

# touring magazine

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2021  
[www.touring.co.uk](http://www.touring.co.uk)

## BACK TO FRANCE SPECIAL



**INSIDE  
FRENCH CAMPSITES  
ALL ABOUT AIRES  
MICRO CARAVANS**

**CHIC CAMPING  
NEW MOTORHOME  
AND MUCH MORE...**

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# Welcome

**touring**  
magazine

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**T**his has been no ordinary camping year and, therefore, you'll possibly be trying to squeeze in every opportunity to get out and about for the remainder of the year and make up for lost camping time. I certainly have.

We've all been happily enjoying our camping trips throughout the UK, dismissing any notion of touring overseas. But France – and Continental Europe more generally – is always on my list of places to travel and, this year, has been much missed. It was with childish excitement, therefore, that I hopped across the Channel in September for a 12-day tour of France. Too frequently, the media reports about travel 'restrictions'. Let's think positively!

Hence in this issue – which has a French theme - we explain how easy it is to travel to France and what you need to do. I found taking Covid tests, before and after, exceptionally easy, booking them in advance and taking them in the comfort of my motorhome – and then at home upon my return. And, the requirements have eased further since then, so it's now even easier to travel to France.

Also in this issue is a showcase of the regions of France and what's new to visit. What beauty there is to see! We also highlight ten fabulous campsites that are worth travelling to France for, explain about other camping options for motorhomes, review a brand-new French motorhome model and visit Trigano VDL to see how Chausson motorhomes are made.

We also look at how to have huge outdoor adventures with teeny-tiny caravans and camping trailers. There's a fabulous selection that are so lightweight, anyone – and anything – can tow them.

Happy travels – in France?



Caroline Mills, Editor

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# Micro

**TOURING MAGAZINE** INTRODUCES THE  
WORLD OF MICRO-TOURING WITH THESE  
SMALLER-THAN-AVERAGE CARAVANS



# Machines

Big adventures creating great travel experiences don't have to begin with the purchase of a huge – or extraordinarily expensive – caravan. Downsizing can mean even bigger adventures and the chance to go further. And, if there's anything to learn from the recent experiences of petrol stations closing and locked-off petrol pumps, it's that lightweight touring, using less fuel, could be the way forward. 🚗





# GO-PODS

**U**nique in shape, Go-Pods are fun and versatile options for keeping things small while touring. With an MTPLM of just 750kg, you can select from three specifications: Plus, Platinum or Venus. Prices start from £14,795.

All Go-Pods have a wrap-around seating area that converts into a double bed, a 240V Dometic fridge, two-burner hob, sink, electric tap and portable cassette-style toilet. Opt for the Plus model, and you'll also receive dual-fuel blown-air heating, and a front box for gas bottles and extra storage plus a full airbeam awning that sleeps an additional four people.

The Platinum includes the above plus a 100W solar panel, 12V digital flat-screen TV, larger sink, an external 240V mains socket, USB upgrade, microwave oven and electric hook-up cable.

Venus offers the highest specification, with an upholstery fabric upgrade, higher-spec wood and worktops, pop-up 240V sockets with USB, cables and security items plus, on the outside, a choice of coloured GRP shell (match it with your car?) and alloy wheels. ●

[www.go-pods.co.uk](http://www.go-pods.co.uk)



**touring**  
CO.UK

**The hub for motorhome,  
caravan and camping inspiration**



**C**amperlands, who specialises in micro caravans and camping trailers, is the sole importer and dealer of this new lightweight caravan, the Campmaster LC3. It is just 424kgs unladen, so there's not a lot that can't tow it.

The insulated trailer with internal wall linings has a double-glazed door and side window plus a top vent and secure internal underfloor storage.

It's fully fitted with mains and 12V electrics, plus an audio system.

There's a rear kitchen with hob, fridge, sink with running water and storage. The gas bottle is housed in a lockable compartment.

Prices are from £9850 although it's recommended to add an awning or canopy for additional outdoor living space. Camperlands has various options to fit, which are discounted when purchased with the Campmaster. In so doing, you also receive a free package of mains hook-up lead, trailer level, awning carpet, caravan bottom skirt and a spare wheel. ●

[www.camperlands.co.uk](http://www.camperlands.co.uk)



# CAMPMASTER LIGHTWEIGHT CARAVAN

## In Focus



# FREEDOM CARAVANS

**S**lightly old-fashioned on the outside, modishly feature-packed on the inside, Freedom Caravans offer plenty of choice with six models available. And, with unladen weights of between 600kg and 680kg, and an MTPLM of just 750kg, they're not exactly a hefty lump to tow.

The Microlite Discovery tips the scales at just 600kg. More to the point, its overall length including chassis is a mere four metres and overall height (with its pop-top roof down) is 2.21m. Internal height is still 1.88m (6' 2") so plenty of people can stand tall without needing to raise the roof. Alternatively, try the top-of-the-range Jetstream that's feature-rich. The Jetstream Twin Sport includes a super king-size double bed (yes, you read right) plus a washroom with shower and a kitchen with an oven. Prices start from £12,165. ●

[www.freedomcaravans.com](http://www.freedomcaravans.com)

# DIDDYVANS

**H**ow about this for a lightweight trailer? At just 340kgs (approximately), there's no car that would struggle to tow a Diddyvan; they are sturdy and easy to manoeuvre and, at five feet high, prove aerodynamic behind a towcar. Built in Hampshire, and all IVA certified, the teardrop trailers are bespoke with various options available.

The aluminium-clad camping trailer is loosely based on a 1940s design, The Cub. There's space for cooking at the rear, which includes compartments for storage and the leisure battery. Inside there is ample space for two adults to sleep in comfort with a sleeping area that measures 6'3"L x 4'W x 3'6"H. Prices start at £5995. ●

[www.diddyvans.co.uk](http://www.diddyvans.co.uk)





**MINI FREESTYLE**



MINI

Freestyle  
by TRIGANO

970-V

## In Focus

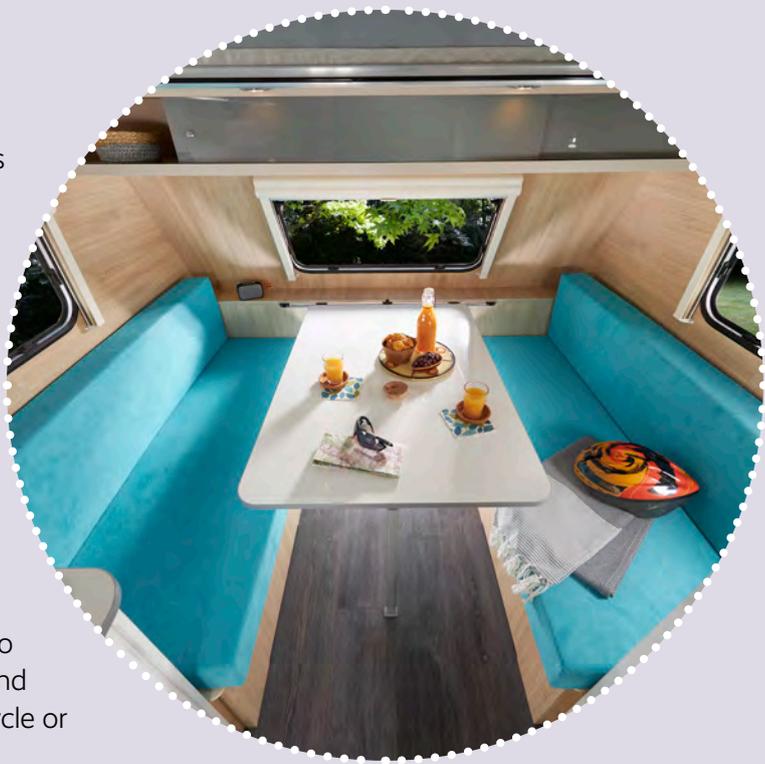
**W**e love these little two-berth micro tourers from French manufacturer Trigano VDL. They look decidedly *de rigueur* with trendy interior colours and coordinating pop-up roofs yet without losing the style of a traditional touring caravan. They'll fit in a standard-sized garage when not in use but, on the road, tow with minimum wind resistance.

The daintiest is the Mini-Freestyle 270, which offers a traditional parallel-sofa layout that transforms into a double bed at night. It also includes a good-sized kitchen area with hob, sink and full-size fridge. If you opt for the 290, you also claim a washroom with toilet, handbasin and sink. Go for the sporty looking 300 Racing Edition, though, and you'll get tracks and space to transport your motorcycle or bikes.

Mini-Freestyle are imported into the UK by Raclet Ltd ([www.raclet.co.uk](http://www.raclet.co.uk)).

Alternatively, if a Mini-Freestyle is your heart's desire, and you feel like a trip to France to pick one up (not forgetting import duty), the nearest French dealer is in Arras, just an hour south of Calais. ●

[www.mini-freestyle.com](http://www.mini-freestyle.com)





# WHEELHOME DASHAWAY

It's not as if Stephen Wheeler, owner of Wheelhome requires the publicity for his Dashaway Trailer; he's had to suspend orders on this cool trailer while he concentrates on the multiple orders for his micro campervan, the Vikenze III. But Stephen couldn't resist sharing snaps of the Dashaway that, earlier this summer, he towed to the Orkney Islands and back from his base in Essex, with a Tesla Model 3 – an all-electric journey of some 1,500 miles!

The Dashaway's Mass in Running Order is just 644kgs, making it easily towable by all-electric towcars, as Stephen's trip proves. The two-berth van has a retracting 'Podrant', which houses the fridge, part of the bed and bedding. There's also a pop-up roof to provide standing room and you can add an awning. It's all-electric, too, with a solar panel to charge up the lithium leisure battery, so no lugging around a heavy gas bottle. ●

[www.wheelhome.co.uk](http://www.wheelhome.co.uk)



# CARETTA

It's not the most well-known caravan brand in the UK but Caretta, manufactured in Turkey, are imported and sold by Cheshire-based Caretta Micro Caravans UK. Select between the Calypso 2 and Calypso 4, which, as the names imply, are two- and four-berth vans respectively. External colours include a choice of white, grey or champagne.

The Calypso 2 is just 4.21m long and has all the specifications of a much larger touring caravan – you'll still find a cassette toilet, fridge, hob, fresh- and waste-water tanks, shower, solar panels, water and blown-air heater, flyscreens, electric hook-up, gas bottle storage and so on. There's also a French double bed.

The Caretta 2 weighs just 690kg, so is tow-able by small cars without the need for a B+E license. For a family, opt for the Calypso 4, which also features bunk beds yet only weighs 750kg and is a mere 4.81m long. ●

[www.caretta-caravans.co.uk](http://www.caretta-caravans.co.uk)

# NOMAD TRAILER

If you didn't catch it first time round, you can read more about the new micro trailer from Nomad in our June/July 2021 issue. As a taster, the curvy camping pod sits upon a bespoke-made chassis. Internally, it's not possible to stand but you can sit upright perfectly well, and there's sufficient space for a full-size double bed, plus storage in cupboards and a small, drop-down leaf table for sitting a mug of tea or a laptop.

It's all about cooking outdoors, with an external hatch at the rear of the trailer that lifts to present a kitchen with small hob, sink and room for a coolbox. An awning provides extra outdoor living space. ●

[www.nomadtrailers.co.uk](http://www.nomadtrailers.co.uk)







# ERIBA TOURING

# In Focus





**T**hese are classic caravans with a vintage look but all the comforts of modern touring. ERIBA Touring caravans, owned by the Erwin Hymer Group, have long been cherished for their retro style and charm – and have a huge following.

ERIBA does not specialise solely in micro caravans, but the company does manufacture some compact models. The three-berth Touring 310 is the smallest of the 11 models available, at 4.83m long and weighing in at 750kg MiRO (and, therefore, does not require a B+E licence). Among the models are also the oh-so-cool ERIBA Touring Ocean Drive and the ERIBA Touring Rockabilly, with an American Diner look. Both retro vans, based on the Touring 530, offer three sleeping berths and are 5.79m in length yet still weigh in at less than 1,000kg. All ERIBA Touring vans include a dinky pop-top roof. ●

[www.eriba.com/gb/en](http://www.eriba.com/gb/en)

In Focus

# MINK SPORT CAMPER

**T**here's a Nordic heritage behind the Mink Sport Camper, which is new to the UK this year but established in Iceland since 2015. The concept is to combine luxury travel while being at one with nature, including for the most inexperienced of campers.

