

WELCOME TO

LDL
LE
DOMAINE
DE LOUSTALVIEL

CONTENTS

	PAGE
YOUR HOSTS	2
TECHNOLOGY	2
SWIMMING POOL	3
PLAN OF THE DOMAINE & AROUND	4
EMERGENCIES IN THE HOUSE	5
THINGS YOU'LL WANT TO KNOW	6
GETTING TO OTHER PLACES	8
SHOPPING	10
ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA	13
LE GUIDE GASTRONOMIQUE	16
WHEN IT'S TIME TO LEAVE	20

ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES	Back
POINTS OF CONTACT:	Cover

YOUR HOSTS:

Welcome to Le Domaine de Loustalviel – we hope you have a great holiday.

Your hosts Nigel and Julian, moved to the Domaine in January 2011, and live in LoustalViel (the middle house). Our aim is to make your stay as enjoyable and trouble-free as possible. Please tell us about any problems, and ask us for any help or information you might need.

We have two small dogs, Jack and Cosmo. Jack is an elderly gentleman Jack Russell whose hobbies are eating and sleeping in the sun. Cosmo is a very bouncy American Cocker Spaniel (think Tigger) who loves to play with a ball. Both are extremely friendly. They are not allowed in the gites.

TECHNOLOGY:

Wi-Fi:

Wireless internet is available on the Domaine, and should be accessible at least in the lounge of your house. Walls here are made of stone, and are extremely thick, so unfortunately signal varies considerably.

The key to access the internet is:

Phones:

Mobile phone signal on the Domaine is patchy at best – If you need to make an urgent call, please let us know.

Television:

Your gite is fitted with HD Satellite TV, giving access to over 100 English TV and radio stations.

DVD:

There is a DVD player and a small selection of films in each gite – we have a large selection available, so please ask us if the ones provided are not to your taste.

Wii:

The Nintendo Wii provided has a number of games built in.

By all means play your own games, but please do not update the Wii with any of your own discs. Extra controllers or balance board available by request.

Swimming Pool

Pool towels are provided, and are located in your bedroom wardrobe. Please do not use bathroom towels for the pool, or remove any towels from the Domaine. If you wish to take a towel to the beach/lake, we can provide them.

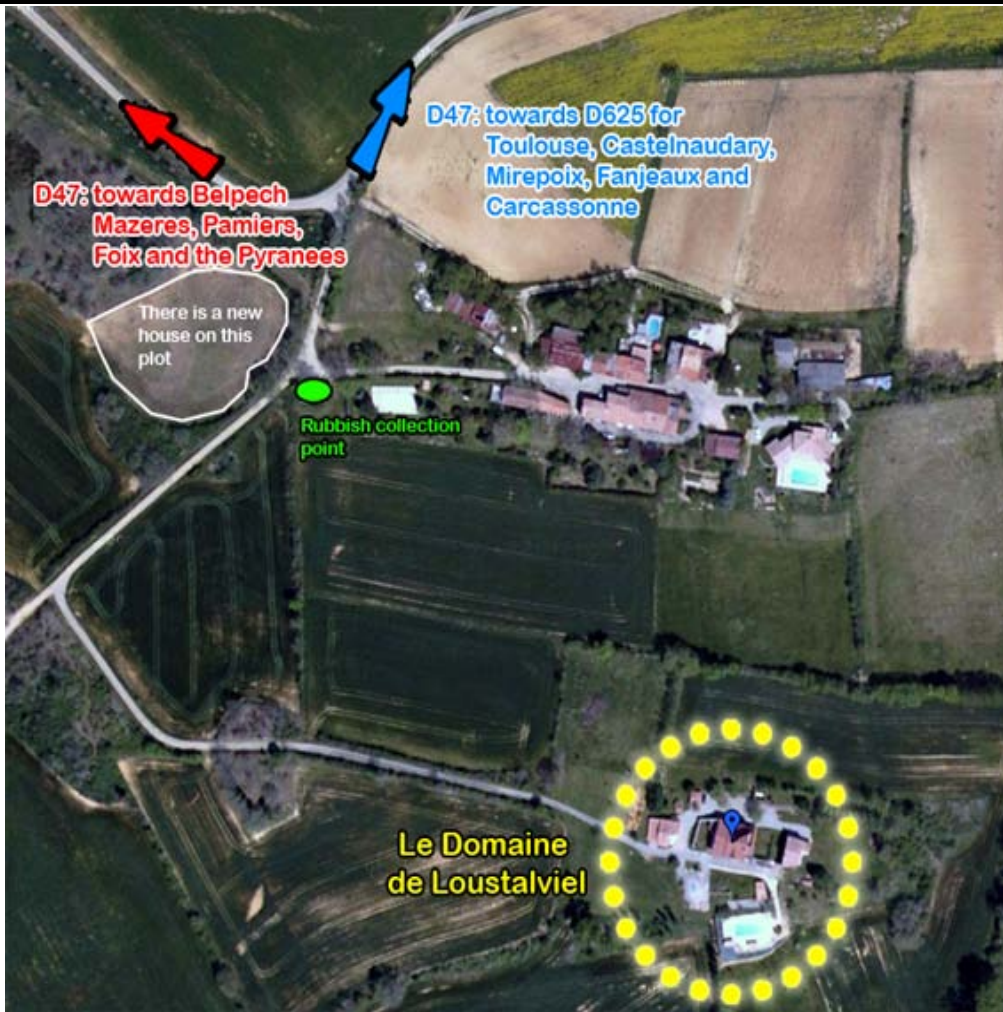
For everyone's peace of mind, and in line with French law, the pool is surrounded by a safety fence. You enter through the gate at the end of the path leading down from LoustalBeau.

