

France is every man's country in summer

By DAVID WILLINGS

I cannot remember who said "France is every man's second country" but for me it is certainly true. Every summer for several years has seen me driving to the car ferry at Dover, across to Boulogne, a Channel port town which always leaves me with one desire, to get out of it and head south to the Dordogne Valley. For the first hundred miles or so you might think you were in a North American industrial area unless you happened to observe that the notices are all in French. With the exception of the Cathedral at Orleans, which you normally pass through, you might be in any big industrial city anywhere in the world.

I always imagine a modern Joan of Arc would be fighting not against the English army but against the Almighty Dollar. The English burned Joan of Arc at the stake. A modern Joan of Arc would either be certified as insane or seduced by an American economist and shipped over to Detroit to raise six little Franco American economists.

But I digress! Orleans Cathedral is well worth a visit and then one can head south again. The roads in France are very good and the signposting is excellent. I have very rarely used a road map in France except to plan my journey. I just make a list of the places I must pass through and rely on the excellent system of signposts to get me there.

For those who do not have their own transport French Railways are fast, clean and efficient. There is a regular train service from Paris to Périgueux. My first impression

of Périgueux I must admit was somewhat Freudian, or at least facetious. Where else would you find the Girls' High School, the Maternity Hospital and the Parish Church right next door to each other? In any French town the first place to call is the Syndicat D'Initiative. This is the French equivalent of a tourist information office and an excellently organized version it is.

Périgueux is the capital of the region of Périgord. It has been called Centre artistique, gastronomique et préhistorique. This is not sales talk. It is true. Food in Périgueux is expensive but it is certainly the best value for money I have encountered anywhere in the world. Don't expect quick service. Eating is a ritual in that region and to hurry it would be blasphemous. The speciality of Périgueux is a goose liver (paté de foie gras). Once you have tried that no other paté will ever taste the same. Their local drink Pineau is too sweet for some people but personally I lament the fact that only in that region does one seem able to get it. You won't want more than a couple of glasses. Don't let it go to your head. I am told it leaves you with a hangover to end all hangovers.

Don't expect to be able to take a quick look round the Museum. It is divided into a number of sections covering various periods from the lower Palaeolithic era (450,000 BC) to the Renaissance. In some cases they also have sections comparing developments in the region with developments elsewhere. A visit to the museum is a study tour in itself. I would suggest spending a whole morning there and then going back a day or two later to refresh your memory. In-

centially all museums in this region close on Tuesdays.

The Cathedral shows strong Moorish influence. For a few francs you can climb a fearful looking staircase and go onto the roof. The view over the city and, on a clear day, a substantial part of the region is never to be forgotten.

The Rue Limogeanne is a residential area, so it seems, but several of the houses are worth seeing for their Renaissance doorways. Take a walk up the Ruc du Plantier. It is like going back in time several hundred years.

The Romanesque Church of St Stephen was destroyed by the Huguenots and only restored in the previous century.

For those who have their own transport or who can afford to hire a car the surrounding region has plenty to offer. At various spots on the country roads you will see stalls bearing the sign "Dégustation" which means free tasting of the local wines. It takes a fair amount of sales resistance to take advantage of this offer and get away without having bought at least one bottle. Agreeable stopping off places but they can be disastrous for your finances to say nothing of your driving.

The Chateau D'Hautefort should not be missed. This castle was the baronial residence of the medieval Warrior/Troubadour Bertrand le Born. I fear our modern industrial society has programmed out any

equivalent of the Warrior/Troubadour and our civilisation is the poorer for it. The Chateau was bought by M. and Mme. de Bastard. The story seems to go that Mme. de Bastard dropped a lighted cigarette and the chateau went up in flames (the silly...madame) but the ruins are well worth a visit and the gardens are still maintained and can only be described as an experience.

The 12th century Abbey at Chancelade is only a brief drive from Périgueux. Destroyed by the English in the 13th century and destroyed again in the wave of anti-clericalism in the 18th century it was restored in the 19th century but still retains its medieval ambience. If nature calls you will find, by following your nose, what looks like a grossly undersized cowshed. That is...IT.

Hotels are clean and the service is good by European standards but they tend to be a bit highly priced. There are a number of camping sites, many beside the river. I am always astonished at the number of French families who drive south to the camping sites in The Dordogne and spend the whole summer without ever going off the site.

If you are lucky enough to arrive in the region during one of the local events the Festival Agricole et Folklorique it is worth stopping off. These festivals combine all the modern trappings of a fair-ground with folk traditions dat-

ing back hundreds of years. This is the occasion when the young people let their hair down. A word of warning. Don't try to chat up the girls who seem to be enjoying themselves in a free and easy emancipated fashion. Their mothers are never more than ten yards behind and sundry Uncle, Brothers and Fathers within calling distance to beat the daylight out of you. Chaperoning may not be apparent in the Dordogne but it exists.

Périgueux is only a short distance by road or rail from Les Eyzies - a town which has styled itself justifiably as the capital of prehistory. It is the prehistoric sites of this region which attract me to it year after year. I am often asked why as an Occupational Psychologist I have so actively interested myself in prehistory. It fascinates me, its unsolved mysteries challenge me. But an occupational psychologist should be engaged in scientific study of human activity and creativity both among individuals and among groups. Occupational psychology must start with the explosion of human ingenuity when, some 1,800,000 years ago homo erectus first learned how to use fire. Les Eyzies, which I shall describe in the next article, is a monument to the many explosions of creativity and ingenuity by which man survived and took over the world.

Red & Black dates

Dates of note:

Saturday, September 30, 1972, Singers audition - 10, a.m.;
 Tuesday, October 3, 1972, Singers audition - 7, p.m.
 Saturday, October 7, 1972, Skits audition, 10, a.m.
 Tuesday, October 10, 1972, Skits audition - 7, p.m.
 Saturday, October 14, 1972, Last day for auditions Skits and singers, 10, a.m.

Bookings in C139

Bookings in SUB ballroom:
 Monday, October 23, for singers rehearsal, from 7-10 pm;
 Wednesday, October 25, for Skits' Rehearsals from 7-10 pm;
 Thursday October 26, for Rehearsal from 7-11pm;
 Saturday, October 28, for Rehearsal all day;
 Monday, October 30, for Dress Rehearsal from 12 noon on.

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