The Mink Sport Camper is everything the adventure seeker needs: easily towed luxury that's compact and weighing just 490kg. The incredibly comfy double bed sits beneath a panoramic sunroof, so you can sleep under the stars, while cosying up with a hot cup of tea that you've brewed in the alfresco kitchen. However, if gin, beer, or bubbles are more your thing, there is also a 36-litre ice chest! The Mink Sport Camper is available in the UK from long-established camping and caravanning dealer, Broad Lane Leisure. ●

[www.mink-campers.co.uk](http://www.mink-campers.co.uk)



# Micro Caravans



# FIRST I



**New from Chausson for 2022 is a  
slimline coachbuilt that's packed  
with storage space ↻**

# NLINE



The new Chausson S514 First Line  
Photo © Elite Motorhomes

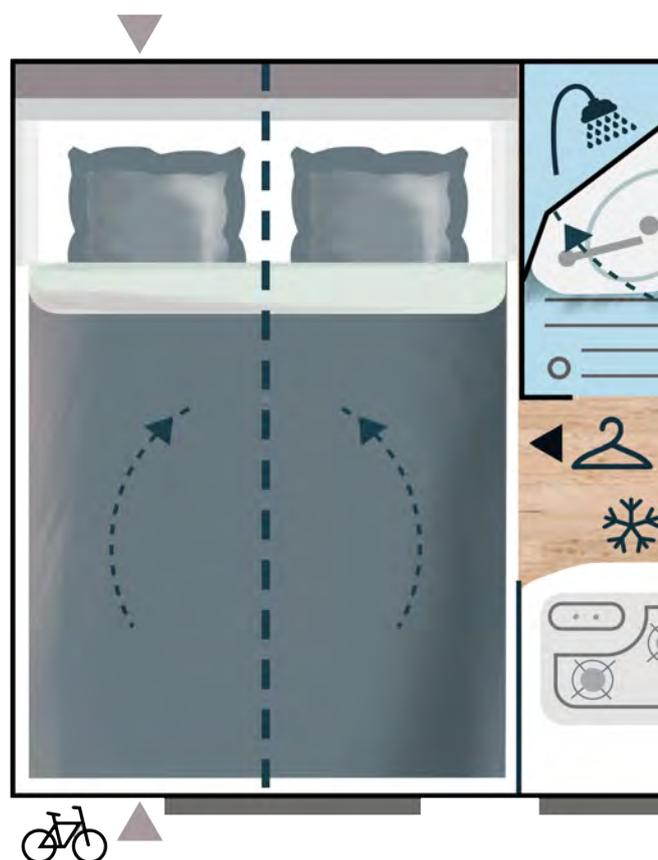


**F**rench manufacturer Chausson has long been known for its design innovation and how to maximise the use of the interior space of a motorhome without making it longer, taller, wider. In fact, for 2022 the team at Chausson has created a new coachbuilt motorhome with reduced dimensions.

## EXTERIOR

The body of the S514 First Line is narrower than a standard low-profile motorhome; neither is it as tall. In essence, its 20cm shorter in height and has a reduction of 25cm in width. This makes it closer to the width of a panel van conversion than a coachbuilt. Not that you'd know it's much narrower when you step inside. We'll come to that in a minute. But the reduced width, coupled with its length at just 5.99m, makes all the difference when looking for that elusive parking space.

You'll find access to the fresh-water tank and toilet cassette, plus the grey waste drain, on the nearside. The gas bottle locker is on the offside, between the driver's cab door and the habitation door. External doors to the garage storage space at



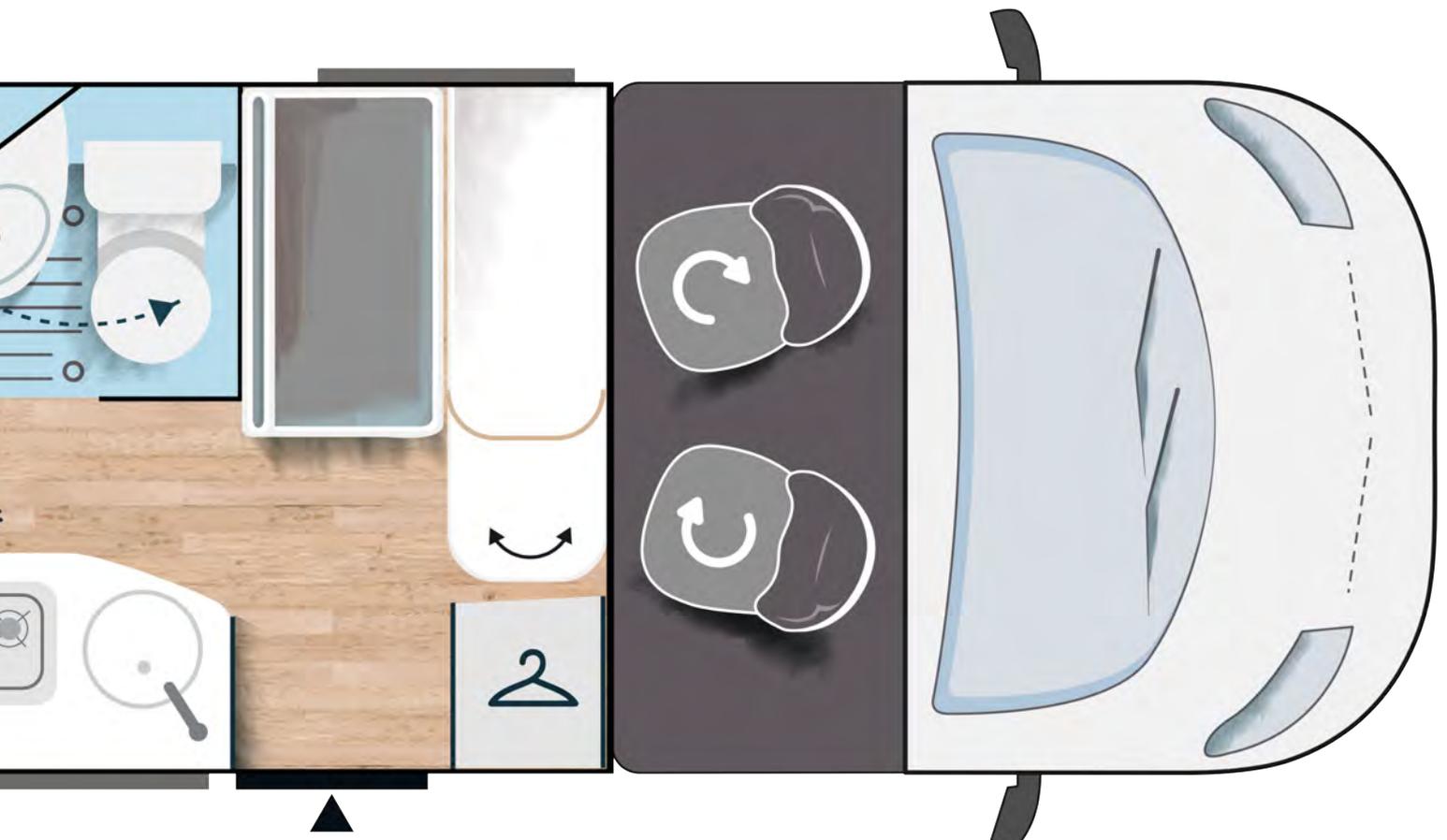
# Chausson S514 First Line

the rear are on both sides of the 'van, though the door on the offside is the larger of the two. The cab has that tell-tale bulbous Ford nose, but this is softened by the polyester low-profile Chausson cap that brings cab and body seamlessly together. Decals are modest, over the sidewalls only, and a black Thule Omnistor awning and solar panel can be included as an option for an additional £1300.

## LIVING & SLEEPING

First Line models from Chausson are entry-level but the upholstery that immediately grabs your eye when you step inside doesn't determine that. Rotating cab seats (with armrests) and the two-belt passenger bench seat in the rear are coordinated, with a soft, plush faux suede and dogtooth fabric in neutral greys plus highlighted orange stitching. A pedestal table has a slide-out extension for greater space however, the narrower width of the 'van overall does mean that moving between cab and living area is a bit of a sideways squeeze.

Forward of the habitation door on the offside is a useful sideboard with lift-up top providing access to a deep storage area and shelving above. →



## First Look

It's possible to create a single bed at the front by converting the dinette but, to all intents and purposes, this is a two-berth motorhome – and a comfortable one at that. At the rear is a full-size transverse double bed that's raised above floor level, accessed via a half-height ladder.

The mattress is comfortably firm and sits on sprung wooden slats for good ventilation. There's an opaque roof vent above the bed and a narrow-depth window with blind; couple these with the lined curtain to pull across and you've a very cosy nest in which to sleep.



### KITCHEN

The galley kitchen, beside the habitation door on the offside, is perfectly adequate for two. There is minimal preparation space though a pop-up extension to the worksurface provides enough to place a small chopping board or a couple of mugs. Be mindful that this does extend over the access from the habitation door. You'll find a circular, brushed stainless steel sink with modish matt black mixer tap adjacent to a recessed two-burner gas hob. Both have black glass tops that could also be used as preparation space, 'though with the hob top lifted, it does cut off the small area of worksurface behind.

Beneath the worktop is a good-sized cutlery drawer, a large cupboard with shelf that's an excellent size for storing pans and dry foods, plus an 87-litre three-way fridge with freezer compartment; easily enough space for two people to keep a few days of food fresh.

### WASHROOM

Chausson has used its ingenuity again here with the, currently popular, device of a pivoting panel that allows the washroom to be space-saving. Put simply, choose between toilet and washbasin or shower. In one moment, you have the Thetford toilet plus a sink with mixer tap, large mirror above and storage cupboard for lotions to one side; the next, swivel the 'wall' around to establish a shower area with extending shower tap and utilise the shelf created by the wheel arch to place your shower gel and shampoo.

One thing to consider is that you need to step out of the shower into the corridor beside the kitchen in order to return the pivoting wall to its travelling position. There is no domestic-handled door, but a wrap-around concertina door. Our concern here is the rattle that this door could create when driving.



Want more? Turn to page 100 for a factory tour of Chausson's headquarters in France.

**STORAGE**

While the S514 First Line may be narrower than most coachbuilds, it's by no means short on storage. There is masses of it. Both kitchen and washroom have well-planned storage solutions while there are overhead lockers elsewhere including on the rear wall, above the double bed, and above the dinette table. There are also useful cubby holes and shelving above the cab.

But the boon in this 'van is the storage provision at the rear. Yes, there's a rear garage space large enough to house a bike or two, accessed both externally and internally via a sliding hatch. But also, beneath the rear bed are two large cupboards, one with shelving. And, if you lift the 'butterfly bed' – one of those design innovations from Chausson where the bed has a centre-fold – you'll find storage space beneath the mattress slats. Put simply, there is ample storage for the most active of motorcaravanners.

**FINAL SAY...**

The S514 First Line has an entry level specification and that is apparent in some of the detail, such as the internal finish of the habitation door and the unlined cab curtain in place of pleated cab blinds, or the general appearance of the basic, internal white walls. But there are design features here that are far beyond entry-level, including the attention to storage capacity, fixtures such as blown-air heating in the garage, preventing kit going damp, and the consideration for access between garage and habitation area; you could, for example, slide the internal access hatch across and fiddle with your bike chain in the warmth of your 'van rather than in the rain.

Couple this with standard features such as a choice of heating (use your diesel while on the road, then switch to gas or electric when parked up), 100% LED lighting inside and out, USB ports plus 12V and 230V sockets throughout (including in the garage), Grade Three insulation, a whopping payload and much more, and you've got yourself a very comfortable, usable 'van.

Internally, it's only the corridor to access the rear bed from the living area that's noticeably a little narrower. And there's no need to 'live' in the corridor when you've got that big bed to snuggle up in and the awning under which to enjoy a drink and admire the view of an evening. Happy days. ●

**TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS****BASE VEHICLE CHASSIS:**

Ford Transit Euro6D 130bhp  
(optional upgrade to 170bhp)

<b>MASS IN RUNNING ORDER (MIRO)</b> .....	2,600kg
<b>GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT</b> .....	3,500kg
<b>MAX PAYLOAD</b> .....	900kg
<b>EXTERIOR LENGTH</b> .....	5.99m
<b>BODY WIDTH</b> .....	2.10m
<b>HEIGHT</b> .....	2.75m
<b>BERTHS</b> .....	2/3
<b>DESIGNATED TRAVEL SEATS</b> .....	4
<b>COST</b> .....	from £44,840 (OTR)

NB. MiRO and payload may change according to any optional extras supplied.

Back to



# France

HOW WE'VE MISSED FRANCE!  
**TOURING MAGAZINE** SHOWCASES,  
REGION-BY-REGION, WHY YOU SHOULD  
RETURN – OR MAKE A FIRST-TIME VISIT  
FOR A CAMPING HOLIDAY



## Overseas Touring

# Auvergne

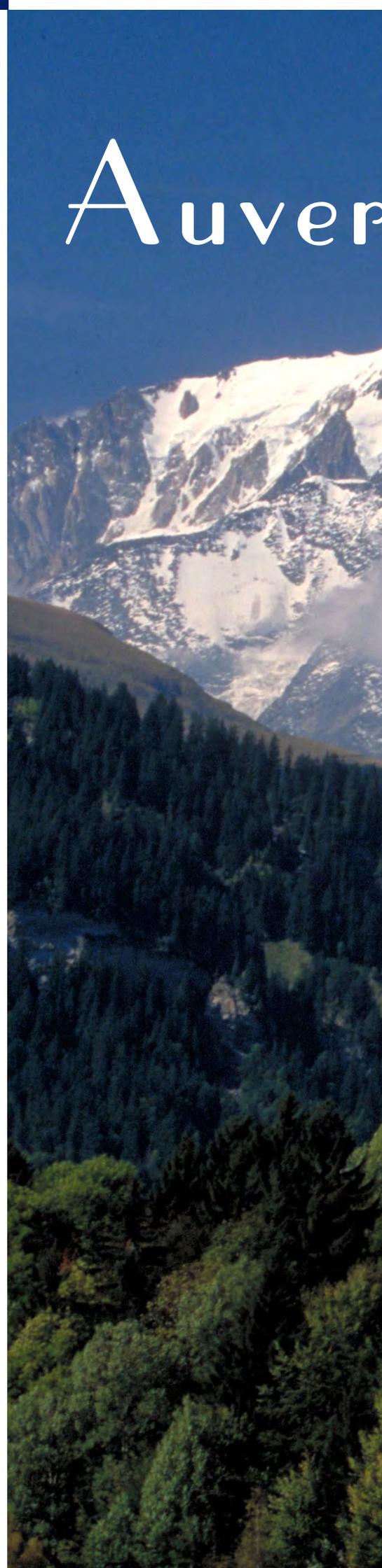
**W**hether you're after the culture and noted gastronomy of Lyon, France's third-largest city, the wild, volcanic landscapes of Puy de Dôme (considered one of the Grand Sites de France) and the Cantal or the ritzy ski resorts of the Alps, you'll find plenty of variation within this expansive region in the east of the country.