To get in, if you're tall enough, pull up the knob at the top of the black cylinder which sticks up above the gate and it will open. (If you're not tall enough, ask Mum or Dad to help you!)

There are some irritating little rules:

- It's a legal requirement that the gate should be self-closing. Please don't wedge it open.
- Please do not let other people's children in to the pool area without the express permission of their parents.
- Please don't take glasses into the pool area; there are plastic tumblers in your kitchen.
- The other gate (on the south side of the pool by the sun canopies) leads to the pool equipment house. It is out of bounds. Please don't open this gate or allow children to.
- The fence, the gates and the pool cover roller won't take the weight of a person, even a youngster. Please do not allow children to climb on the fence or swing on the gate, or use the pool cover roller as a diving board!
- Horace (the busy little robot who keeps the pool clean) is a delicate piece of kit; he can be easily damaged and is *very* expensive to repair. He is not a toy; please don't allow your children to play with him, and please don't pull on his hose or take him out of the water.





**GRID REFERENCE FOR SAT NAV DEVICES:
LATITUDE 43.213918, LONGITUDE 1.823881**

EMERGENCIES IN THE HOUSE

GAS:



If you smell gas, immediately turn off the gas supply.

The gas taps in all the houses look like the picture on the left.

The gas is **ON** when the red lozenge is in line with the pipe (as shown in the picture).

The gas **OFF** when the red lozenge is at right angles across the pipe.

In **LoustalNEUF**, there are **TWO** gas taps, one bottom right of the wall facing you when you enter the “boiler room” (off the downstairs wc), **another** in the base unit left of the cooker.

In **LoustalBEAU**, there is only one gas tap, high up on the right-hand side of the “boiler room” (off the downstairs wc).

WATER:



If you find a leak, or have any other problems with the water, please start by turning the water off at the mains.

In all the houses the stopcock is **ON** when the lever is in line with the pipe (as in the pictures).

The stopcock is **OFF** when the lever is at right angles across the pipe.

Please turn this valve **slowly** when turning water on. (French water pressure is very high, and an abrupt switch-on can actually burst soldered joints!)

In **LoustalNEUF** the main stopcock is low on the right-hand wall as you enter the “boiler room” (off the downstairs wc). It looks like the picture on the left.

In **LoustalBEAU** the main stopcock is the lower one in the bottom cupboard in the kitchen to the left of the sink. It looks like the picture on the left.

ELECTRICITY:



The electrical control boards all look like the picture on the left. They include the main on/off switch for the house as a whole, as well as circuit breakers for individual circuits.

In **LoustalBEAU** and **LoustalNEUF** it is in the “boiler room” (off the downstairs wc).

If there is a power failure, first check whether you can see lights in other houses, or the street lights at La Cabane;

- IF YOU CAN'T, (especially if there are thunderstorms nearby, or in the mountains) then it's probably a general power cut, and you just have to sit and wait until the power is restored.
- IF YOU CAN, then there may be a problem in the house. In which case
 1. Check the switch box. The mains switch (the largest, most prominent on the panel) should be on position **1**;
 - if it is on position **0**, turn off or unplug as many appliances as possible (especially high power devices – hairdryers, dishwasher, oven, washing machine, etc),
 - then reset the mains switch to **1**.
 - Restart the machines you turned off one by one. If the switch trips again, the problem will be the last couple of appliances you just turned on.
 2. If one of the smaller switches is out of line, try turning it back on; if that fails, carry out the detection process above to find out which appliance is causing the problem.

ONCE YOU HAVE “MADE SAFE” AS ABOVE, PLEASE TELL US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THINGS YOU'LL WANT TO KNOW

- ARRIVALS:** We will expect you between 4 pm and 8 pm. You'll find us in the middle house, LoustalViel. We will give you your keys and show you round. If you arrive before 4 pm, your house may not be ready; PLEASE don't move in until it's ready, so we can make it as welcoming as possible.
If you arrive late you will find your key(s) in the front door of your house.
- BOTTLE BANK:** One in *Pech Luna*; another opposite the bakery in *Belpech*. Glass bottles only (*not* plastic).
- CARS:** Ample parking is available behind the houses, please don't drive or park on the grass. And please drive carefully, being aware of children and animals.
- CENTRAL HEATING AND HOT WATER:** The central heating and hot water systems are fully automatic. PLEASE don't adjust the controls, even the thermostat. If you think something is wrong, or you want a temperature change, tell us, but DO NOT MAKE ANY ADJUSTMENTS.
- LOG-BURNING STOVES:** The log-burning stoves all work. Logs and kindling are in the woodshed - but let's hope you won't need it!
- LAUNDRY:** Instructions are by the machines.
- LIGHTING:** Please turn the OUTSIDE LIGHTS OFF before you go to bed and when you leave.
- POOL:** **SAFETY: IT'S VITAL YOU READ UP ABOUT THE POOL ON PAGE 3.**
Please do not use any glass by the pool. There are plastic tumblers in your kitchen.
Pool loungers, chairs, etc are kept in the pool store.
Horace, the little robot who wanders busily around the pool at pre-set times works hard to keep it clean for you. Please tell your children he is not a toy; he is *very* expensive to repair.
The timers, valves, pumps, filters, sterilisers and other techie stuff are under the pool at the South West corner. This area is out of bounds. **You must not adjust any of the settings.**
Please do not allow children to swing on the gate, or climb on the fence or on the pool cover roller, (or use it as a diving board!). These things just won't take the weight.
If you notice anything that seems at all wrong with the pool, please tell us.
- PROBLEMS:** If you have any problems, or something breaks or doesn't work, or if you just want some local information, please come and talk to us and we'll do what we can to help you.
- RUBBISH:** Rubbish is collected on Wednesdays from the big rectangular bin at the fork in the

road on the way towards the D47 (see plan on page 4).

