



To benefit the Village Dans l'intérêt du Village

November 2014

2014 A poor season

President's word

2014 has been a poor season. The worst we have known in 25 years.

It was sad to see the restaurants less than half full through until July, and again in late season. Normally the French descend in hordes through the school holidays of July and August - but this year their numbers were greatly diminished.

Camp sites and Marseillan Plage generally were under-subscribed - the only parks full were occupied by camper vans which are notorious for bringing their own food supplies from supermarkets back home.

No seasonal enterprise actually went out of business, but the upcoming winter will be hard for several, one feels.

We were affected, of course. With the English speakers very low in number our services were not in as much demand as usual. (Fortunately for us personally we are not dependent on client flow, nor takings. But our ability to make an end of season donation was in question for much of the year.)

To put things into perspective we normally use at least 32 day book pages each season. This year we only needed 22 !

A report from the Midi-Libre, mid-season, is quoted in the Newsletter. It expresses the problem very clearly - the British early season people did not come, the Scandinavians have changed their school holidays and so would have to come at high season instead of June - they stayed at home. The end-of-season older folks invasion was much smaller than usual.

All in all a tale of woe.

Sorry.

Patricia

Beziers: July statistics bad

From the Midi-Libre

In Beziers, tourism professionals are counting the cost of a poor start to the summer season.

The results of the this first month of the 2014 holiday season show a reduction of 20 to 40% of attendance compared to last year (*which was not a good year*).

All sectors were hit - suppliers, cafes, hotels, restaurants and camp sites.

Campsites appear to be down at least 20-30%. If a large campsite lost a third of its customers, that means there are 1,500 fewer people to go out to eat, to have a drink or to eat an ice cream at night.

There is a definite snowball effect that hurts everyone across the board.

Another effect of the bad weather was that people from Toulouse or Carcassonne stayed home on weekends rather than head to the beaches.

Businesses in the interior are hitting higher levels than usual because local customers are staying at home.

Our region is not the only one affected: "For the feria de Bayonne or Mont-de-Marson, my colleagues have suggested a

25% drop. There is no money at all levels. People are paying attention to every detail with restaurateurs describing families of four sharing ome pizza, or two people sharing desserts".

For Jean-Loic Gassier, campsite manager of Yole Vendres, weather is only one factor among many other causes, and certainly not the primary. "The first is the reduction in length of holiday time, then the World Cup effect was not helpful."

"The third reason is the standardization of European vacation times. For example, the Dutch, who used to come from mid-June to late August, are now all on vacation from July 14 to August 28. The general economic crisis is obviously another reason. Households are slowing their spending because they do not know how well things will be going in the immediate future."

"Reservations are increasingly late. And because people now use the internet, they are also made at the last moment."

Professionals expect an upturn in August: "Since last weekend we went back to a normal occupancy rate for us."

(But the end of season was also bad.)

Donation

This year we were seriously concerned that we might not be able to make our usual donation to a local charity working in the interests of the Marseillais.

However, thanks mainly to the generosity of our sponsors (of whom we have fifteen) we have been able to make a donation of 500 euros to a very deserving cause.

The association Marseillan, d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui (Marseillan Yesterday and Today) exists to research and record the history of the people of Marseillan.

It has a very enthusiastic membership of around 200 and has succeeded in tracing most of the old Marseillan families antecedents. They also mount wonderful exhibitions of old Marseillan.

Marseillan Changes

Boulevard Lamartine has seen three restaurant changes:

The Saladerie has opened up by the Marine Bar. It offers an interesting range of both salads and some hot dishes, but has no inside accommodation.

The pizzeria has changed hands, not for the better.

The tea shop is now an Italian restaurant. (Not a good one.)

The port has acquired a Tapas Bar where the estate agent used to be. It is doing well, and has a popular set lunch at nine euros with wine.

Lisbet's hairdressing salon is to close, but is being transferred to Lisbet's house (up almost as far as Carrefour).

One will have to climb the hill, and then mount a steep driveway and most of her clients are middle aged and older, so one wonders at the possibility of success.

The lingerie shop next to le Table Emile has closed.

There are rumours that the le Table Emile is for sale, and that a book shop is about to open.

Ten things I Know about you

1. You are reading this.
2. You are human.
3. You can't say the letter "P" without separating your lips.
4. You just attempted to do it.
6. You are laughing at yourself.
7. You have a smile on your face, and you skipped number 5.
8. You just checked to see if there is a number 5.
9. You laugh at this because you are a fun loving person and everyone does it too.
- 10 You are probably going to send this to see who else falls for it. This is included because we didn't want to be alone in the idiot category.

Have a Great Day !

New trees for the Canal du Midi

A new plan to tackle the decimation of the Canal du Midi's 42,000 plane trees has emerged - and is proving quite controversial amongst residents along the canal.

The plane trees that line the canal, and give it its distinctive look and atmosphere, have been afflicted by a deadly fungus, *Ceratocystis platant*, for which there is no apparent cure. 4,000 trees per year are being felled, and although possible cures are being tested, none has yet proven to be successful.

"Much of the effort so far has been in finding a cure to the disease. But we think the traditional plane trees can be replaced with a superior alternative" said Yves Saurel, of Montpellier University, who have been tasked with looking for solutions to the problem.

"It's an option that eliminates the risk of another epidemic completely, while reducing the costs of maintaining the canal. We are proposing that the current trees are replaced with synthetic plane trees - that last forever and reduce maintenance costs."

Maintaining the canal eats up much of the annual UNESCO Heritage Site budget. Thousands of tons of leaves have to be dredged each year, to ensure boats can navigate the already shallow waterway. "Synthetic trees might sound like a radical solution - but they are incredibly realistic, easy to install and far cheaper to maintain. They also never die" added Yves Saurel.

Local councillors were initially against the plan, especially Frances Menard, director of tourism for the Aude departement "I thought it was a silly idea. Until I actually saw one of the trees. I couldn't tell it wasn't real until I got to about 50cm away from it. The detail of the bark, leaves and roots is quite incredible. And if it frees up some of the annual budget for the promotion of tourism, it has to be a good thing."

A trial of the new synthetic trees is likely to go ahead soon, along a stretch of bank close to La Redorte. Made of tough weather-resistant polymer, the trees can be fitted with mobile phone transmitters, video surveillance cameras and even WiFi routers.

"We can offer visitors free internet along the canal, while monitoring criminal activities. This really is the future."

The cost of the new trees is likely to be borne by national and local government, with a portion coming from UNESCO. Each tree is said to cost in the region of 5,000 euros. Installation should work out at about 900 euros per tree.

The trees were originally developed in China to line the river running through the city of Chingdu in Sichuan - a quick and cost-efficient alternative to planting the real thing. Subtle variations (there are over 50 different 'models' of tree available) mean the result looks surprisingly natural.

Said Yves Saurel "The trees in Chundu looked impressive - we were quite surprised. We think locals and tourists in Languedoc will be pleasantly surprised too".

Languedoc Living - 1/4/14

Impossibilities

1. You can't count your hair.
 2. You can't wash your eyes with soap.
 3. You can't ride a bicycle with your eyes closed.
 4. You can't breathe when your tongue is out.
- Put your tongue back - you silly person !

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