

## What's new in France? (Or Todd-inspired news)

### Organ-grinders galore: a 2000 must

Readers Joan and Geoff Todd, organ-grinders *extraordinaires*, have become my friends over the years. Founder members of the British Organ Grinders Association, the couple, dressed in their pearly king and queen outfits, have raised over £60,000 for charity (mainly Macmillan Nurses), simply by "hand turning" their splendid Trueman 21 street organ. (Details: tel 01869 338532.)

Some readers may have seen them at work: in Oxfordshire, Warwickshire or further afield. The Todds also participate in many two-day festivals in France each summer. These are exhilarating affairs (pm Sat and Sun); organ-grinders come from all over Europe and, as only the French know how to mastermind, the additional entertainment is fabulous (*animations*, concerts, *crêperies*, you name it). Make a note of nine 2000 street organ festivals: Beaumont-sur-Oise (95-Val d'Oise) 20/21 May; Villers-Pol (59-Nord) 17/18 June; Wintzenheim (68-Ht-Rhin) 1/2 July; Les Gets (74-Hte Savoie) 15/16 July; St-Jean-en-Royans (26-Drôme) telephone Todds; Contrevoz (01-Ain) 5/6 August; Vichy (03-Allier) 13/15 Aug; Chassiers (07-Ardèche) 25/27 Aug; Oingt (69-Rhône) 2/3 Sept.

### Vercors

The Todds, and also readers Rob and Christina Harrison, led me to a marvellous additional hotel in the *massif*. Seek out English-speaking Lucien and Liliane Brusegan at their Auberge du Pionnier, "one of the most peaceful places in France." He's Italian, she's French. Lucien is an Anglophile with an interest in English literature. No-choice *cuisine Bourgeoise* evening meals; none is needed. Rooms (9; 7 en-suite): 190-250 demi-pension per person. 26190 Bouvante -Lente (use D131 south from St-Jean-en-Royans). Tel: 04 75 48 57 12.

### Hôtels au Naturel

Last year the Todds sent me a first-class English-language leaflet they saw at the Auberge du Pionnier – called "Hôtels au Naturel". There are 36 Regional Nature Parks (RNPs) in France. A new 1999 scheme has linked seven of the parks with 10 hotels within their boundaries. As it happens four are in *FLF*: p71 Le Blanc (Domaine de l'Etape; La Brenne RNP); p197 Lapoutroie (Les Alisiers; Ballons des Vosges RNP); p264 Pontempeyrat (Mistou; Livradois-Forez RNP); p255 La Petite-Pierre (Aub. d'Imsthal; Vosges du Nord RNP); and Aub. du Pionnier.

All the hotels are geared up to ensure you capitalise on your exploration of each RNP, with advice, books, guides and the best addresses. The scheme is to be expanded. The leaflet? From any hotel or the Fédération des Parcs Naturels Régionaux de France, 4 rue de Stockholm, 75008 Paris. Tel: 01 44 90 86 20.

### Nausicaa – and also across the road at Boulogne

Don't miss the three-star "living wonder" (with new additions). Tony Lestienne has opened a superb new hotel beside his restaurant, Hôtel de la Matelote, 70 blvd Ste-Beuve, 62200 Boulogne. Rooms (19): 420-660. Tel: 03 21 30 33 33.