SHOPPING:

Belpech (closed Sunday pm and all day Monday) meets most needs. Good supermarkets at: *Pamiers* (*Carrefour*, *Leclerc*) and *Castelnaudary* (*Géant*, *Intermarché*). Directions opposite.

GETTING TO OTHER PLACES BY CAR

- BELPECH** 8 minutes
- *Bakers*
 - *Banks*
 - *Butcher*
 - *Doctors*
 - *Pharmacy*
 - *Restaurant / Bar*
 - *Mini-supermarkets*
 - *Pretty Church*
- Turn left onto D47. Follow twisty road until you cross little bridge. Turn left onto D517. After 0.7 km join D217 which comes from your right. Continue to T-junction and turn right onto D102. Go up the hill, and then down into Belpech.
- To get back:** Take D102 up the hill (bright blue virgin on your right), and then down. Turn left at bottom of hill onto D217. Right at Y-junction onto D517. Right at next junction onto D47. Right at top of hill.
- PAMIERS** 25 minutes
- *Excellent Supermarkets*
 - *Good restaurants*
 - *Good general shopping*
 - *Birthplace of Gabriel Fauré*
- Go through *Belpech*, and then follow signs to *Pamiers* (starts as D102; becomes D11). Follow road for 18 kilometres until the level crossing. For *centre ville* (restaurants & shopping) carry straight on and follow signs.
- For everything else, turn left immediately *before* the level crossing, then at the next traffic lights...
- For the *Carrefour* supermarket and *McDonald's*, turn *left* again and carry on to the roundabout; take the 3rd exit.
 - For the *Leclerc* supermarket, turn *right*, pass over another level crossing, and take the third exit from the roundabout .
- CASTELNAUDARY** 25 minutes
- *Good Supermarkets*
 - *Plentiful restaurants*
 - *Good general shopping*
 - *Birthplace of Cassoulet*
- Turn right onto the D47, and follow it through *Pech Luna* until the junction with the D6. Turn left, and carry on for 15 km.
- Intermarché* and *Géant* (bigger and better) supermarkets are both signed.
- To get back:** D6 signed to *MIREPOIX*. 10 km after crossing motorway, turn right onto D47 (easy to miss, signed to *St Amans*); fork left just before *St Amans*. Pass through *Pech Luna*; cross D625; after 1.4 km turn left.
- CARCASSONNE** 40 minutes
- *Airport*
 - *Magnificent must-see medieval walled city*
 - *Excellent supermarkets*
 - *Stylish shopping*
 - *Many restaurants*
 - *Very hot and touristy in August; consider early morning or evening trip.*
- Turn right onto D47 towards *Pech Luna*. After 1.3 kilometres, at the big crossroads, turn right onto the **D625**. After 4½ km turn left onto the **D102**. Continue for 19 km until a T-junction. Turn left.
- Follow the road as it twists downhill through the picturesque town of Fanjeaux. Immediately after the stone gateway, fork left.
- At bottom of hill re-join main road. At roundabout take the first exit onto **D119**; after 1 km, fork left, still on **D119** (DON'T take the **D623**) and continue, through *Montréal*, for a further 21 km.
- Salvaza airport on left, *Géant* supermarket on right, city centre straight on.

TOULOUSE 55 minutes

(Don't miss your flight; leave at least 1½ hours before check-in)

*Airport (Blagnac),
plus everything you would expect
from a cosmopolitan, 1,500-year-
old city.*

Turn right onto D47 towards *Pech Luna*. After 1.3 kilometres, at the big crossroads, turn right onto the **D625**.

After 11 km, in *SALLES SUR L'HERS*, turn left by big church on your right (hard-to-see sign to Toulouse).

After about 14 km, at T-junction in *GARDOUCH*, turn right. Cross canal and motorway. Follow signs left for A61 to Toulouse.

Ignore *AIRE TOULOUSE-SUD*. Motorway splits near Toulouse; fork **left**; second sign shows *BLAGNAC* (with an aircraft pictogram); for the airport, follow this from now on, or else follow signs to *Centre Ville*.

SHOPPING

BELPECH:

Will meet most immediate needs. Most of the shops are open from 7.30 am till 7 pm, but closed from 12.30 to 2.30 pm or 4 pm, and on Sunday afternoons and Mondays.

Bakers: there are two, both on the main street, both excellent. One on the right as you enter the village (closed Tues) is particularly good for pastries. The other is further down on the left.

Bar/Restaurant: *Le Vixiège* is OK for a beer or a reasonable meal (closed Wednesdays). It's on the left of the main street, just before the bridge.

Butcher: can be found opposite the covered market, and is a *real* butcher – good meat, skilfully cut and prepared. If you want anything special, give a couple of days' warning. Also does eggs, and *foie gras* and local cheeses which are well worth trying.

Garage, Petrol and Repairs: the Renault dealer, on the left as you leave town on the *Pamiers* road is an old-fashioned mechanic who can repair *anything*. Closed on Saturday afternoons, Sundays, and between 12 and 2 the rest of the week. Automated petrol sales out of hours, but may not accept non-French credit cards.

Mini-Markets: there are two; we use the *Casino*, next to the butchers. They have most staples, and are a useful source of last-minute barbecue charcoal (you have to ask [*charbon de bois*], because it's not on display).