Dividing the unique, volcanic terrain of the Auvergne and its wooded mountains with the alpine scenery that includes Mont Blanc and the stunning lakes of Annecy and Bourget, is the Rhône valley, which feeds the nation through its fields of fruit orchards and keeps visitors supplied with wine in Beaujolais and the Cotes du Rhône.

Eat fondue in Savoie, follow the Lavender Route in the department of the Drôme, and take a wild walk in the Parc Naturel Régional des Monts d'Ardèche. Or why not learn about the green drink of Chartreuse, created by monks in the mountainous region of the same name, or go white-water rafting in the Gorges de l'Allier? That is, if you can prise yourself away from a street café in picturesque Annecy or stop for a while from pedalling the long-distance ViaRhôna cycle route, alongside the River Rhône.

Recently launched is the Vallée de la Gastronomie, which offers a series of unique gastronomic experiences along the valley of the Rhône, from Dijon to Marseille. Select from a picnic in lavender fields to visiting a goat farm making provincial cheese, artisan nougat makers to wine tastings amid the vineyards of the Ermitage, and much more.

[www.auvergnerhonealps-tourisme.com](http://www.auvergnerhonealps-tourisme.com)



# gne Rhône-Alpes



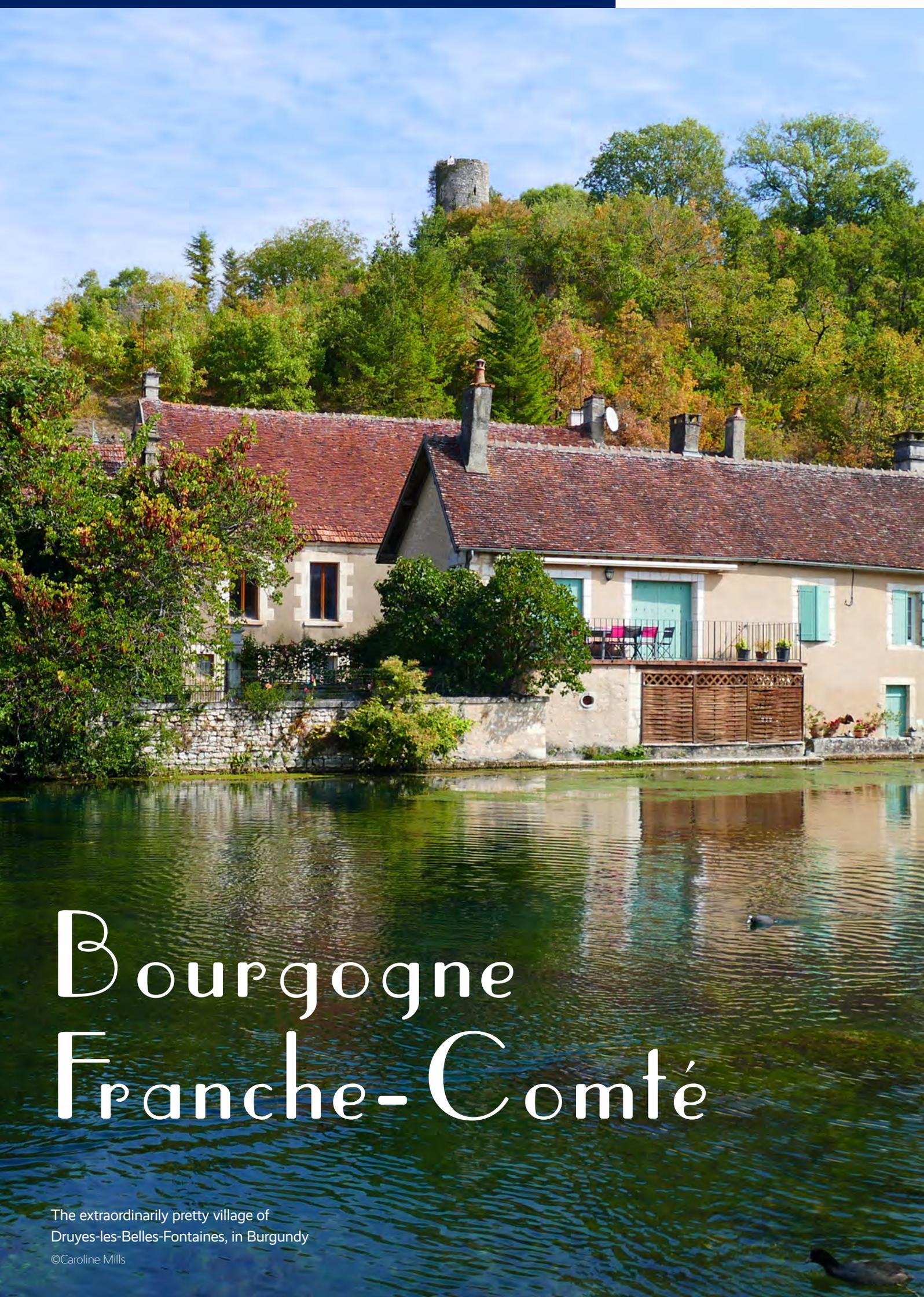
Massif du Mont Blanc

©JL. Rigaux/Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme



“The wild, volcanic landscapes of Puy de Dôme are considered one of the Grand Sites de France”





# Bourgogne Franche-Comté

The extraordinarily pretty village of  
Druyes-les-Belles-Fontaines, in Burgundy

©Caroline Mills



**T**here are three distinct sides to this extensive region, and you'll experience notable changes in landscape on a tour throughout. Head to Bourgogne (Burgundy) for its extraordinary quality of history, culture plus food and wine pairings – the historic city of Dijon with exceptional museums and art galleries combine with Michelin-star restaurants while Beaune is the historic centre for wine and Auxerre, brimming with medieval riverside architecture. Cycle among the vineyards along Burgundy's scenic wine-producing slopes of the Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune, where the Climats (tiny vineyard parcels) are designated with UNESCO protected status and the pretty villages are simply sublime.

Or, select the beautiful mountains of the Jura, in Franche-Comté, renowned for its wooded slopes and patchwork of rolling meadows filled with brown and white-patched Montbéliarde cows producing tasty Comté cheese. There are ski slopes to match those of the Alps without any pretentiousness and the opportunity to get on your bike or step into your walking shoes on the Grandes Traversées du Jura trails. Hiking and biking are also possible in the Vosges Massif, where more than 80 lakes and a thousand ponds hide among the most forested area of France; autumn is a fabulous time to visit when the beech trees turn golden.

[www.bourgognefranche-comte.com](http://www.bourgognefranche-comte.com)

Motorhomes parked up beside the Canal du Nivernais at Mailley-le-Château

©Caroline Mills





If there's ever a place to take things slowly, the Breton peninsula, is it. Make the most of bracing coastal walks on the Pointe du Raz – the westernmost point in mainland France and one of the most wildly beautiful stretch of coastlines in Brittany, go rock scrambling on the Côte de Granit Rose (Pink Granite Coast), eat oysters plucked from the sea in Cancale or take a boat trip from a bygone age from Brest.

Our pick would be to take a ferry to one of the 42 islands in the Gulf of Morbihan, to sample crêpes in Roscoff, visit the ancient standing stones of Carnac, discover painters in Pont Aven or climb a 'mountain' for views in the Monts d'Arrée hills. And, while the historic monastic abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel is across the border in neighbouring Normandy, the vast bay in which it sits, and which is subject to some of the most extreme tidal variations in the world, is partly within Brittany. Go for a guided walk on the sand in search of mussels or try kitesurfing to feel the wind in your hair.

[www.brittanytourism.com](http://www.brittanytourism.com)

# Brittany

View of the Baie du Mont Sr Michel

©Teddy VerneuilCRT Bretagne



Château de  
Chenonceau

©D. Darault/CRT, Centre  
Val de Loire



# Centre Val de Loire



Oh my goodness, can there be a more incredible spectacle of sumptuous architecture than along the banks of the River Loire? Take your pick. Do you visit the Château de Chambord first or the Château de Cheverny? Or, maybe, even the Château de Chenonceau whose graceful arches straddle the River Cher. Don't forget the royal palaces in the equally sumptuous towns of Blois and Amboise, or the many palatial gardens like Villandry and Château de Rivau.

This is one of the best regions of France to reach for the sky with a hot-air balloon ride to see the Valley of the Kings from above. That is, once you've eaten a spread fit for a king from the selection of cheese and wine that the Loire Valley offers.

Castled out? We'd recommend you get on your bike and tour La Loire à Vélo that follows the Loire – for 900km! Or take a Segway ride through the vineyards or visit La Maison Tatin in the Sologne region to find out about – and taste – the amazing Tarte Tatin.

[www.loirevalley-france.co.uk](http://www.loirevalley-france.co.uk)



Family picnic  
at Château de  
Chambord

©Ludovic Letot/CRT  
Centre Val de Loire

# Grand Est

**F**rancy a tippie? Put your glad-rags on and stroll along Épernay's Avenue de Champagne, one of France's most exclusive addresses, for a taste of fizz. Then put your woollies on and head down-under to visit the kilometres of underground Caves in the capital of champagne production, where the bottles are left to sit at a perfect temperature. Champagne Mercier, with an underground train tour, Champagne de Castellane and Moët & Chandon all offer a good tourist experience.

If you'd prefer to see another side of the Champagne region, to the east of the golden vineyard slopes are the Grand Lacs, with opportunities for wild swimming, birdwatching in nature reserves and any number of watersports depending on which lake you visit.

Head further east, still, and you can visit the remote and beautiful wooded river valleys of the Ardennes, where you'll find peaceful countryside that's sparsely populated – and free from mass tourism. Follow the River Meuse and discover, not only a beautiful river but some charming towns along the way, like Stenay, with its Beer Museum, Monthermé and Revin.

And, for somewhere with a character of its own, Alsace really takes some beating; there's nowhere else in France like it. Germanic in character (the area went back-and-forth between states for centuries), you'll find picturesque villages made up of colourful, painted half-timber buildings decorated with vibrant pots of geraniums and nesting storks all tucked among the vineyard slopes at the foot of the Vosges mountains. Look out for Tarte Flambée (Flammenkuchen) washed down with a glass of chilled Alsace Riesling. Divine!

What's new? Get close to nature at Le Sentier des Cimes where you'll walk among the treetops of the Forêt de Cleebourg, which itself is a part of the Parc Naturel des Vosges du Nord. At its heart is a 30m-high timber tower, from which are fantastic views of the Rhine Valley, the Black Forest (in Germany) and the mountains of the Vosges. Once you've admired the view, return to ground level by way of a toboggan.

[www.explore-grandest.com](http://www.explore-grandest.com)



Avenue de Champagne

Photo: Shutterstock





# Hauts de France

Don't miss out on the northern coastline of the Sites des 2 Caps, one of the Grands Sites de France

© Caroline Mills

It's a region that British tourists, all too often, drive straight through without stopping when taking a holiday in France. That's a real shame with more than 200km of coastline, five regional natural parks and three locations designated as Grands Sites de France, including the Site des 2 Caps – the two headlands most noticeable as you glide towards France on a ferry to Calais.

The vast Baie de Somme, a little further west, is also marked with the same status and is an ornithologist's paradise. Follow the river inland, though, and you'll arrive at one of the most poignant areas of France – the Somme Battlefields. Here, you can take a self-guided tour by road or, better still, on foot or by bike to visit the thousands of war graves. There are exceptional museums at Thiepval, Bapaume and Albert plus, one of the most recent to open, The CWGC Experience in Beaurains, where you find out about the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Beautiful cities include those of Amiens, with its magnificent cathedral, and Lille, a one-time Capital of Culture and renowned for its innovation in art and design. But don't miss lesser-known gems, such as the peaceful Audomarois around St Omer – less than half-an-hour from Calais – where you can take a gentle boat ride along the many canals. Or, experience the unpretentiousness of an Estaminet, where you can sample a beer from one of the many breweries in the Hauts de France and taste local delicacies.

While Nausicaá, France's national sealife centre, in Boulogne-sur-Mer, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, new to neighbouring Calais is the giant mechanical Dragon. Keep a look out for this 15-metre-high dragon; you can also book a tour of the town sitting atop the fire-breathing monster!

[www.french-weekendbreaks.co.uk](http://www.french-weekendbreaks.co.uk)



Make a poignant visit to the war graves of the Somme Battlefields

© Caroline Mills



The Calais Dragon

© Fred Collier/Ville de Calais

# Normandy

A very popular region with British tourists, thanks, in part, to ferries direct from the UK to the Normandy coast, but also for its bucolic countryside that surrounds charming villages and towns defined by their numerous medieval half-timbered buildings. There's also, of course, a direct link with Britain; this is William the Conqueror's original stomping ground and you can visit the château museum on the site where he was born, in Falaise. Plus, there's the famous Bayeux Tapestry, which depicts the Battle of 1066, to view in the town of the same name.

The Normandy Beaches, where the Normandy Landings took place, and all the related memorial sites, are a must-see but, so too, a little further up the coast to the northeast, the impressive cliffs at Étretat, beloved by artists.

For more artistic inspiration, head inland to the beautiful city of Rouen to visit the cathedral, painted repeatedly by the Impressionist artist Claude Monet. The city on the Seine is also where you'll find the Joan of Arc Museum and further historical links to Britain. South of Rouen is Giverny, the much-loved and celebrated home of Monet where you can wander the colourful gardens – a reason to visit France in their own right.

But Normandy is also renowned for its local produce and the Calvados region is the place to go for gentle countryside filled with apple orchards and the chance to taste delicious Normandy cider and Calvados, the local apple brandy. It washes down well with local cheeses like Camembert, Livarot and Pont L'Évêque. One of the most beautiful towns to visit for a sumptuous meal using local produce is Honfleur – it doesn't get much more picture-perfect.

