
Bulletin !

An informal look at life in this part of France, with some snippets of local info and advice.

Thought for the month:

To succeed in life you need 3 things:
a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone

In here are a few ideas for trips out and about – but they are constantly under review due to Covid-19. To be sure of their happening, do contact the Tourist Office in advance, if possible. At all the places/events mentioned here strict safety measure are applied (hand gel, masks, spacing).

Special dates:

Fri, 2nd *Vendredi Saint* (Good Friday) (see below)

Sun, 4th *Pâques* (Easter Sunday)

Mon 5th *Lundi Pâques* (Easter Monday)

Vendredi Saint (Good Friday)

The most significant Friday of the year is Good Friday when the traditional Lenten dish *Brandade de Morue*, a pounded salt cod concoction, is served all over France. As a predominantly Catholic country, France used to obey the Church's fasting rules very strictly. No meat was ever to be consumed on Fridays or during Lent and, if you wanted to eat butter on such 'lean' days, you had to give the church a special offering, which proved to be an excellent source of income. Creamily fishy, *brandade* is just the thing for eating on Good Friday: it keeps well and served with potatoes and followed by a salad is substantial enough to sustain people through the lengthy services and rigours of the day. For the last 2 centuries salt cod, originally from Provence, has been easily available throughout France. It may be an acquired taste, but devotees go to great lengths to indulge themselves.

Marché artisanal in Lassay-les-Châteaux (53)

On Fri. 2nd this will (hopefully) be taking place from 15h30 to 17h30 at 18 Place du Huit-Mai-1945, Lassay-les-Châteaux. There will be 12 stands, with locally produced meats, cider, *poiré*, bread & brioches cooked in a wood-fired oven, beers, vegetables, honey and jams.

“A l’Entrée au Dessert” charcuterie/delicatessen in Gorrion (53)

A l’Entrée au Dessert, at 25 rue de la Mairie in Gorrion, was re-opened in March 2020 after a fire in 2019. It is a great place to find starter ideas / salads / food for parties & special events, picnics, etc., or just a light lunch. There are also edible gift ideas and special ingredients offering culinary inspiration! Open: Tues. to Sat. 8h15 to 13h & 14h45 to 19h30. Safety measures are in place, including a limited number of people allowed in the shop at a time.

Les Jardins des Plantes d’Avranches

Covering an area of 3.5 ha., in the town of Avranches (50), these gardens helped to inspire many 19th century writers, including Guy de Maupassant and Victor Hugo. There are 12 different gardens, all with inspirational themes. Open all year – also accessible for people with reduced mobility. They are adapted for the younger children also as there is a play area. Free entry, and all safety measures will apply.

Exhibition of vintage vehicles in Avranches (50)

On Sun. 4th, 9h30 to 12h30, on Place de la Mairie in Avranches, is an expo of vintage cars, bikes and other old vehicles. Open to the public, with strict respecting of distance and masks to be worn. For further info tel: 06 28 25 68 27 (French spoken).

Without Rochefort, we would not have begonias . . .

Historic naval port Rochefort in Charente-Maritime is not a native habitat for begonias, but there would be no begonias were it not for Rochefort, which houses Europe’s most important collection of the genus. Well, the plants would exist, of course – they would just be called something else. The naval dockyard and town celebrated its 350th anniversary in 2016 and was created under Louis XIV who saw the need for France to become a maritime power as the European nations developed trade with, and possessions in, the New World. One of the administrators overseeing the development of Rochefort, from 1688 to 1719, was Michel Bégon. who would set out from Rochefort to the Caribbean during those years, accompanied by botanist-monk Charles Plumier. Plumier recorded details of a number of plants previously unknown to Europeans and was the first to make botanical dedications, by which a plant would be named in someone’s honour.

Among the best known of those he named are the fuchsia, named for the German botanist Leonhard von Fuchs; the magnolia, named for French botanist Pierre Magnol; and, you guessed it, the begonia named for Michel Bégon.

Rallye Photo 2021 (photo competition) in Domfront (61)

Until 31st December 2021, this competition is organised by the Domfront Tourist Office, Place de la Roirie, Domfront. There are 3 themes you can choose from: ‘*Nature et gastronomie; la patrimoine à travers le temps, or Domfront en Poiraise*. Entry: 2€. You can take 5 photos on your theme, and all info and registration details are at the Tourist Office (www.ot-domfront.com).

Emma Mory in concert in Flers (61)

On Sat. 3rd at 15h in the *mediathèque* in Flers (salle Tintamare) Emma Mory and Maxime Savary with “*Chansons Française et Anglo-Saxone*”. Free entry. Numbers limited.

Visit a cider-making farm near Bagnoles de l’Orne (61)

On Saturdays 3rd, 17th & 24th, 15h to 17h, at *La Noë Plaine*, near Bagnoles de l’Orne, is a bio cider-making farm where you can discover the environmental practicatities of a high calibre orchard and the fabrication of bio cider, poire, fruit juices, vinegar, calvados and pommeau. The 2-hour visit ends with a tasting. Reservation is required at the Bagnoles de l’Orne Tourist Office before 11h on the day (02 33 37 85 66, English spoken). Numbers limited – minimum 5, maximum 9 people.