Pharmacy: there's just the one, but they have everything you might need, from eye-liner, through antibiotics to incontinence trousers – and they are a useful port of call if you aren't feeling too good before you resort to one of the three doctors in the village.

Newsagent/Tobacconist: apart from the obvious, they develop films, and arrange dry cleaning; go at 10 or 11-ish, and they may still have yesterday's English papers.

Weekly Market: Wednesdays: only worth visiting to see how sad French village markets can be (two fruit and veg stalls, and one stall selling 1980s frocks!).

CASTELNAUDARY:

They will tell you that this is where *cassoulet* was invented, and there isn't a restaurant in the town that doesn't claim their version as the original, and the best in town (and in the world) – and there are a lot of restaurants!

It's a pretty town, with good shopping, and a splendid tree- and café-lined central avenue – worth a trip just to sit in the shade in a pavement café and watch the world go by. It's also worth taking a walk along the tree-lined *Canal du Midi* to the *Bassin* (the canal equivalent of a shunting yard).

The two main supermarkets, *Géant* and *Intermarché*, are perfectly good, but not a patch on the *Pamiers* offering. Other shopping is just what you'd expect from a provincial French market town.

FANJEAUX:

Make a point of stopping at the bakery here if you're passing; it's the best in the area. Bread is excellent, patisserie heavenly, especially the *pompot* (a citrus flavoured flaky pastry dessert to blow your mind).

MIREPOIX:

The medieval galleried square at *Mirepoix* is a picture-book sight. When it's full and bustling on market day, it's irresistible to sit in one of the cafés under the arcades and watch it all happening, while waiting to collect your take-away order of freshly-spit-roasted *poulet fermier*.

The supermarket (*Super U*) is adequate, but not brilliant, but the shops round the square are well worth the trip – in particular the women’s clothes shops with their own unique collections; everybody thinks one of them is “their own” – but nobody can agree as to which one it is!

PAMIERS:

This is the birthplace of Gabriel Fauré.

Go to the town centre, and you’ll find plenty of attractive, reasonably priced and well laid-out shops, as well as a good range of restaurants, and even billiard halls and (somewhat provincial) night clubs.

But *Pamiers* also has two **excellent supermarkets** *Carrefour* – our preference – and *Leclerc* (directions on page 5). They stock pretty well everything you could need, and, in particular, have remarkably good fruit and vegetables and delicatessen by comparison with their UK counterparts - and great fresh fish counters.

If you have a car problem, all the dealers (Citroen, Ford, Honda, Opel [= Vauxhall], Peugeot, Renault, Toyota, Volkswagen/Audi) are clustered together in the *Village Automobile* just behind the *Carrefour* supermarket.

MARKETS

Note that they almost all close soon after midday, and parking is always agony. It’s well worth getting there really early:

Monday: *Mirepoix* (an absolute must) and *Castelnaudary*

Tuesday: *Pamiers* and *Carcassonne*

Wednesday: *Belpech* (don’t blink, or you’ll miss it!)

Thursday: *Carcassonne*, and *Mirepoix* Farmers’ Market

Friday: *Lavelanet*

Saturday: *Revel* (even better, we think, than *Mirepoix*, but a 40 minute drive).

LOCAL PRODUCE

BREBIS: A large selection of ewe’s milk products available from the farm *Le Bosc*, including yoghurt, *crème fraîche*, and a huge range of flavours of the best ice cream you’ve ever tasted, curds and *fromage frais*.

Head north along the D625, and turn right, following signs to *St Amans*. *Le Bosc* is about 1 km along on the right. Make a point of going here; it’s well worth the 10-minute drive. The farm shop is open most afternoons between about 4 and 6.30.

CHÈVRE: Try the Farm *Joutet*, (signed to the right as you leave the far side of *Pech Luna*).

CONFIT, CHICKEN, PINTADE, ETC: M Gaec Lassalle is your man.

Go towards *Belpech*; at the 2nd bridge, turn right towards *St Sernin*; follow the winding, gently climbing road as far as the T-junction, and then turn left, signed towards *Bastide de C* (away from *St Sernin*). Look out for a sign on the right to *France* (this is M Lassalle’s farm). Except Saturday, Sunday and Monday, they are usually away at market until mid-afternoon. They also do fresh, oven-ready chicken

and *pintade*.

FOIE GRAS: This is the local speciality. It's usually made with duck, rather than goose, liver. And the locals claim it beats anything you'll find elsewhere in France.

Don't buy the supermarket stuff. Go to the local farms which have signs by the roadside (BelleMayre, for example, on the left on the D217 as you're heading towards Belpech), or the butcher in Belpech (see above). No recommendations here, because they're all different, and you'll have your personal preferences.

ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA

Apart from sightseeing, markets and eating, here are the local activities which have earned the best feedback from people who have stayed at Le Domaine de Loustalviel (if you want to access them online, you'll find links aplenty at www.pechluna.com/activities.htm):

- BISON FARM:** Yes, a *bison* farm! Near Lapenne (to the left off the road to Pamiers) is *La Ferme aux Bisons* (05 61 67 60 74) which offers guided tours of their herd of Bison, Deer, Eland, Wapiti, Watusi, Yaks and other exotic beasts. There's also a petting zoo, and a restaurant where they'll barbecue for your delectation bits of the critters you've just been admiring!
- CANAL DU MIDI** (walking, cycling or just lazing): The canal runs peacefully and very beautifully all the way from the Mediterranean to the *Gironde*. We're under 25 minutes from the quiet lock at *Le Seuil de Naurouze*, and the busy *Bassin* at *Castelnaudary*, both good start-points for a stroll along the plane-tree-shaded towpath, pausing sooner or later at a café to sit and watch the tranquil canal traffic.
- Or you can hire bikes to cycle along the tree-shaded towpath. Kids' and adults' bikes, baby seats and helmets all rented by the hour, ½ day or day (Under 20€). Do book. 04 68 60 14 07.
- Directions:** Take the D625 through *Salles-sur-l'Hers*. After 14 km, in *Saint Martin de Lanès* turn right onto the D7, and then, immediately onto the D507 following signs to *Belflou*. After 4 km, turn right onto the N113, and then, after 2.5 km, right onto the D218, signed *Seuil de Naurouze*. First right leads to the home of M et Mme Severac, who rent the bikes.
- CARCASSONNE:** A World Heritage Site you **must** see. A wonderful medieval walled city – although quite heavily restored! A 40-minute drive, and 2 hours to walk the streets and ramparts; it's culture that even children enjoy. In high season, it can be very hot and crowded, and the (paying) car parks are a long walk, so think about saving this trip for a cooler day, or go very first thing in the morning, before the crowds arrive. Check with the *Bureau de Tourisme* (04 68 10 24 30) whether there's *Son et Lumière* during your stay: a great evening's insight into some spectacular and bloody history!
- CASTELNAUDARY:** A delightful market town with many good restaurants at all price levels, it claims to have invented *cassoulet*. Many events and fairs during the year. It's also the high point of the *Canal du Midi*. Bureau de Tourisme: 04.68.23.05.73
- CASTLES:** The history of the pure, gentle, peace-loving Cathars seems to be entirely one of bloody barbarism and sudden but lingering death. Their legacy is some spectacular mountain-top castles, all within easy reach of Loustalviel. The most memorable are *Peyrepertuse*, *Quéribus*, and *Montségur* (due South, via Mirepoix and Lavelanet). This last was at the heart of the Cathar movement. Built in 1204, it finally fell in 1244, and 225 Cathars opted to be barbecued below its walls.
- If you're not superfit, and it's hot, the climb up to the stronghold can take up to an hour, but the wonderful view from the top will be reward enough.
- CAVES AND GROTTES :** There are prehistoric caves all around. The paintings at the *Grotte de Niaux* (05 61 05 88 37) are said to be 12,000 years old, but there are also later inscriptions (one, allegedly from the 18th century, reads *Ici j'hay perdu mon pucelage à l'âge de treize ans*). The *Grotte de Bedeilhac* (05 61 05 96 06) is huge; it has been used as an aircraft runway. Inside are Magdalenian paintings and carvings of humans, deer, bison, ibex and more. The *Grotte du Mas d'Azil* (05.61.69.97.71) is important enough to have given its name to the entire Azilian period. Take warm clothes, even in mid-summer. Book ahead.
- FALCONRY :** The *Aigles de la Cité* (04 68 47 88 99) run falconry displays daily from June to September (usually around 2.30 pm but phone to check) just outside the Carcassonne city walls.

- FOIX:** Narrow medieval streets, good restaurants, good shopping, all dominated by the 10th Century Castle. Today only three towers remain, but with a spectacular panoramic view from the top, over the town and the *Ariège* valley. Bureau de Tourisme : 05 61 02 30 70
- GO-KARTS AND QUAD BIKES:** There are go-kart tracks at *Varilhes* (05 61 67 39 06), just south of *Pamiers* and near *Carcassonne* (04 68 25 67 07). Better still, only a few minutes from us, there is *Randoquad* (05 62 73 00 58), which specialises in quad bike trips around our local countryside. 13-year-olds and 61-year olds who have tried it compare it favourably with sliced bread.
- GOLF** Our golfing friends recommend the par 71 *Carcassonne Golf Club* (04 13 20 85 43), and the par 69 *Toulouse-Téoula Golf Club* (05 61 64 56 78). Or for some spectacular Pyrenean views while you putt, drive just past Foix to the par 71 *Ariège Golf Club* (but phone 05 62 45 14 50 first; low cloud can close the course!).
- HORSE RIDING:** *Les Gascous* is a 15-minute drive. Everyone who's been says it's ace, because of the friendly folk who run it, the friendly Appaloosa ponies, the super countryside and the stunning views. All levels, from 4 years old up. Essential to book in advance (04 68 60 53 72).
- Directions:** Go South on the **D625** towards *MIREPOIX*. After 7 km turn left onto the **D715** (signed to *VILLAUTOU*). After ½ a km there's a crossroads with a large Crucifix. Turn sharp right (signed to *LES GASCOUS*); continue for exactly 1.5 Km. Turn right, and you're there.
- Also consider: *Centre Equestre du Lauragais* at *Villeneuve La Comptal* (04 68 23 09 24).
- KAYAKS/ CANOES/ RAFTING:** There are a lot of river-sport establishments in and around the Pyrenees, some under ½ an hour's drive away. Two, which both offer a full- or ½-day white-water descent of the *Ariège*. Are: *Ariège Évasion* (05 61 05 11 11). And *Roc Aqua* 04 68 20 53 97
- LE PETIT TRAIN JAUNE :** For a lazy way to enjoy some magnificent scenery of the Pyrenees, try a day trip on this mountain railway, which climbs dramatically from *Villefranche de Conflent* to the highest railway station in Europe at *Bolquère* and then meanders across the incredibly beautiful hidden high valley of La Cerdagne to La Tour de Carol. 08 92 35 35 35
- MIREPOIX:** It's 20 minutes to this medieval town with its ancient arcaded central square and its cathedral (500 years to build). The Monday market is a MUST. Bureau de Tourisme: 05 61 68 83 76
- THE PYRENEES:** A 40 minute drive will bring you well into the foothills with a huge range of walks, from "granny and the kids" to "compass and bivvy", all *very* beautiful. The Mirepoix and Foix Bureaux de Tourisme (qv) have maps, guides and advice.
- SAILING OR WINDSURFING:** The *Lac de la Ganguise* is a 25 minute drive. It's for experts and beginners, and claims winds up to force 4 for 300 days a year. You can simply rent, or take lessons, and people who have been say it's great, run by helpful, friendly staff. 04.68.60.35.68. There's more if you want to drive the 1¼ hours or so to the Mediterranean.
- Directions:** Take the D625 through *Salles-sur-l'Hers* (as if to Toulouse). After about 14 km, in *Saint Martin de Lanès* turn right onto the D7, and then, almost immediately onto the D507 following signs to *Belflou*. From there on, it's signposted.
- VALS – THE CHURCH IN THE ROCK:** A tiny church built into a cleft in the rocks. The Cathars hid and prayed here in the 13th Century, and left behind a serene air of tranquil spirituality. You won't spend more than ½ an hour here, but we'll be surprised if you don't leave feeling calmed and uplifted. Visit on your way back from the market at *Mirepoix* (look for signs to "*Vals – église rupestre*").