New to Normandy – and Brittany and the Hauts de France – is the Vélomaritime cycle route, which extends for 1400km along the coast, from Roscoff (Brittany) to Dunkerque (Northern France). The route is fully signposted and passes by and through some of Normandy's major tourist attractions, including the town of Honfleur.

[www.normandy-tourism.org](http://www.normandy-tourism.org)



The picturesque town  
and old port of Honfleur

© Caroline Mills



# Nouvelle-Aquitaine



## The Dune du Pilat, the largest sand dune in Europe

© Caroline Mills



If variety is the spice of life, you'll find Nouvelle-Aquitaine the region to visit. It has variety in (buckets and) spades. Take the Atlantic coast, for example; in the northwest of the region, you've the pretty port of La Rochelle and the islands of Ré and Oléron. Further south, is one vast long stretch of sandy beach for miles, incorporating little beachside tourist towns and, behind, the cool of the scented pine forest of Les Landes. That long stretch of sand includes the Dune du Pilat, the largest sand dune in Europe. It should be on a must-visit list.

Further south still, the lovely town of Bayonne, with an air of Basque about it, then the glitzy resort of Biarritz and, just before you cross the Spanish border, St Jean de Luz and Ciboure, both good-looking towns filled with Basque architecture and Tapas bars.

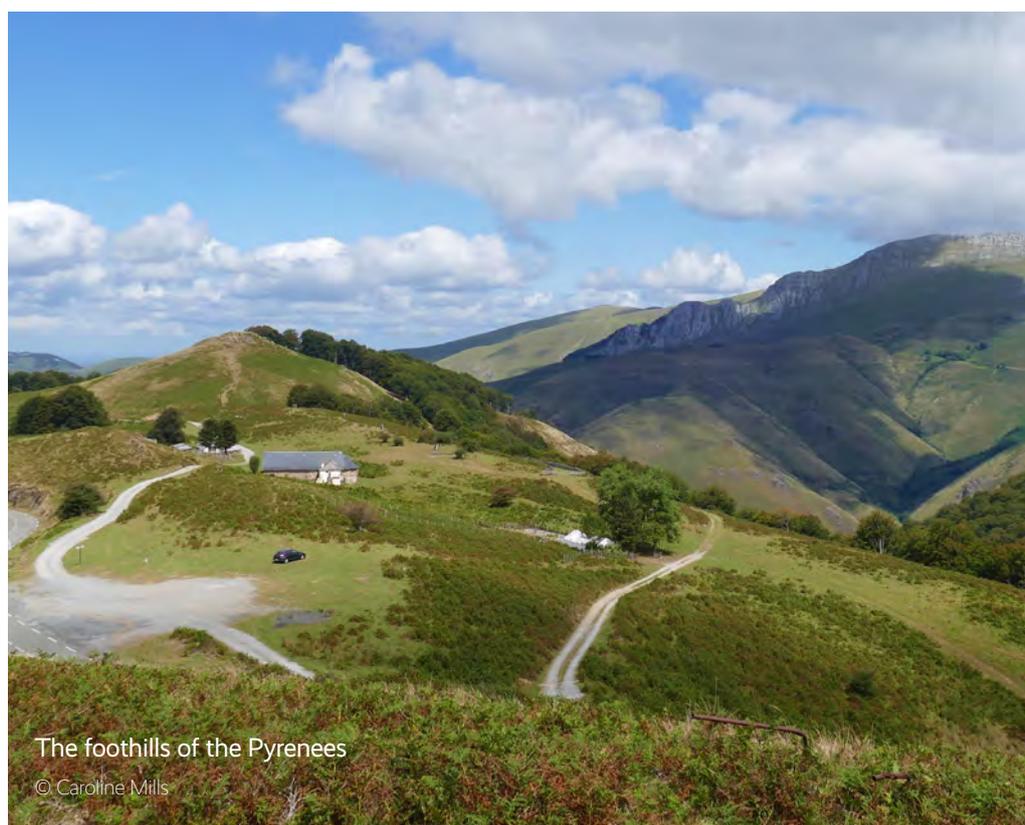
Inland, there are the A-list stars of the wine world in the Médoc, Haut-Médoc and around attractive towns like St Émilien. Then there's Bordeaux itself, an elegant city where the Cité du Vin should be on your to-do list, among many other attractions.

But there is so much more to see inland, including the Périgord and the Dordogne Valley, a river that much endears itself to British holidaymakers that like to get on the water, as well as visit the markets for the bounty of local produce and ogle at the sublime rustic stone architecture.

Further north, don't miss out on the gentle pastures of the Limoges, or for something a bit more techno, Futuroscope – a theme park that the kids will love.

Our pick, though, is the Pays Basque, in the far south of the region. The character of the area is outstanding, the architecture unique, the welcome warm and, if you head to the top of the citadelle in Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, the foothills are breathtaking.

[www.loirevalley-france.co.uk](http://www.loirevalley-france.co.uk)



The foothills of the Pyrenees

© Caroline Mills

The colourful town of Ciboure,  
seen from St-Jean-de-Luz and  
the Atlantic Ocean

© Caroline Mills



“Just before you cross the Spanish border, St Jean de Luz and Ciboure, both good-looking towns filled with Basque architecture and Tapas bars”





It's the second largest region of France and, why wouldn't you want to visit? In an area that's 3½ times the size of Wales, there are 200km of Mediterranean coastline, two national parks and eight regional nature parks plus a marine nature park, eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 44 winter sports resorts and 28 thermal spas.

It also includes more than 40 of France's top sites including medieval villages and castles in Cathar country together with the renowned cité of Carcassonne, incredible waterways like the pastoral Canal du Midi and the rocky gorges of the Tarn, the Jonte, the Lot and the Dordogne valley, some of the Pyrenees mountain range (we recommend a cable-car ride to the summit of the Pic du Midi – and a Skywalk!) and massifs such as the Cévennes, not to mention vineyards. Oh, and it's also the most popular region in France for camping.

There's lots that's new, including an eighth dedicated regional nature park – Corbières-Fenouilledes. More than 30% of the land in Occitania is protected either as a national park or regional nature park; this new protected area of 1,800 square kilometres showcases an important cultural heritage, with Cathar sites, abbeys and listed villages, in addition to exceptional flora and fauna, some of which, such as Bonelli's Eagle, are critically endangered in France.

[www.tourism-occitanie.co.uk](http://www.tourism-occitanie.co.uk)

Glorious scenery in the  
new Corbières-Fenouilledes  
Regional Natural Park

© G. Deschamps/CRTL Occitanie

# Occitanie



Occitanie includes the rocky gorges  
of the Tarn, the Jonte, the Lot and  
the Dordogne valley and some of the  
Pyrenees mountain range



Summer in the ski resort of  
La Mongie, Pyrenees

© Caroline Mills



## Overseas Touring

**A**h, the city of love. France's capital never ceases to charm, though visitors that continue to be cautious of crowded places may be looking for a little more social-distancing space than world-famous museums and glass lifts reaching the dizzy heights of the *troisième étage* of the Eiffel Tower. If that's you, maybe look at visiting the large open-air observation deck of the Montparnasse Tower with, arguably, the finest views of Paris – and the Eiffel Tower.

Or why not broaden your horizons and visit the Île de France, the region that surrounds Paris? It includes, for example, the stunning gardens and Palace of Versailles, with its gleaming Hall of Mirrors. Or the gardens at the Palace of Fontainebleau, Vaux-le-Vicomte and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, complete with walks along the Seine. There are undoubtedly, plenty of places to social distance in this region.

But, if it is museums you're desperate to return to, Paris has some 'new' places to visit. That includes the Palais Galliera, home to the first permanent fashion exhibition in France. It's dedicated to the history of fashion from the 18th century to the present day. There's also the Hôtel de la Marine, not a hotel (actually, once the headquarters of France's Navy) but a new museum with state rooms and a cultural exhibition gallery that overlooks the Place de la Concorde. And the Grand Palais, with its Champs Élysées address, is temporarily relocating – until 2024 – to the Champ de Mars, at the base of the Eiffel Tower.

[www.visitparisregion.com](http://www.visitparisregion.com)



# Paris

The gardens at the  
Palace of Versailles  
© Caroline Mills

# & Île de France



# Pays de la Loire



## The wild Côte d'Armor

© Caroline Mills



Fancy some fizz that's not from Champagne? Try Saumur instead. These regional bubbles, made from the vineyards around the beautiful town of Saumur, make an interesting change; and there are plenty of well-known names with Caves to go for a tour and a tasting. Try Gratien & Meyer, Bouvet-Ladubay, Ackerman or Veuve Amiot to visit. The vigneronns utilise the soft, tuffeau stone caves for which the area is famous, south of the Loire. Make a point of visiting the town itself, though, which graces the left bank of the River Loire and includes the fine Château de Saumur.

You could, of course, make straight for the Atlantic coast, where you'll find 215km of beach. North of the Loire, you'll find the Cote d'Armor with a wild and rocky coastline and some pleasant coastal towns and, in the hinterland, an intriguing landscape of salt pans and the delightful, fortified town of Guérande. Cross the Loire at Saint Nazaire and you can step off the mainland to the Île de Noirmoutier, more Mediterranean than Atlantic. That's not to take anything away from the beachside towns that crop up every few kilometres along the mainland coast; Les Sables d'Olonne is the most popular of them all. The coastline is one of the most popular for surfing and sailing, too.

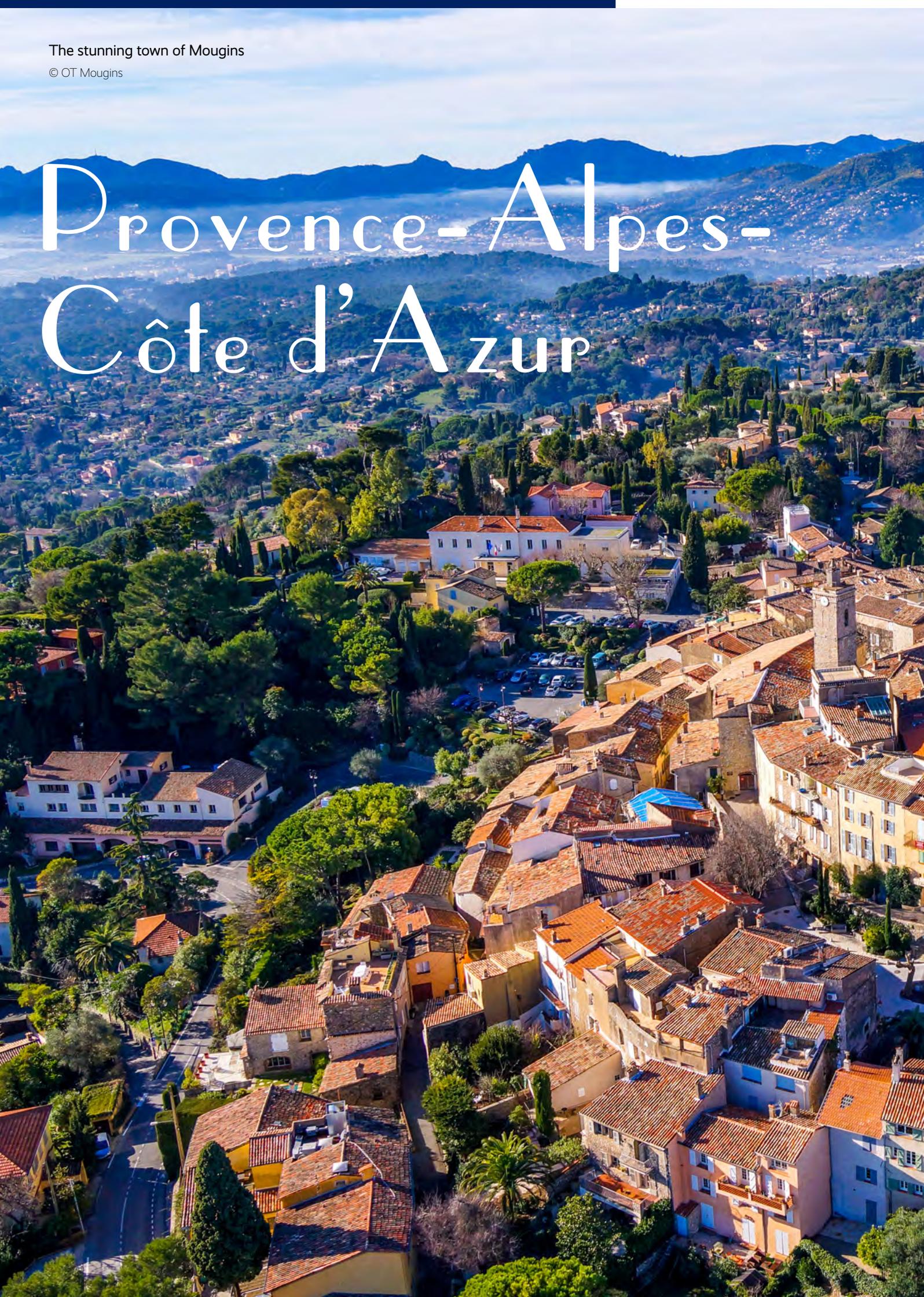
What's new? Ever liked the idea of boating without getting wet? There's a new glamping option at Au bord de Loire campsite in the little village of Gennes, where you can stay in a sailing boat, on dry land. You'll be next to the River Loire for that nautical experience, just without the sensation of continuous movement.

[www.enpaysdelaloire.com](http://www.enpaysdelaloire.com)

The stunning town of Mougins

© OT Mougins

# Provence-Alpes- Côte d'Azur

An aerial photograph of the town of Mougins, France. The town is built on a hillside, featuring numerous buildings with terracotta roofs and light-colored walls. The architecture is a mix of traditional and modern styles. The town is surrounded by lush greenery, including tall cypress trees and various other plants. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a clear day.

