles support the aluminium absorber plate and create a space behind it for the insulation and tinfoil (see below)</p>
 <p>3</p>	<p>To reduce the amount of heat that escapes from the back of the panel, fit a Rockwool slab snugly into the tray then cover it with kitchen foil. Place the aluminium absorber plate on top of the tinfoil so it rests on the corner supports. Secure it with screws at each corner through oversized holes that allow for heat expansion.</p>
 <p>4</p>	<p>Make the copper pipe snake by soldering cut lengths of pipe and corners together. If soldering isn't your strong subject then fabricate it from 'bendy' copper pipe. Make sure you don't kink it by forming the corners around a clay pot or tin can. Try and get about 4.5 loops that run the entire length.</p>
 <p>5</p>	<p>Pass the ends of the snake through two predrilled holes in the wooden tray; one hole at the bottom for the input and another at the top for the output (hence the 4.5 loops) Secure it to the aluminium plate using the halves of pipe clips (see picture insert) and self tapping screws.</p>
 <p>6</p>	<p>Use plenty of clips so the snake is pressed firmly against the aluminium absorber plate. It's very important to get as much contact between the pipe and plate as possible so there's maximum conduction of heat. Fit a thin strip of wood around the inside edge of the tray to support a glass/Perspex sheet.</p>
 <p>7</p>	<p>Paint the pipe and the aluminium absorber plate with matt black metal grade paint. Don't use too much paint or you'll insulate the pipes and plate and with it! Finish it off by fitting a sheet of glass/Perspex with silicon. Attach a hosepipe to the bottom input pipe then regulate the flow of water to achieve a reasonable temperature rise.</p>
 <p>8</p>	<p>Please be very very careful as any water left standing in a panel can boil after just a few minutes sunshine. Build it at your own risk! If you'd like some help or more information send me an email nigel@mysolarshop.co.uk Lots more photographs at: www.mysolarshop.co.uk/diypanel. Contributed by Nigel Howard. Tel: 0468 559336</p>



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The rise and rise of Languedoc Roussillon



The stunning region of Languedoc Roussillon runs along the Mediterranean coast and nestles between the Rhone Valley and Pyrénées Mountains. The region is set for dynamic economic growth and its continued popularity, among the French and foreigners alike, bodes well for future investment.

It remains popular, not only for being the sunniest area in France with 300 days of sunshine each year and its Mediterranean climate of mild winters and dry summers, but for its beauty and diverse environs. From breathtaking mountain scenery to long white sandy beaches and the gently undulating countryside in between called le Garrigue that gives the region its distinctive smell of wild herbs and flowers; the region offers every possible leisure activity. It is one of the few areas of Southern France that has retained its character, remaining unspoilt, uncrowded and steeped in history. It is also the largest vine growing area in the world where more than 40% of France's wine is produced.

Since 1999 Languedoc Roussillon is the only region to have registered a growth in its population of more than 11%. With this record, it is the region that is the most dynamic in the country and offers important potential for the creation of employment and commerce. There is a projected rise of inhabitants from 2.5 million in 2005 to 3.4 million in 2030.

Due to an ageing, increasingly-divorced population, the French housing market will have a long-term trend towards more households. France has not been hit by the credit crunch in the same way as the UK and USA due to its very strict requirements over lending money. This, together with the changes to the tax regime made by Sarkozy as part of his bid to ensure higher levels of ownership, ensures the property market continues to perform well.

When buying a property abroad, whether for a holiday or permanent home, airports and accessibility are important when deciding location and this is where this region excels. With direct flights from the UK to 8 airports in the region, fantastic motorways and excellent rail and TGV links, the Languedoc Roussillon is easily accessible and is opening up to tourism. This has promoted a rapid growth of employment, primarily in the service sector and construction industry. The British continue to remain the largest buyers of French property, accounting for around 60% of all foreign buyers.

The need to find those hidden gems that secure increases above the average is why the south-west still remains a firm favourite. Prices have remained stable and still rising in some areas, such as Montpellier.

The housing market is experiencing a significant slowdown but financial forecasts indicate that prices will level out, rising in line with inflation, but in areas where economic activity is strong there is every reason to believe there will be above average price rises. The overall strength of the French housing market perhaps contradicts with the country's relatively sluggish GDP growth of 1.9%, but in Languedoc Roussillon the GDP is over 5%. Having had its price explosion back in 2002/2003, the region is still one of the most interesting areas to buy, remaining cheaper than other southern regions but with projected house price rises it makes sensible investment logic.

From frenetic cities with historical and architectural interest to tranquil and unspoilt countryside, from picturesque ports and harbours to classic French villages, the region looks set to continue as a good investment for buyers, and there is no reason to suggest a decline in its popularity, in fact quite the opposite.



How to get here:

There are flights from the UK to the following airports in the region:

- To Avignon** from Edinburgh, Exeter, Leeds Bradford and Southampton
- To Béziers** from Bristol and Stansted
- To Carcassonne** from Cork, Dublin, Liverpool, Nottingham, Shannon and Stansted
- To Marseille** from Birmingham, Bournemouth, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gatwick, Manchester, Prestwick and Stansted
- To Montpellier** from Gatwick and Stansted
- To Nimes** from East Midlands, Liverpool and Luton
- To Perpignan** from East Midlands, Manchester, Southampton and Stansted
- To Toulouse** from Belfast, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh, Gatwick and Leeds Bradford

There are also a large number of flights from the UK to Spain. Barcelona, Girona and Barcelona Reus airports are all well served. More detailed information on all flights to the area can be found at www.the-languedoc-page.com

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