VINEYARDS:

There used to be a vineyard at Loustalviel. Now you have to drive for 20 minutes to reach the *Appellations Contrôlées* of *Malepère* and *Limoux*. We recommend a visit to *Domaine le Fort* (04 68 76 20 11), between *La Force* and *Montréal*. It's not posh, but offers a wide choice of wines, ranging from drinkable at 1€10 a litre (take your own container) to delectable at 9€ a bottle.

Or visit the cellars of *Sieur d'Arques* (04 68 74 63 45) at *Limoux* for sparkling and still white wines – not cheap, but, we think, classy and *different* (and don't forget that Limoux invented "bubbly" long before those upstarts in Champagne).

But our favourite is *Domaine Gayda* (04 68 31 64 14), which also has a top class restaurant.

LE GUIDE GASTRONOMIQUE DE LOUSTALVIEL

NB: THESE ARE *VERY* PERSONAL AND SUBJECTIVE OPINIONS. We have inherited this excellent guide, and will endeavour to update it as we work through the list ourselves. We would be very pleased to receive your opinions on these and any other establishments that you visit during your stay.

A red box means a place has had consistently good reports from previous guests.

Red text indicates where we have already updated

LOCAL

Belpech

LE VIXIEGE
04 68 60 62 03

We get very variable reports about this place. Sometimes very positive indeed; sometimes very lukewarm. It's always pretty basic, and nobody has ever said it's expensive (reckon well under 30€ a head). **Probably worth going for a beer one day or for the 11€50 set lunch including wine!**

Mazères

L'AUBERGE DE L'HERS
05 61 69 45 22

It was originally the municipal bath and wash-house; but, at 25-35€ a head, they won't take you to the cleaners. We think it's great, and we've had only positive reports. The food is excellent, with ample choice for the adventurous and the less adventurous, the staff are friendly and helpful, and the setting is super with a terrace over the eponymous river by an ancient bridge, floodlit at night. **Worth booking.**

Mazères

LE PARADIS DU PAPE
05.61.69.39.40

Glorious gardens set on the banks of the Hers river. There are some touches of innovation in the otherwise fairly standard regional menu. Service is friendly, and the chef is cheery, bonhomous and enormous. Brilliant for a Sunday lunch or on a balmy summer's evening; you should certainly book (around 30€– 40€ per head).

Mazères

LA FERME O DELICES
05 61 60 65 30

They produce *all* the ingredients organically on their on-site farm. The young chef has trained at big-name restaurants, and he's an innovator, as you can tell from the interesting menu. **Must book. 30€– 40€ per head. Ambience leaves a little to be desired but the food makes up for it.**

Montgéard

*LA FERME DE
CHAMPREUX*
05 61 81 33 13

A great place for a French-style family Sunday lunch. Bourgeois cooking, but to a high standard, and reasonably priced, say €35 – €40 per head.

Near **Gardouch** (drive through **Montgéard**, and look for signs)

Dylan Glover reports: “Unobtrusive and efficient service, coupled with a solid house red and a superb *Magret de Canard*, make for a very relaxed gastronomic excursion. The garish “Miami Vice”-style neon exterior belies an intimate and pleasant terrace with lakeside views. Varied *prix fixe* menu ranges from €16 to €35; extra expense is rewarded with rich, memorable encounters with the flavours and textures of the Aude (including a hidden fish course for the €30 menu!)”

Fanjeaux

LA TABLE CATHARE
04 68 24 62 46

Not the most exciting gastronomic event in the world, but quite pleasant, with well prepared, standard regional dishes at acceptable prices (probably under €25 per head) in an entirely acceptable environment; and it is only a 15-minute drive from base. We haven't been for a while, and it appears to be under new management, so if you try it, please tell us, and other guests what you think.

PAMIERS

LE ROY GOURMAND
05 61 60 12 12

Setting, service, *carte du jour* (€30) posher than you might expect from a station restaurant (over level crossing towards *centre ville*, first right). We've had some really excellent reports about this place – but no-one appears to have been recently..