**F**or many, France is Provence and the Côte d'Azur. That speedy drive the length of France to soak up the sun on the Mediterranean coast and, as its name implies, an azure sea that glints with every passing sun-ray.

Your idea of heaven may be to see and be seen in Cannes, or Juan-le-Pins, or Saint-Tropez. It may be, if you're more cyclist than sunseeker, to climb the mythical Mont Ventoux on two wheels; the Tour de France mountain has become the region's ninth Regional Nature Reserve. You may prefer to see the mystical white horses and flamingos of the Camargue or sit in a street café for a fish supper in Marseille.

If you saunter inland, perhaps you'd prefer to make a personal perfume in Grasse, the capital of scent, or move towards the mountains for summery alpine scenery and explore the Gorges du Verdon by bike or the ski slopes of the Champsaur.

Sea or mountain scenery, our pick of the newcomers is the Marseille Underwater Museum. Here, you'll find a series of sculptures submerged in the Anse des Catalans bay that can only be reached by diving. Alternatively, head to the hills and the new Photography Centre in Mougins, a beautiful, medieval hill-top village that's extremely photogenic! For many, the town is known as the place where artist Pablo Picasso spent the last years of his life. The Photography Centre joins a growing collection of cultural and artistic hubs around the village and offers exhibitions and artist residencies.

[www.provence-alpes-cotedazur.com](http://www.provence-alpes-cotedazur.com)

The new Marseille Underwater Museum

© Wallis\_MSM



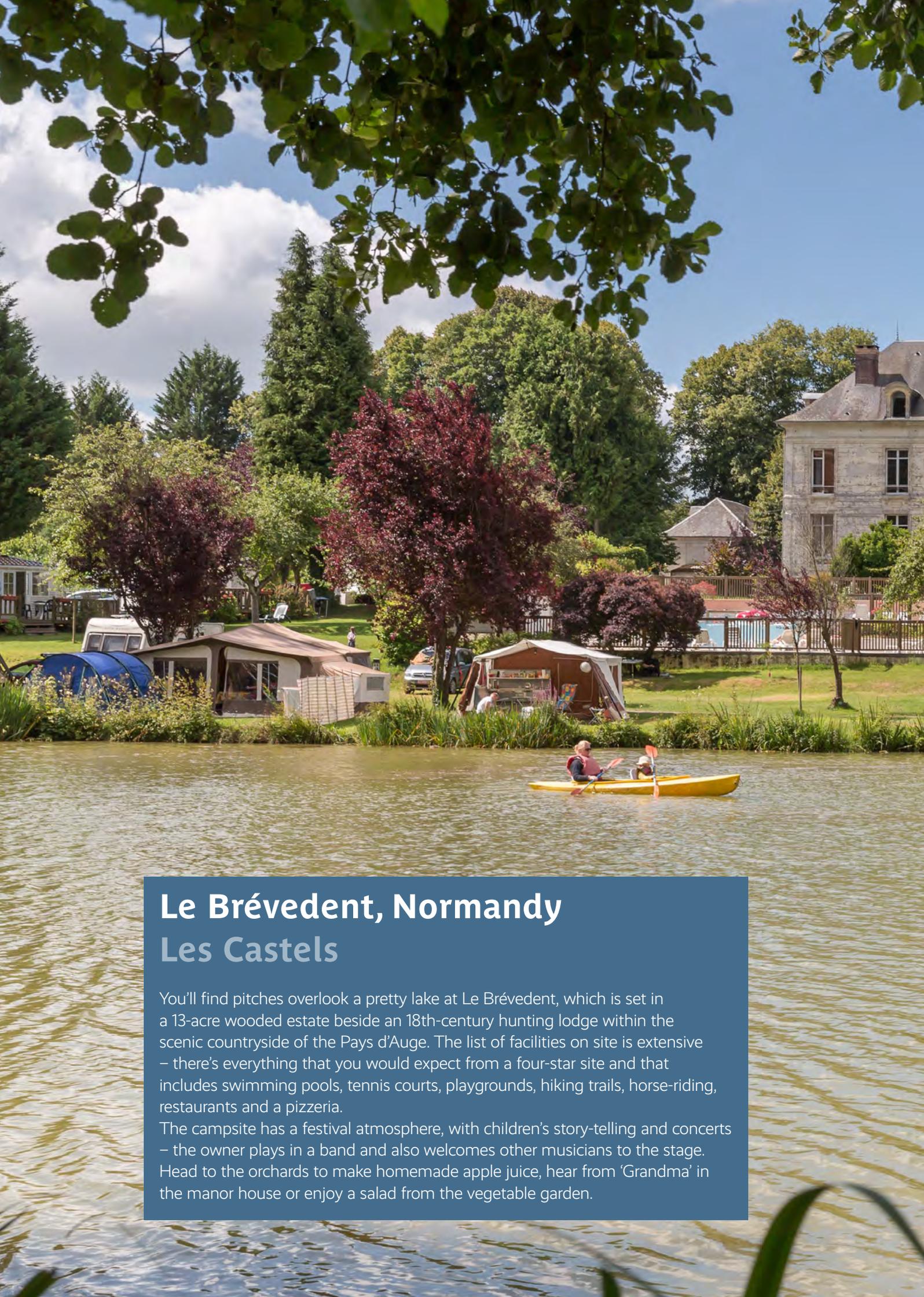
# Les car



France has thousands of campsites with pitches costing anywhere between a handful of Euros and 40-50 Euros, depending on the number of people and the grading – up to five stars – of the site. This selection, from four of the most well-known camping organisations in France, are chosen for their incredible locations and facilities

# campings





## Le Brévedent, Normandy

### Les Castels

You'll find pitches overlook a pretty lake at Le Brévedent, which is set in a 13-acre wooded estate beside an 18th-century hunting lodge within the scenic countryside of the Pays d'Auge. The list of facilities on site is extensive – there's everything that you would expect from a four-star site and that includes swimming pools, tennis courts, playgrounds, hiking trails, horse-riding, restaurants and a pizzeria.

The campsite has a festival atmosphere, with children's story-telling and concerts – the owner plays in a band and also welcomes other musicians to the stage. Head to the orchards to make homemade apple juice, hear from 'Grandma' in the manor house or enjoy a salad from the vegetable garden.



## Campsites

### Camping Les Châteaux, Loire Valley Huttopia

Select from one of the 282 pitches at this sensational woodland site, where spacious pitches are beneath a mix of oak and pine trees. There's a choice of Nature pitches or Comfort and Comfort Plus pitches, providing greater space, or you can opt for a hiker/cyclist's pitch if you're travelling without a vehicle. For family gatherings, groups are catered for in dedicated areas while amenity blocks include family bathrooms and facilities for babies (plus, you can hire cots and highchairs to save transporting your own).

There's an indoor pool and bike hire for when you want to head out to visit the Loire chateaux, but make sure you're back in time for dinner as the menu in the restaurant is tempting. Oh, and the village baker calls each morning with fresh bread and croissants.









## Camping Noirmoutier, Pays de la Loire Huttopia

Ah, the sound of the sea and the swish of the sand. For an exotic feel, the Huttopia site on Noirmoutier, an island in the Atlantic Ocean, is the place to camp. The island, which is easily reached by road, has a different ambience to the mainland.

You can camp between the sea, forest and salt marshes on this exceptional site, with direct access to Sableux beach, a 1km stretch of sand; indeed, many pitches directly overlook the ocean. It is a large site – there are almost 500 pitches with a choice of sunshine or shade beneath the pine trees. And, if you don't have your own tent, tourer or motorhome, there are family-sized safari tents, each with their own terrace and sea view, for rent. Washrooms were completely renovated in 2020. There are lots of activities on site, including stand-up paddleboarding, ebike hire, open-air movie nights and theatre workshops.

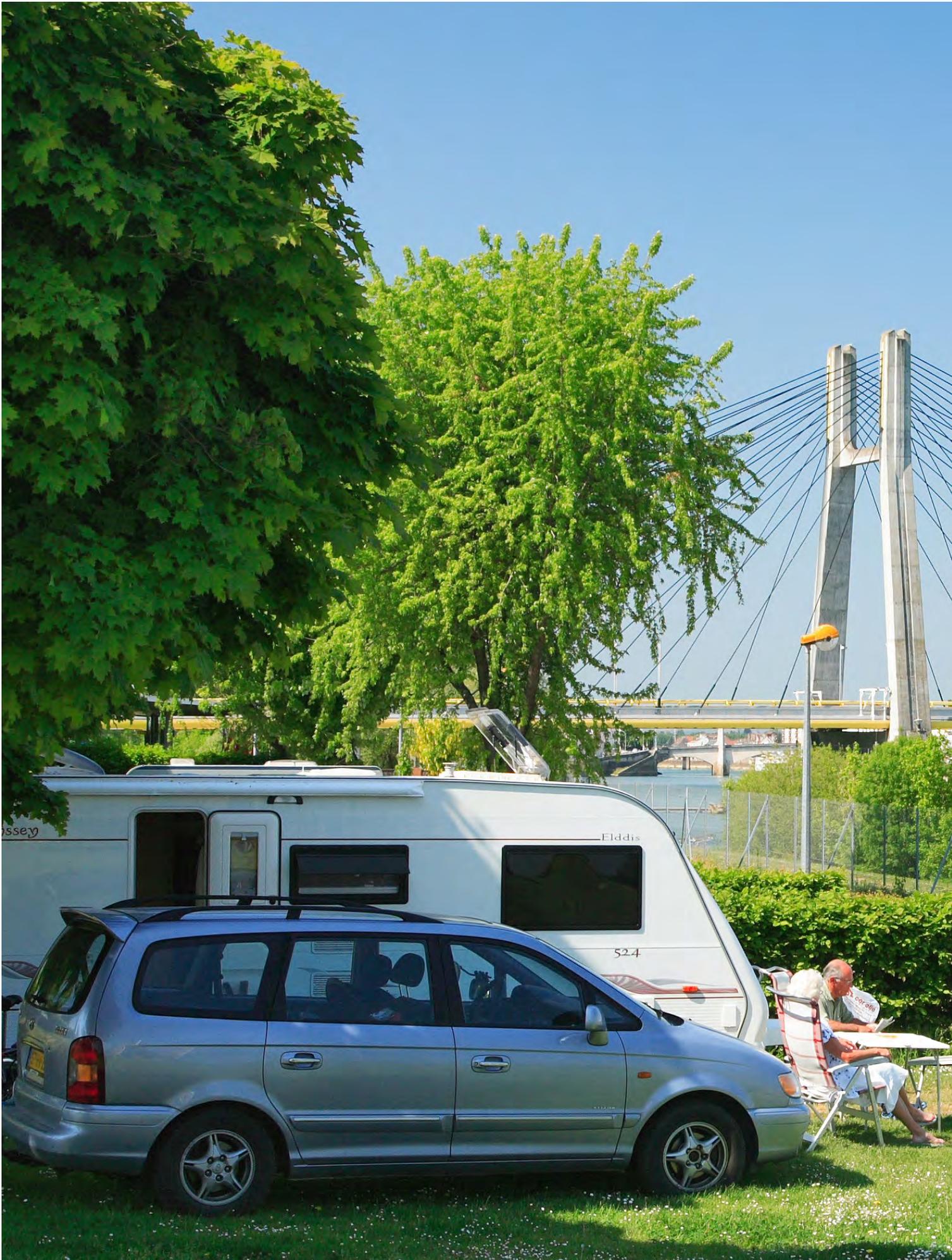
## Camping Meursault, Burgundy Huttopia

Looking for a campsite with some autumn colour? May we recommend this campsite, which is open until 7th November (for 2021) and is situated among the glorious vines of the Côte de Beaune. The vine leaves turn rich yellows and golds in autumn, and you'll have plenty of opportunity to view them from your pitch. The village of Meursault, next to which the campsite is located, is one of Burgundy's gems – as is the grand cru wine produced here.

The Route des Vins, from Satenay to Dijon, is accessible from the campsite and is a joy to discover by bike – and you can hire these (including ebikes) from the campsite. But take time to sip a glass on the terrace overlooking the vines, take a dip in the pool, or take the kids to the outdoor cinema. Inevitably there are wine tasting evenings available, but wine barrel making? Oh, yes!







## Camping du Pont de Bourgogne, Burgundy C'est Si Bon

This campsite is an ideal base from which to discover Burgundy. It is just 10 minutes' walk from the centre of Chalon-sur-Saône, with its lovely medieval square and a market every Friday and Sunday. There are 90 grass pitches in a parkland setting, right alongside the River Saône. Some pitches have privacy hedging while others are more open; all are for tents, tourers and motorhomes.

If you don't have your own accommodation, there are two-person bivouac tents, built on stilts for fab views of the river, distinctive 6-person family tents that are great for cyclists or walkers, and a small selection of mobile homes and chalets. Facilities include a small snack bar and a children's playground while the municipal swimming pool is 100m away.







## La Colombière, Haute-Savoie Sites et Paysages

Be welcomed by Aurelie, Laurence and Pierre at this four-star campsite with stunning views of the Alps. The site, with 113 pitches for tents, tourers and motorhomes plus chalets, is in the heart of a beautiful little mountain village, at the foot of the Salève yet is within just a few minutes of the graceful city of Geneva and the southern shore of Lake Geneva.

The facilities on site are too numerous to mention but, suffice to say, that there's everything you'd expect from a four-star site plus much, much more. That includes tours of the owner's vines, nature construction workshops for the family (build a bug hotel or a birdbox), play squash in the sports hall, or read a book in the library. And, if you're arriving by rail or air, there's a shuttle from the station or airport.