Base de loisirs in la Ferté-Macé (61)

This outside leisure area, with an overall area of 65 hectares – of which 26 ha. is water, and also 2,400 metres of walking/cycling paths – is accessible all year (depending on current Covid restrictions). It is dedicated to family activities in the open air. There are children’s games and picnic areas - ask at the Tourist Office (02 33 37 10 97) if the other facilities are available (kayak hire, *pétanque* pitch, pedalos, archery, etc) and for the latest Covid safety restrictions. Access and parking is free.

Jardins créatifs et éphémères in Domfront (61)

At these temporary sites behind the Domfront *Mairie* and along the *Sentier des Cent Marches* (Route of 100 Steps) you will find sculptures from vegetation by 2 local artists. Available all year, free and open for everyone. More info at the Tourist Office (02 33 38 53 97).

Beware of toxic caterpillars

Parents and pet owners should beware of dangerous pine processionary caterpillars (*chenilles processionnaires*) as their protective hairs contain a toxin that can cause severe skin irritation and can kill dogs. In Spring, brought out by the warmer weather, the caterpillars have left the trees and are marching nose-to-tail across woods and open lands to find a new nest. Previously confined to the south of France, they are now to be found north of Paris and can cause severe damage to pine trees. Gardeners can use black sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts and suet to lure predators such as the great tit, coal tit and great spotted cuckoo which will eat hundreds of caterpillars a day. The *Mairies* have requested to be told of any sightings in your local area.

Les Tulipes Contre le Cancer

Organised annually by the *Lions Club du Pays de Domfront*, this sale of tulips will take place again this year. Last November, 36,500 tulip bulbs were planted and at the beginning of April 50 volunteers will be involved in the picking of the tulips, which will be sold either singly or in bunches, outside supermarkets and large commercial areas, the proceeds going towards the fight against cancer.

Virtual visit to an art gallery

During April at the Galerie Albert Bourgeois in Fougères (35) you can enjoy this interactive virtual visit to the exhibition “Double Face” of Chantal Lorient-Melia. For more info, contact the Fougères Tourist Office – www.ot-fougeres.fr (02 99 94 12 20)

The fishing season has arrived!

For those who enjoy a day’s fishing, many designated lakes are now open until mid-October. You can ask at your local *Mairie* for details (permits, etc). Here are some local lakes:

St Denis-de-Gastines/Careilles/Vautorte (53) - 500 kg of young fry have been released into 3 communal lakes, and 2 batches of 400 kg of rainbow trout are planned. Permits can be purchased at ‘*Karel City*’ in Careilles, the ‘*Bar-tabac du Centre*’ in St Denis and the café ‘*Le Bretagne*’ in Vautorte.

La Dorée (53) - this communal *plan d’eau* will be open for fishing from 7h to 19h (due to Covid-19, normally 20h). Around 100 kg of fish were released for the opening. Here there are different rules: only lines with one fish-hook (*un hameçon*) allowed. Not allowed: casting/fly fishing. Bathing in the lake is strictly forbidden. Here *les cartes de pêche* (fishing cards) are available at the lake on the day.

Local oak sourced for repairs to the Paris Notre Dame spire

Two oak trees in *le forêt de Pail* (near Villaines-la-Juhel, 53) have been chosen and cut down for the replacement of the spire of the cathedral Notre-Dame in Paris, which tragically caught fire in April 2019. Overall, 1,200 oak trees will be gathered from both private and public forests in France in 2021. In the Pays de la Loire, 60 trees were identified, half of which are in privately owned forests. After President Macron announced in July 2020 that the reconstruction is to be exactly as before, the hunt was on for suitable oak trees with a diameter of 60 to 70 cms, aged between 100 and 180 years. Serge de Poix, whose family owns the forest where the 2 oak trees were chosen, is proud to be participating in this very important reconstruction.

More names of the inhabitants

People who live in	Saint-Pierre-des-Nids	are	Poôtéens
“	Larchamp	are	Larchampois
“	Saint-Suzanne	are	Suzannais
“	Pré-en-Pail	are	Préziens
“	La Sauvagère	are	Sylvagériens
“	Le Mans	are	Manceaux
and (I love this one)	Champgénéteux	are	Campgénéteusiens

[try saying that when you’re drunk!!]

Initiation à la pêche (Introduction to fishing) for children

On Wednesday afternoons in April, May & June 2021, this activity will take place at the lake in Saint-Fraimbault (61), organised by the AAPPMA (*Association Agréée pour la Pêche et la Protection du Milieu Aquatique*). More information at the Domfront *Mairie*.

Emergency contact numbers

18	Emergencies ('Urgences') . This number connects you to the <i>Sapeurs Pompiers</i> (fire brigade) but they deal with medical emergencies and should be the first port of call in life-threatening situations.
15	Samu – for other urgent medical call-outs
17	Police / Gendarmes
112	Universal European Emergency Services – from all phones including mobiles

And finally:

Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says "I've lost my electron". The other says "Are you sure?" The first replies "Yes, I'm positive".

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That's all for this month. I hope you have all been enjoying the warm, sunny days we have been having recently. Long may they last!

Judy Skinner

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