LES BAIN DOUCHES
05 61 69 78 27

Perfectly pleasant town-centre setting on a tiny canal but near a road that can be quite busy at lunchtime. Pleasant to eat out in the evening. Friendly efficient service, but

what you go for is the food; it's *superbly* prepared, whether the creative ideas (sweet pepper or foie gras ice cream, for example, which are heavenly) or the more traditional dishes. About 25€/per head, and *highly* recommended. You should book.

CRESCENDO

OK, this is embarrassing, but the self-service restaurant in the Carrefour complex is great value. Not a top gastronomic experience, but preferable to McDonalds, and not much pricier. On Mondays they do "All you can eat Mussels and Frites" for 9€5.

MIREPOIX AND NEARBY

LE CANTEGRIL
05 61 68 11 26

Best choice for an honest square meal in the main square of *Mirepoix*. A number of set menus, all pretty good value bourgeois regional cooking. We think the locals use it at lunch, so it's less of a rip-off than its location suggests. €25 a head. Worth booking, especially if you want to sit outside. Service is fine when *Mme la Patronne* is in charge, but be prepared; it's totally disastrous on her days off.

LA FLAMBÉE
05 61 67 12 70

Just off the main square (in the street alongside the *Casino* supermarket), and one step up-market from the *Cantegril*. More original food, with a clearly Catalan influence, and a lot more garlic. Friendly, efficient service in a pleasant setting. €27 a head.

CHEZ LLOBET
05 61 69 44 34

M Llobet runs this wine bar/*brasserie* just off the main square, opposite the cathedral. Varied and unusual menu, well prepared; prices quite high (€35 per head) but still worth it – especially if you'll enjoy his clever wine list. Must book.

HÔTEL LE COMMERCE
05 61 68 10 29

A family-run one-time coaching in. Very friendly, reliable, moderately priced place for a good meal in a pleasant atmosphere. You'll have a bill for around €30 a head. Service can be slow when it's busy, and it often is, so try mid-week rather than weekends. Good for fish, but our desserts weren't worth the calories!

HÔTEL RELAIS ROYAL
05 61 60 19 19

The *cheapest* menu is 32€ a head, and they go up to 90€ but a 16/20 score in *Gault-Millau* means they can't be all bad; so, if you want to push the boat out...

LES REMPARTS
05 61 68 12 15

Very good food indeed. We're in 30+€ a head territory here, but the atmosphere (especially in the crypt) is quite special, the food exciting and very well prepared (if a touch on the *nouvelle* side); the wine is list interesting and not over-priced. Open 7 days a week, and we think it's good for a "special" meal

LE COMPTOIR GOURMAND
05 61 68 19 19

Up-market Deli with restaurant. Friendly, welcoming service. Pleasant setting, Delightful and quite original menu – especially the fish. Just across the road from the Western Stone Gateway without the City Wall. Very highly spoken of by people who care about good fresh food. 30+€/per head.

Troye d'Ariège

L'ÉCOLE BUISSONNIÈRE
05 61 68 11 62
On the D70,
7 km south of Mirepoix

Where Kafka meets Alice in Wonderland, this place is best described as an over-cluttered surreal bric-à-brac shop, with some tables shoe-horned in. But the service is warm and friendly, the food original, very local, very home-made, very delicious and remarkably good value. We'd expect you to escape at well under 30€/per head having had a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Camon

L'ABBAYE-CHÂTEAU DE CAMON
05 61 60 31 23
On the D7,
12 km south of Mirepoix

A 16th century fortified *abbaye* now run by a Welsh/South African couple with a Mancunian chef (*very* multi-cultural!). It's a gloriously pretty, atmospheric and romantic place to spend an evening; the ambience and charming, efficient service are matched by an exciting (if quite short) and excellently prepared menu. We recently overheard a Parisian asserting that this was the best meal he'd had in the region. Not cheap, but worth the probable 40€ a head, as much for the setting, and the service as for the food. You must book (but at least you can speak on the phone in English!)

CASTELNAUDARY (there are dozens of excellent restaurants in Castelnaudary; these are two of our favourites)

HOTEL DU CENTRE ET LAURAGAIS
04 68 23 25 95
Excellent bourgeois cooking (and, we think, the best *cassoulet* in the area). Small noisy terrace on the main street of *Castelnaudary*. Otherwise, somewhat lacking in atmosphere. Typically €30 per head. Must book if you want to lunch on the terrace, especially on Sundays.

LE TIROU
04 68 94 15 95
Hidden behind a petrol station opposite the *Géant* supermarket, but, nonetheless recommended for an evening out. There's excellent, friendly service in the very pretty garden; food a bit flash and quite rich (€35+ per head). Do book.

NORTH OF CASTELNAUDARY

Saint Félix Lauragais
Near **Revel**
LE POIDS PUBLIC
05 61 83 00 20
Michelin *: excellent food, pleasant, modern, unremarkable decor, but the most glorious view from the terrace, which is a *heavenly* lunch spot for a sunny day (but you need to specify when you book that you want to be on the terrace– and it can get very hot in the summer). Beware their speciality *amuse-gueule*, stewed cocks' combs! Service hits exactly the right note. Brilliant wine list – and you can trust the *sommelier* not to rip you off. Probably €50+ per head; must book.

La Pomarède
(Towards **Revel**)
CHATEAU DE LA POMAREDE
04 68 60 49 69
Michelin *: very classy indeed, set in an old Cathar castle; takes itself quite seriously, so the magnificently romantic setting can become something of a ritualised sacramental experience, rather than just a great meal. Specialities include: *Fraîcheur de homard et purée d'artichaut* and *Nougat glacé aux olives de Lucques*. Very expensive, of course, but if you can afford it, probably worth every penny. Must book.