# Château de Ponsouze, Limousin

## Les Castels

Social distancing, anyone? You'll find camping pitches up to 300m<sup>2</sup> at Camping Château de Ponsouze! The four-star luxury site, near Montluçon, sits in the heart of the Creuse countryside. Camping pitches are situated near the chateau (yes, that's right) and the water park, which includes pools and slides that spill over into an adjoining lake where you can go kayaking. If you don't have your own tent, tourer or motorhome to book onto one of the 116 pitches, why not book a stay in one of the shepherd's huts or chalets?

With all the activities and facilities available at the campsite, there really is no need to head off-site, though that would be to your detriment for Limousin has some outstanding scenery and attractions to visit. You could, always hire a bike to explore the local area – available from the campsite. There are daily activities organised for children up to the age of twelve, too.



## Le Moulin de Sainte Anne, Occitanie Sites et Paysages

Jacuzzi, anyone? It's next to the swimming pool, if you're looking for it after you've finished your cocktail at the bar. And that's presumably to cool off after you've been to view nearby Carcassonne and taken a stroll along the Canal du Midi. You could try your hand at pétanque (there is, naturally, an area for playing it), after the owners have taken you on a tour of the local vineyards that surround the site.

There are just 43 pitches at Le Moulin, situated in a peaceful, wooded environment within a tiny village in the heart of Cathar country. If you don't have your own facilities, there are pre-erected safari tents and timber lodges to rent.



© Visit Britain/Andrew Pickett





# Pyrénées Natura, Nouvelle Aquitaine C'est Si Bon

In the middle of the mountains, this peaceful site has incredible views. Situated in the Pyrenees National Park, it is perfect for lovers of nature, walking and cycling. The four-star site lies over 6 acres, with 53 pitches for tents, tourers and motorhomes that are beautifully laid out along the valley, plus a selection of glamping pods and mobile homes.

Owing to its location in the Val d'Azun, the site promotes ecotourism. The campsite operates a small restaurant, serving delicious food, local beer and its own charcuterie. The owners are passionate about their regional produce and organise lots of food-themed activities.



# Sites et Paysages



It's all about nature and the countryside on a Sites et Paysages campsite. Peace and tranquillity are oft-overused words for tourism, but that's the spirit of this collection of 47 campsites, whether your camping by the sea, in the mountains or by a woodland stream. Aimed at families, all the sites are independently owned but follow a charter for great quality environmentally friendly provision rated three, four or five-stars and within some of France's most beautiful countryside.

[www.lefrenchtime.co.uk/sites-et-paysages](http://www.lefrenchtime.co.uk/sites-et-paysages)

# Huttopia



You'll find Huttopia campsites not only in Europe but also in Asia and North America, with a total of 65 luxury sites offering camping pitches and glamping villages. It's regarded as one of the most successful camping brands and at just 22 years old, it has seen extraordinary growth. That success is down to its ethos of providing space within natural surroundings and high-quality modern comforts. Facilities are top-notch with experiences such as sports lessons, cooking workshops, or themed evenings on offer, too.

[www.europe.huttopia.com/en](http://www.europe.huttopia.com/en)

# C'est Si Bon



This collection of 15 family campsites are all privately owned and managed by the owners who will be available to provide advice to make the most of your stay in the region – meet Mathieu at the Pont de Bourgogne, Jean-Louis at Champ la Chèvre in the mountains of the Drôme, or Jean-Christophe and Nathalie at Ardèche Camping. In particular, these campsite owners love the food and drink of their particular region and will arrange food and wine tastings or dinners on site, or, for example, visits to a local wine cellar or cheesemaker.

[www.c-sibon.fr](http://www.c-sibon.fr)

# Les Castels



Les Castels is a group of 25 sites with a total of 5795 pitches throughout France that have long set the gold standard as far as four- and five-star camping accommodation is concerned. For more than 60 years, Les Castels has provided luxury yet convivial, fun sites with natural authenticity that promote local history and inheritance. The sites are all independently owned and the passion of the proprietors for their region is evident.

[www.lefrenchtime.co.uk/les-castels](http://www.lefrenchtime.co.uk/les-castels)

# Aires &

TOURING FRANCE WITH A MOTORHOME DOESN'T HAVE TO INVOLVE CAMPSITES. FOR TRUE FREEDOM OF THE OPEN ROAD, THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES.

**CAROLINE MILLS** SHOWS YOU THE WAY



# *Graces*





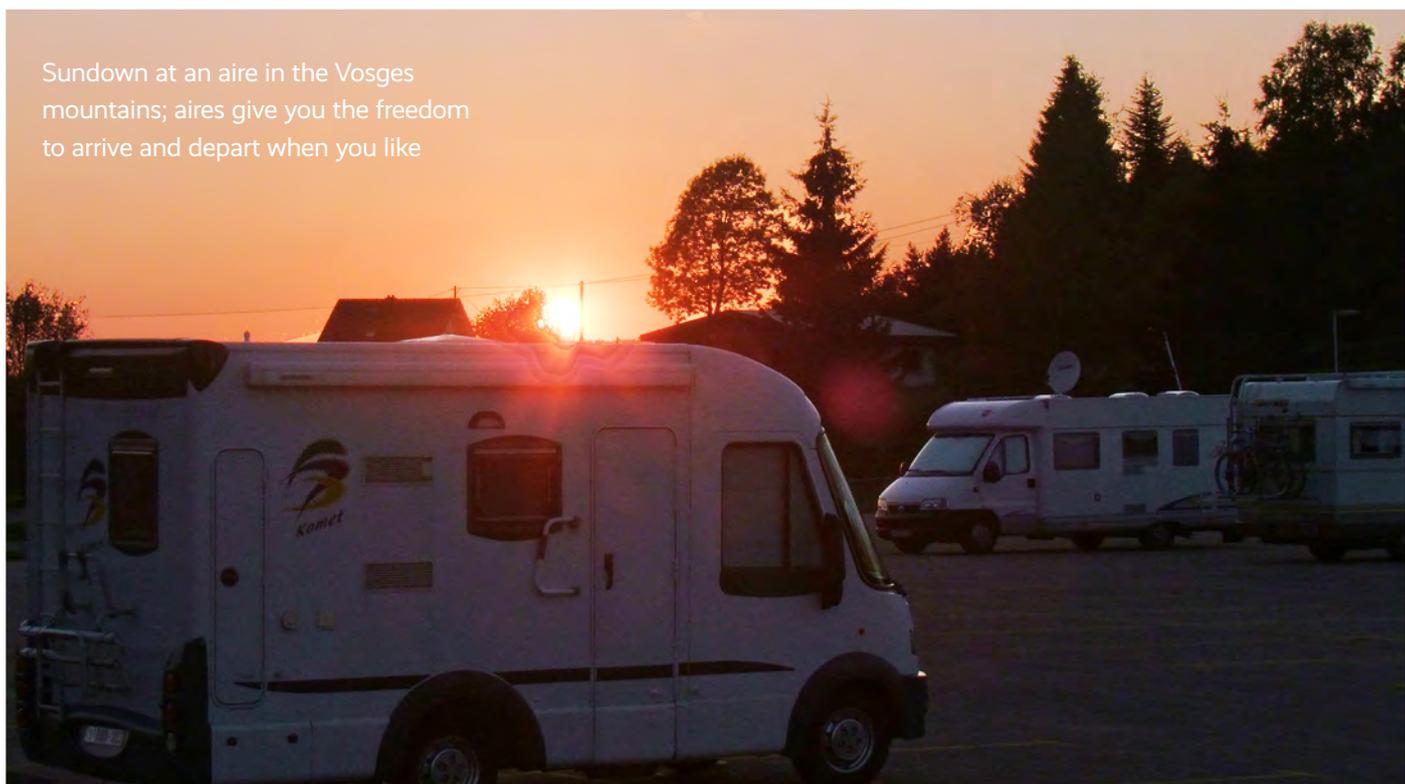
**C**ampsites are wonderful for staying in one place for a week or a fortnight. If you're staying in a tent, or a touring caravan, they are generally your only option. Sometimes, however, they can be restrictive, especially if you wish to arrive or depart at a time to suit you rather than the campsite, you don't wish to book in advance or you're not sure where or when you want to stop for the night. Continental Europe – and France in particular – provides hundreds of legal overnight stopping places that give you complete freedom to come and go as you please if you're touring in a motorhome or campervan.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

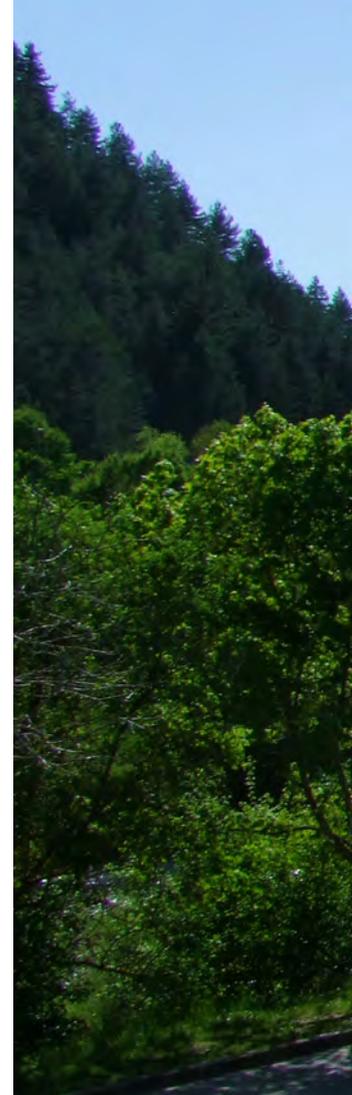
Each country tends to call the overnight stops by a different name. In France they are called Aires de Service/Stationnement pour Camping-Car, in Italy Aree di Sosta. Germany names them Stellplätze or Reisemobileplätze. Whatever their name, they are very similar in the way they work. Some are little more than parking areas, others will look akin to a small campsite. Whatever the option, they are usually far cheaper (often free) than staying at campsites. That's great for touring on a budget or extended touring. →



Sundown at an aire in the Vosges mountains; aires give you the freedom to arrive and depart when you like



:Aires are often in stunning locations, including this ski resort in the Pyrenees



## AIRES DE SERVICE

French law dictates that aires are only for motorhomes. With more than 2000 aires throughout the country, they are sited in many villages and towns, along riverbanks, in the mountains or along the coast. They can be dedicated spaces or may be a small section of a municipal car park in the village square or, often, a sports complex or leisure centre. There may be a small charge (anything up to five or ten Euros) for an overnight stay, though this is usually at the busier town and city aires, where the cost will give you 24 hours parking – a great opportunity for visiting larger towns and cities.

Most aires, though not all, provide facilities for emptying cassette toilets, waste water, rubbish disposal and filling up with fresh water. Occasionally, electric points are also available. Again, these facilities are often provided free of charge, while others request a small fee, usually 50 cents or one Euro. Aires are usually extremely well signposted.

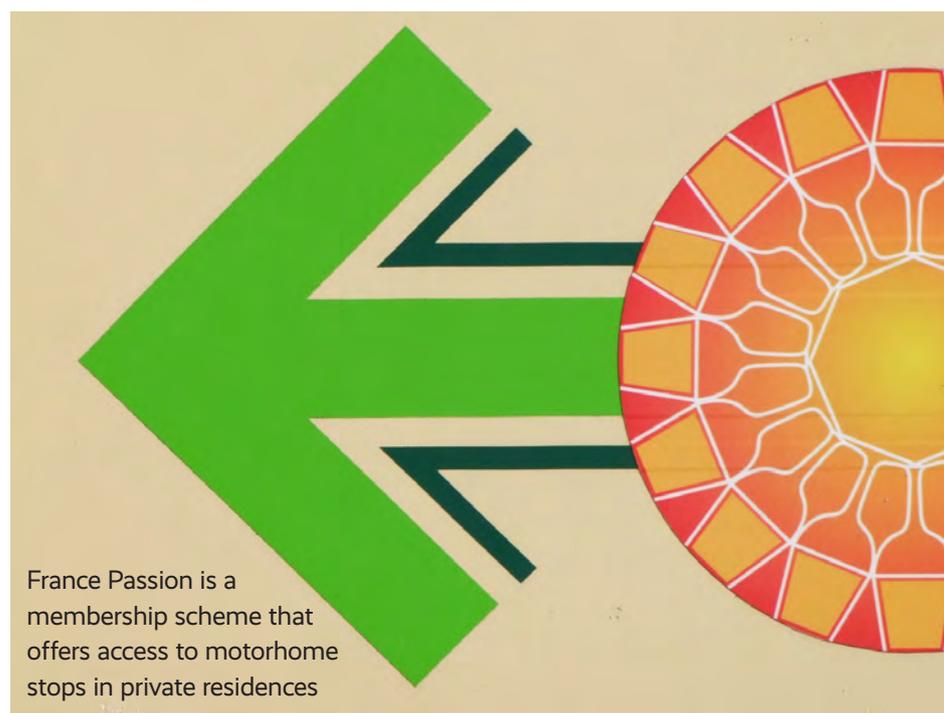
## STELLPLÄTZE

If you're travelling beyond the borders of France, German Stellplätze are open to all motorhomes while many are also open to caravans. A very useful (essential if you use Stellplätze regularly) guide to have is the annual Bord Atlas, which provides

maps and details of every Stellplatz, including the type of unit allowed on site. Like aires, there may be a small charge involved, but you'll often find electric hook-ups on site and almost every Stellplatz provides essential facilities. Like aires, Stellplätze are well signposted upon entering towns and villages.

## FRANCE PASSION

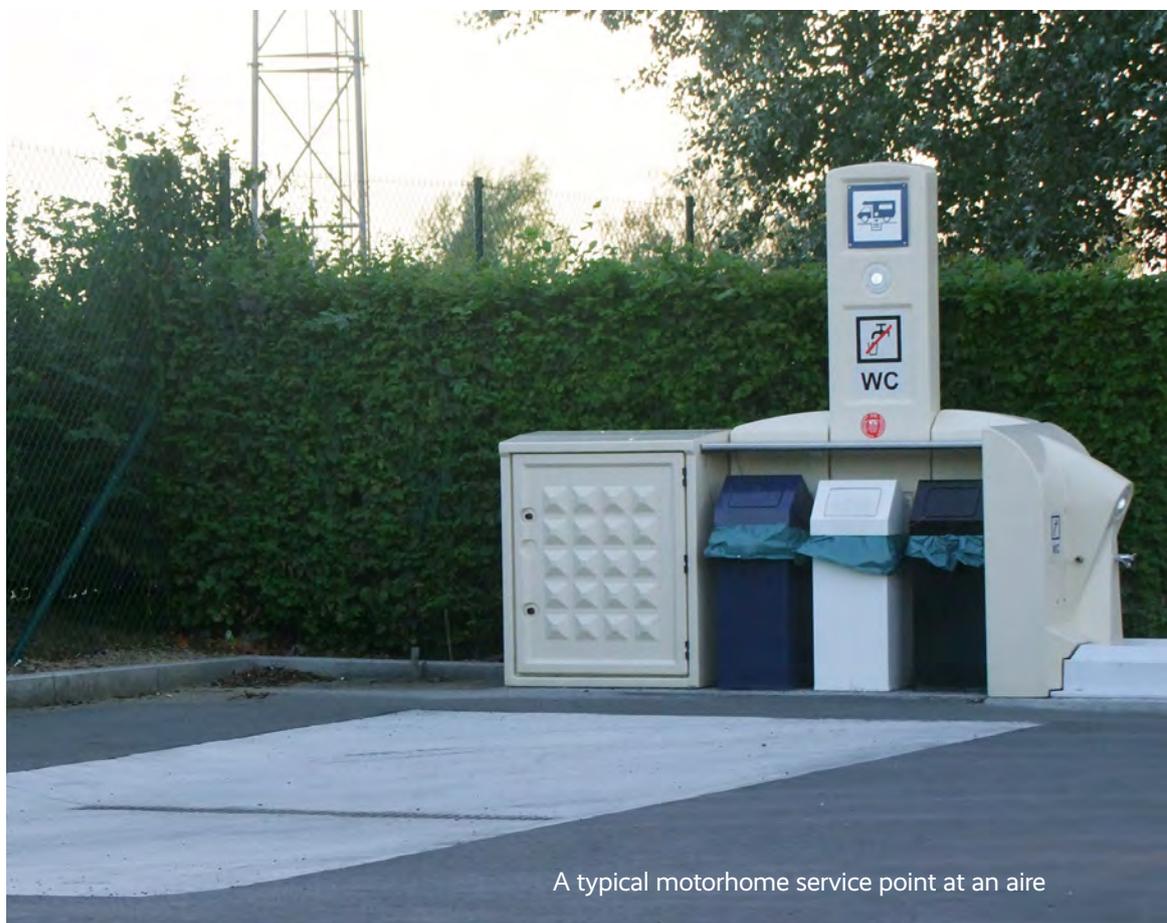
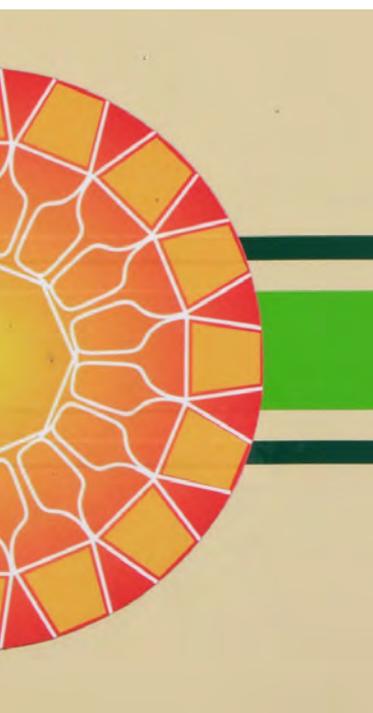
The France Passion scheme is a tourer's dream for overnight stays. Upon the purchase of an annual membership book



France Passion is a membership scheme that offers access to motorhome stops in private residences



Riverside aire in Provence



A typical motorhome service point at an aire

many but CL  
can often  
be  
seen



Stopping overnight at a France Passion site amid the vineyards of Burgundy



A France Passion site at the winemaker in Alsace, where it's possible to sample the wine



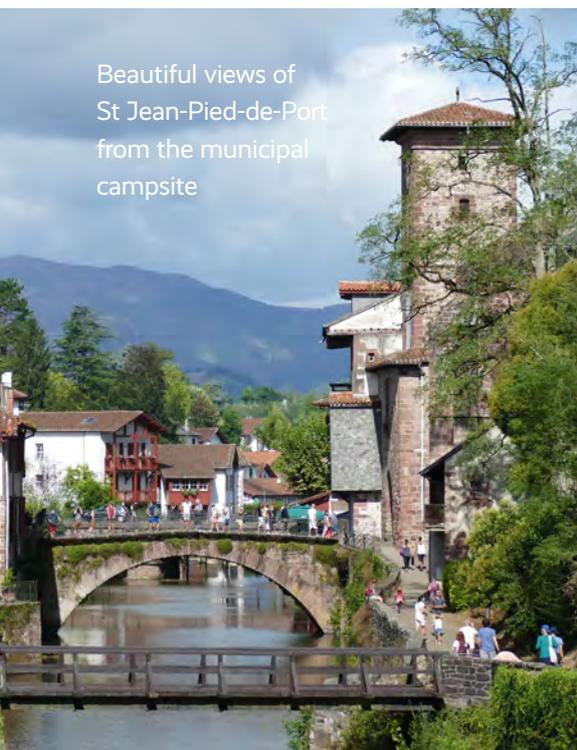
The municipal campsite at St Jean-Pied-de-Port

### DISCOVER MORE

The Bord Atlas guide to German Stellplätze (in German), the France Passion guide (multi-language) and 'All the Aires: France', a very useful English-language guide with pictures, descriptions and directions to all French aires, are available from Vicarious Books ([www.vicariousbooks.co.uk](http://www.vicariousbooks.co.uk)). These are must-have guides for those keen to use alternatives to campsites.



Beautiful views of St Jean-Pied-de-Port from the municipal campsite



(currently £27), detailing all the available places to stop in France, motorhomes may stay for one night free of charge at private residences.

These are usually farms, vineyards, orchards or restaurants, with the idea being that, in exchange for a free overnight stop, you may wish to purchase a bottle of wine direct from the vineyard, a local jar of honey or sample some regional produce. There is, however, absolutely no obligation to do so but it is a wonderful way to discover a region and chat to producers that are passionate about their work.

Your motorhome must be completely self-contained as waste facilities are not provided (use the facilities on aires) and you do not book in advance; simply turn up, being mindful of any time or date restrictions.

## MUNICIPAL CAMPSITES

If you don't like the idea of staying on an aire, I'd recommend the excellent municipal campsites throughout France. There are thousands of them across the country, managed by the community, and are usually very inexpensive. I have stayed at lovely sites recently for just 10 or 12 Euros and, because they are rarely full, there's no need to book in advance.

They don't have all the facilities of a large, luxurious privately-owned site, but they will have electric hook-up, some basic showers and toilets, and maybe a handful of facilities such as a small playground or bar. ●

## A guide to using Aires and Stellplatze

Aires (and Stellplätze) work on a first come, first served basis without reservations. It's rarely a problem, but popular tourist towns can fill up fast at weekends so be prepared to look for an alternative.

Where payment is required - either for the overnight stay, using electric hook-ups or obtaining a fresh water supply - it is usually via coin operated service points. Occasionally, these service points require the purchase of a token (jeton), available at a tourist information centre, town hall or local shop (the service point will indicate where). To avoid getting caught short, it's worth stocking up on a few commonly-used tokens. Always have a good quantity of change for service points too - 50 cent and One Euro coins are the most common denominations required.

Use the service points to empty cassette toilets (nearly always available free of charge even if there is a charge for fresh water) and fill up with fresh water whenever possible, just in case facilities are unavailable at the next stopping point. Carry a couple of bottles of fresh water with you.



# ADVANCE TO GO



IT'S EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK TO TRAVEL TO FRANCE THESE DAYS. **TOURING MAGAZINE** SPEAKS TO THE FERRY OPERATORS TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU SET SAIL

**H**ave you been longing to travel to France (again) but found the various rules and regulations relating to Covid too daunting to deal with? We spoke to the various ferry operators to see what's in place to help those travelling to France.

## THE RULES

There are no specific requirements to enter France if you are fully vaccinated other than to provide a Statement of Honour (declaring that you do not have Covid symptoms and, to your knowledge, do not have Covid) to customs officials at the port. An English-language version can be downloaded from the French Government website ([www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Certificate-of-international-travel](http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Certificate-of-international-travel)).

Masks are still required to be worn in public places across France and a Health Pass is required to enter restaurants, museums and attractions. The NHS Covid Pass to prove that you are fully vaccinated is ok to use.

Returning to the UK, France is not a red list country. That means, if you are fully vaccinated, you only need to:

1. Fill in a Passenger Locator Form within 48 hours prior to returning to the UK.
2. Take a Covid test on Day Two following your return to the UK. This must be booked (and paid for – NHS tests cannot be used) prior to travel.

If you are partially vaccinated, or not vaccinated at all, you must:

1. Take a pre-departure test within 72 hours prior to returning to the UK (which may be bought in the UK

and taken with you or can be carried out at a pharmacy in France).

2. Fill in a Passenger Locator Form within 48 hours prior to returning to the UK.

3. Take a Covid test on Day Two and Day Eight following your return to the UK. This must be booked prior to travel.

The Passenger Locator Form (PLF) can be found on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website – and should only be filled in online from that website. It takes about 10 minutes to complete; you will need your passport details, the address where you will be staying in the UK in the ten days after arrival and the code for your Day Two test (which will be provided when you book it). One PLF is required per passenger. If your travel details change →



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– for example, you choose to travel on a different day from your original booking – you will need to resubmit the PLF.

The Government website also has a list of approved organisations from which you can book your Day Two test. It is recommended that you book this prior to leaving the UK unless you're unsure when you will be returning, as your return date needs to be stated. Test-at-home kits are acceptable and can be the most convenient way to carry this procedure out.

*Touring Magazine* spoke to Discover Ferries:

“All the operators carrying passengers to France have information on their websites to the official government sites where customers can find out the exact requirements at the time they are travelling. Information not only includes health requirements but also Brexit requirements, too. After customers book, they receive customer emails preparing them for their trip, so that they arrive at the port with the correct documentation.

Covid cleaning procedures continue to be in place across the ferry industry and face coverings are still required; indeed, it is a legal requirement on the French-flagged Brittany Ferries fleet.

Discover Ferries has a Covid FAQs page for ferry passengers where they can find out more information about their route.”

### P&O FERRIES

The ferry operator is working with a testing partner for pre- and post-travel testing:

[www.poferries.com/en/coronavirus/pre-travel-covid-19-testing](http://www.poferries.com/en/coronavirus/pre-travel-covid-19-testing).

### IRISH FERRIES

Irish Ferries is operating a new route between Dover and Calais. The company provides comprehensive updates and information on its website as well as via direct communications with customers who have

booked travel. It ensures that an SMS (and email for direct customers) is sent within 48 hours of departure advising on requirements with relevant links to the UK Government website.

[www.irishferries.com/restrictions-france-from-Britain](http://www.irishferries.com/restrictions-france-from-Britain)

[www.irishferries.com/restrictions-england-from-France](http://www.irishferries.com/restrictions-england-from-France)

### DFDS FERRIES

DFDS has crossings between the UK and ports in Calais, Dunkerque and Dieppe. Its website has an update page in relation to Coronavirus guidelines, with links to relevant websites. Should you not be fully vaccinated and require a test prior to returning to the UK, DFDS states:

“The company does not have any specific links with organisations providing testing in France, or any testing taking place at port terminals, but there are several testing centres near its French ports. There are four close to the port at Calais, which are detailed on the Case Coronavirus website ([www.casocoronavirus.fr/carte-centres-test-depistage](http://www.casocoronavirus.fr/carte-centres-test-depistage)). Whilst DFDS does not endorse any one of these centres, they all provide the relevant test for travellers returning to the UK.

A similar number of centres are also located close to the port at Dunkerque and there are three near to the port in Dieppe.”

[www.dfds.com/en/passenger-ferries/corona-virus/updates/uk-france](http://www.dfds.com/en/passenger-ferries/corona-virus/updates/uk-france)

### BRITTANY FERRIES

Brittany Ferries has help and advice on its website regarding Coronavirus, with regular updates. The ferry operator does not have any links with testing centres in France but states that “they are extremely easy to find on Google and many speak English. You can search and book online at: [www.doctolib.fr](http://www.doctolib.fr) and [www.eurofins-biologie-medicale.com](http://www.eurofins-biologie-medicale.com)”.