CARCASSONNE AND NEARBY

Old City
LA TABLE RONDE
04 68 47 38 21
There's a wealth of restaurants in the modern town, and a surfeit of rip-off joints in the old, where this one is. Mulberry shaded terrace is cool and peaceful, a great relief from the maelstrom of the tourist streets. Food entirely acceptable, reasonably priced, given the location. A much less awful lunch experience than you'd expect in this tourist trap.

Cavanac
LE CHATEAU DE CAVANAC
04 68 79 61 04
If you're willing to drive for 50 minutes each way to this village (10 km South of *Carcassonne* on the D104), you'll have a gastronomic evening to remember. You *can* choose *à la carte*, but the set menu is astonishing value: A *kir* to start with, a choice of 4 starters (including ½ lobster or *foie gras*), 4 fish choices (including *écrevisses*), 4 meat choices, a selection of goat cheeses with honey, desserts, coffee and *digestif*, with as much red, white and rosé wine as you can drink. You will leave several of kilos heavier, €45 per head lighter, and several degrees happier. Must book.

LIMOUX

L'ÉGLANTINE
04 68 31 21 95
Very pleasant service. Original menu. Worth the €30 if you're in or around *Limoux*, but *ne vaut pas le voyage*

Brugairolles
near **Limoux**
DOMAINE GAYDA
04 68 20 65 87
If you like the idea of sitting on a terrace watching a glorious sunset over vineyard-clad hills, while enjoying a first-class meal, with excellent, *different* wines created in the winery on the floor below, then this is worth the 40 minutes in the car, and the 40€ to 50€ per head that you'll pay.

It's an extremely stylish restaurant in the vineyard of *Domaine Gayda*. The menu is

exciting, different and very well prepared, but let down on the last couple of occasions we've been by disorganised, if well intended service. Their cheaper wines are very acceptable indeed; the more expensive jobs won't break the bank and are really excellent (there's a rumour that they supply the house wine for some of Gordon Ramsay's gaffs). In short, assuming they get the service back on track, this has become our favourite restaurant in the region.

WHEN IT'S TIME TO LEAVE

**DEPARTURE
TIME:**

Departure time is 10 am. We will need to clean and prepare 2 houses in 6 hours, so you really must be out of the house by then. If you want to stay by the pool for a few hours you are welcome to do so, but, sorry, you can't then go back into the house to shower or change.

CLEANING:

Please do remember that you have contracted to leave your house as clean and tidy as it was when you arrived.

CHECKLIST:

Here is a check list of key things that you need to remember before you leave:

- Check you haven't left anything behind (wardrobes, drawers, bathrooms, under the bed).
- Make sure all shutters are secured; it doesn't matter whether they are open or closed, as long as they are firmly secured, and not flapping in the breeze.
- Close all windows fully.
- Check that you've replaced all the DVDs on the shelf in their cases.
- Put the furniture back roughly where it was when you arrived!
- Check all lights are off (including bathroom, landings and outside lights).
- Leave no items in the fridge that might go off or grow penicillin.
- Please run a final dishwasher load for any dirty crockery, cutlery or cooking utensils.
- Check that the barbecue is empty of ash, and that it, and the oven are as you found them on arrival.
- Take all rubbish to dustbins (see plan on page 4).
- If anything got broken, please tell us; if we are not there, leave the remains on the dining table, (we won't be draconian about the odd breakage – these things happen – but we *do* need to know what to replace for the next guests).
- Leave all internal doors open and lock all outside doors from the inside *except* the front door.
- Lock the front door from the outside and return the key to us, or, if we are not there, please leave your front door key in the lock.

THANK YOU STAYING WITH US,

WE HOPE YOU'VE HAD A GREAT HOLIDAY.

DRIVE CAREFULLY.

**À L'ANNEE PROCHAINE
AU DOMAINE DE LOUSTALVIEL!**

ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

Go to the **URGENCES** at the **HÔPITAL DE FOIX**, OR PHONE THEM ON **05 61 05 40 57**

Driving there is probably quicker than calling an ambulance.

- go to roundabout near *Carrefour* in Pamiers;
- follow signs to Foix;
- on dual carriageway, follow **H** signs to the hospital).

There are other A&E hospitals at CARCASSONNE, CASTELNAUDARY and PAMIERS (look for **H** signs as you approach/enter the town).

Ambulance (SAMU) Dial 15

Fire Brigade (Sapeurs Pompiers) Dial 18

Poisonings (inc snake bites) 05 61 49 33 33

DOCTORS: 04 68 60 62 91

There are two doctors' practices in *Belpech*; we have had good reports of both.

Docteur Gilbert PEYROT and Docteur Martine CMBUS-PEYROT, a husband and wife team; both speak a *little* English.

First right as you enter *Belpech* (just before the baker's); surgery is the first house on right.

DENTISTS:

There is a good dentist at *Salles sur l'Hers*, and several at *Pamiers*; the doctors above can handle first-line dental emergencies, and can refer you to a dentist if necessary.

PHARMACY:

The pharmacy in *Belpech* has, or can get, pretty well anything you might need. They are better than most British chemists at diagnosing and treating minor medical problems.

POLICE:

In an emergency, dial 17

GETTING HELP:

We want you have an enjoyable and trouble-free holiday, but if you need us we live in *Loustalviel*, the middle house.

We may not be there all the time, but please talk to us as soon as possible if anything doesn't work, if there's something you can't find, if something is broken, if you have any electrical, gas, water, or structural problems, or if you just want some information or guidance.