[www.brittany-ferries.co.uk/information/coronavirus/about](http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk/information/coronavirus/about) ●



# Sea crossings from the UK to France

## **Eurotunnel**

Folkestone to Coquelles  
(between Calais &  
Boulogne-sur-Mer) **35mins**

Portsmouth to Cherbourg **8hrs**  
Portsmouth to Le Havre **3¾hrs**  
Poole to Cherbourg **4½hrs**  
Plymouth to Roscoff **5½hrs/9hrs**

## **DFDS**

Dover to Calais **1½hrs**  
Dover to Dunkerque **2hrs**  
Newhaven to Dieppe **4hrs**

## **P&O Ferries**

Dover to Calais **1½hrs**

## **Brittany Ferries**

Portsmouth to Caen **5¾hrs/7hrs**  
Portsmouth to St Malo **11hrs**

## **Irish Ferries**

Dover to Calais **1½hrs**

## **Condor Ferries**

Poole to St Malo **6hrs 20mins**

## **DISCOVER MORE**

[www.brittany-ferries.co.uk](http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk)  
[www.condorferries.co.uk](http://www.condorferries.co.uk)  
[www.dfdsseaways.co.uk](http://www.dfdsseaways.co.uk)  
[www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)  
[www.irishferries.com](http://www.irishferries.com)  
[www.poferries.com](http://www.poferries.com)  
[www.stenaline.co.uk](http://www.stenaline.co.uk)  
[www.discoverferries.com](http://www.discoverferries.com)



# M A D E I N



The factory of Trigano VDL, at the foothills of the Ardèche and close to the River Rhône

# FRANCE

THE FRENCH BRAND CHAUSSON HAS ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN FOR ITS INNOVATION IN DESIGN. **CAROLINE MILLS** VISITS THE HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE TO FIND OUT HOW ITS MOTORHOMES ARE MADE



The factory of Trigano VDL, at the foothills of the Ardèche and close to the River Rhône





I'm standing at the Belvédère de Pierre Aiguille, a wild and windswept viewpoint high above the town of Tain L'Hermitage. All around me are vines of the Côtes du Rhone: Crozes-Hermitage and the exclusive Hermitage just below. The views of the extraordinarily blue River Rhône are impressive, as are the mountains of the Ardèche and the picturesque riverside town of Tournon-sur-Rhône that I can see on the right bank of the river.

Just beyond the main streets of Tournon, tucked among the wooded slopes of the Ardèche hills and spread out alongside the River Doux as it enters the Rhône, are some large factory buildings – and row upon row of gleaming new motorhomes parked up. This is Trigano VDL (Véhicules de Loisirs), the headquarters of one of France's largest motorhome brands, Chausson. If a motorhome is to be bought solely on how picturesque the landscape is where it's made, I'm hooked!

## ABOUT TRIGANO

One of the largest names in the European leisure

industry, Trigano has been supplying leisure goods for almost 90 years. Initially the company sold tent canvas, but expanded in 1945 to selling camping goods. In the 1970s, the company expanded again, introducing the manufacture of touring caravans; between 1974 and 1976 the company built 10,000 caravans a year.

In 1984, the company extended its manufacturing capabilities to include motorhomes. Today, Trigano has more than 65 sites across Europe and employs more than 8000 people in 11 countries. Many of its brands are likely to be well-known to British consumers on the look-out for a motorhome. Following huge expansion in the last 20 years, there are now 25 well-known brands, including Adria, Auto-Sleepers, Auto-Trail, Benimar, Eura Mobil, McLouis, Mobilvetta, Roller Team and Rimor, in addition to Chausson.

## TRIGANO VDL

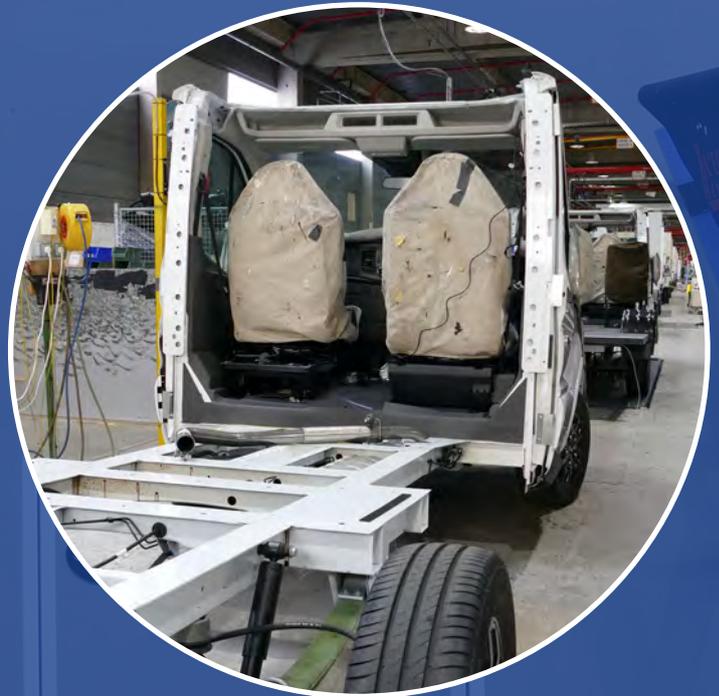
At Tournon-sur-Rhône, the base of Trigano VDL, there are two motorhome brands manufactured: Chausson and Challenger. In addition, Caravelair, →

# THE PROCESS



**GRP sheets  
waiting to be  
pressed**

**Wall sandwich of  
640 motorhome  
with cutouts**



**Chassis  
arrives at the  
beginning of the  
assembly line**



**Passenger seats  
and washroom  
attached**

**Beginning to  
look like a  
motorhome**



**Front cone  
attached**



## DISCOVER MORE

### Chausson

[www.motorhomes-chausson.co.uk](http://www.motorhomes-chausson.co.uk)

To find out more about visiting Tournon-sur-Rhône, go to [www.ardeche-hermitage.com/en/](http://www.ardeche-hermitage.com/en/). There are five campsites in Tournon, four of which are directly west of Trigano VDL: Camping Les Acacias, Camping Les Sables, Camping Les Foulons and Camping La Bohème. The other, Camping Le Rhône, is riverside, in the centre of town.

Sterckeman and Rubis caravans are produced here. Of these five brands, it is only Chausson motorhomes that are available to purchase in the UK. The factory produces almost 14,000 vehicles per year (equivalent to 38 vehicles per day) and employs a 900-strong workforce.

The Chausson brand has been around for more than 40 years and is synonymous with design innovation. Every year, upon the new season launch, it is with anticipation we wait to see what, often trend-setting, concepts Chausson will introduce next.

In the UK, Chausson offers low-profile and overcab motorhomes together with panel-van conversions. The brand also produces A-Class motorhomes, but these are not available in the UK.

## MOTORHOME MANUFACTURE IN TOURNON-SUR-RHÔNE

I meet up with Mathilde Metiffiot, Communications Manager for Chausson, who shows me around the Tournon-sur-Rhône site. Says Mathilde, "We have two

assembly production lines here at Tournon. We pre-build as much as possible in separate buildings before fitting everything together on the assembly line. For example, in one building is the manufacture of all the kitchen units, in another is the manufacture of the wall, roof and floor panels. There are 3000 parts to make a motorhome, so our warehouse is one of the busiest of all the buildings."

Machinery, yes there is lots. But there are no robots; every aspect of the motorhome build is produced and overseen by trained staff.

The first element is the production of the wall, roof and floor panels. Here a Styrofoam insulation sandwich is created using a wood and composite frame onto which a decorative ply is attached to the inside and GRP (polyester) skin to the outside. Design plans are lasered onto the board to show the workforce exactly where holes need to be cut for fittings, additional protection or strengthening. It's then for the machine to cut out the habitation and locker doors, windows and holes for fixtures.



Chausson (and Challenger) motorhomes waiting for final inspection at the Trigano VDL factory in Tournon-sur-Rhône

Says Mathilde, “The assembly line used to have 22 staging posts where each element of production was put together. But two years ago, we extended the building so that we have 41 posts that can now include additional quality checks and smaller elements. There is approximately 30 minutes per stage to get the work done before the vehicle moves on to the next.

Mathilde explains, “Each stage will have routine daily meetings to discuss the top five objectives for the day. Employees will always remain on one specific post to ensure a continuation of expertise following training at our training school here on site: the plumbing, electrics and fixtures are all very exacting, for example.”

As a new chassis arrives at one end of the assembly line (Chausson use both Ford and Fiat as a base vehicle), the first thing is to add the floor and, thereafter, the passenger travel seats.

The aim is to add as many elements – such as the seats, the pre-assembled kitchen units and washroom, the electrics and so on – before the side panels and

roof enclose the vehicle as it is much easier to perform these tasks with greater access.

Toward the end of the production line, is the finishing line, where external decals are applied, upholstery fabrics, cushions and curtains are introduced, and everything is given a further quality check. In the final quality assurance building, the vehicle is cleaned, any snags fixed, and the vehicle, with a wash, is sealed with blue tape to indicate it’s ready to be transported to dealerships across Europe.

## CHAUSSON IN THE UK

For the British market, there is a UK specification, in addition to the right-hand-drive chassis. Most vehicles have an oven as standard, all have Grade Three insulation and heating system, carpets and premium-spec wheels. It should be noted that Chausson motorhomes in the UK have the habitation door on the offside. All Chausson motorhomes sold from UK dealerships, of which there are 15, are approved by the National Caravan Council (NCC). ●

# CAMP CHIC

TOURING MAGAZINE  
CATCHES UP WITH  
*CAMPING WITH STYLE*  
TO TALK COMFY CAMPING  
AND THE POWER  
OF NATURE



## **Hi! Can you introduce yourself and tell us a bit about *Camping With Style* ?**

I'm Shell, editor of *Camping with Style* a blog about all things outdoors and of course camping! I love the great outdoors and in particular camping, so starting my own blog to share my love seemed like a good idea. I'm delighted to say the blog has grown massively over the last few years and I'm proud to work with some amazing outdoor leisure, travel and camping brands and have camped and glamped all over the UK and Europe and even in the Caribbean!

## **How was the idea for *Camping With Style* born?**

The idea came to me after I had a bad snowboarding accident. Laid up with a broken back, I felt like I needed something positive to focus on as I battled my way back to full health and mobility. I knew I wanted to go camping again, but at that point, camping in the way that I used to, in a tiny tent on a thin roll mat, just wasn't going to be possible.

I started looking for comfortable camping gear suitable for someone with a back injury and mobility problems, but not only that, I didn't want a nasty nylon sleeping bag in primary colours and I didn't want a green plastic camp table; aesthetics are important to me, so I wanted great functionality but I always wanted it to look good. In my search I realised there was a bit of a gap in the market. I started writing about comfy and stylish camping gear and was amazed at how quickly it took off and the phenomenal response!

It spurred me on and gave me something positive to focus on which really helped my mental health during my long recovery period.



## **When did you get into camping? Was it a lifestyle you grew up with or did you discover it later on?**

We weren't a family of campers and my family weren't into the great outdoors either. We'd get taken to the park to play, sure, and I camped once when I was

Girl Guide, but it was a miserable experience and I ended up freezing cold in a soaking wet sleeping bag. But I went camping a few times as a child with my dad and his mate and son, so I think that's really where my love of camping started.

As soon as I could drive and had a car I started taking off on camping trips on my own and was hooked, though I didn't discover the many other myriad benefits of the great outdoors until I was much older.

After the accident, it was only then that I realised just how important being outside and immersed in nature was for me, and I finally understood the reason I loved camping so much was because it gave me time to switch off and be at one with nature. It sounds daft that I hadn't realised this earlier, but it was true, camping was always just a cheap means of getting away for a few days and having a wee adventure, and despite camping in some beautiful spots in Snowdonia, the nature aspect had never really occurred to me until the accident.

## ***Camping With Style* is a strong advocate for nature's healing properties. What are some of the ways being immersed in nature can benefit our mental and physical wellbeing?**

It sounds like a cliché but I really didn't appreciate my mobility or the natural world until I was so close to losing it all. I'd spent my life chasing after the things we →

# Interview

are brainwashed into believing will make us successful and happy, I had an education, I had a family, I had a nice car, a nice house and plenty of holidays and didn't really want for anything and yet I wasn't happy.

After the accident I took a long hard look at my life and priorities and realised that 'stuff' and status just wasn't important to me, so I then had to start working out what was truly meaningful to me. To deal with the depression that came as a result of being in constant pain and being unable to move much, I had to look elsewhere and go a bit deeper to find ways to bolster my sense of wellbeing.

As I began to heal, I started to spend more time in the woods beside my home, for the first time ever, I planned walks, rather than just walking because I needed to get somewhere.

I started focusing on the little things, I was grateful everyday that I hadn't ended up paralysed by the accident and so I began my daily practice of gratitude.

I now actively plan and prioritise spending time in nature and I have a special fondness for spending time in the woods and even have 'my' tree that I will often go and sit in and spend 15 minutes or so in quiet meditation when I feel like I need grounding, focusing all my senses, slowing down my breathing and bringing myself back to the here and now.

As someone with diagnosed depression and anxiety conditions, mindfulness and following a much more nature connected and spiritual path have helped me more than any drug I was ever put on.

Of course I'm not saying people should stop taking prescriptions meds and go hug a tree, it's not quite as simple as that, but being mindful and more in tune with nature is scientifically proven to calm the nervous system and to boost feel-good hormones.

Being outdoors gives us a greater sense of perspective too, whether it's standing beneath the canopy of trees in your local town park, standing on top of a mountain at a trig point or swimming in the middle of a lake; the grand scale of nature not only allows us to experience a sense of awe and wonder, but it can focus our attention on the here and now, so that we are fully immersed in the moment.

Quite simply, making gratitude and nature meditation part of my everyday existence is the best thing I've ever done for my wellbeing.

## ***Do you feel humans maintaining a connection with nature is becoming more important to people as society becomes more and more tech obsessed?***

We live in an increasingly stressful world with overpopulation, too much traffic and intense over stimulation. There's so much constantly vying for our attention and we're making decisions all the time. All the while, technology is using a whole host of tactics aimed at keeping us distracted and staring at our screens. It's exhausting.

Not only that, the way we are consuming information is actually changing the way our brains work as we get more used to information being at our fingertips so our long term memories are used less - when we need to know something, we just Google it, we don't have to remember anything.

For example, how many phone numbers do you currently know compared to when you were a kid or a teenager? Right now, I know my own mobile phone number and my parents.

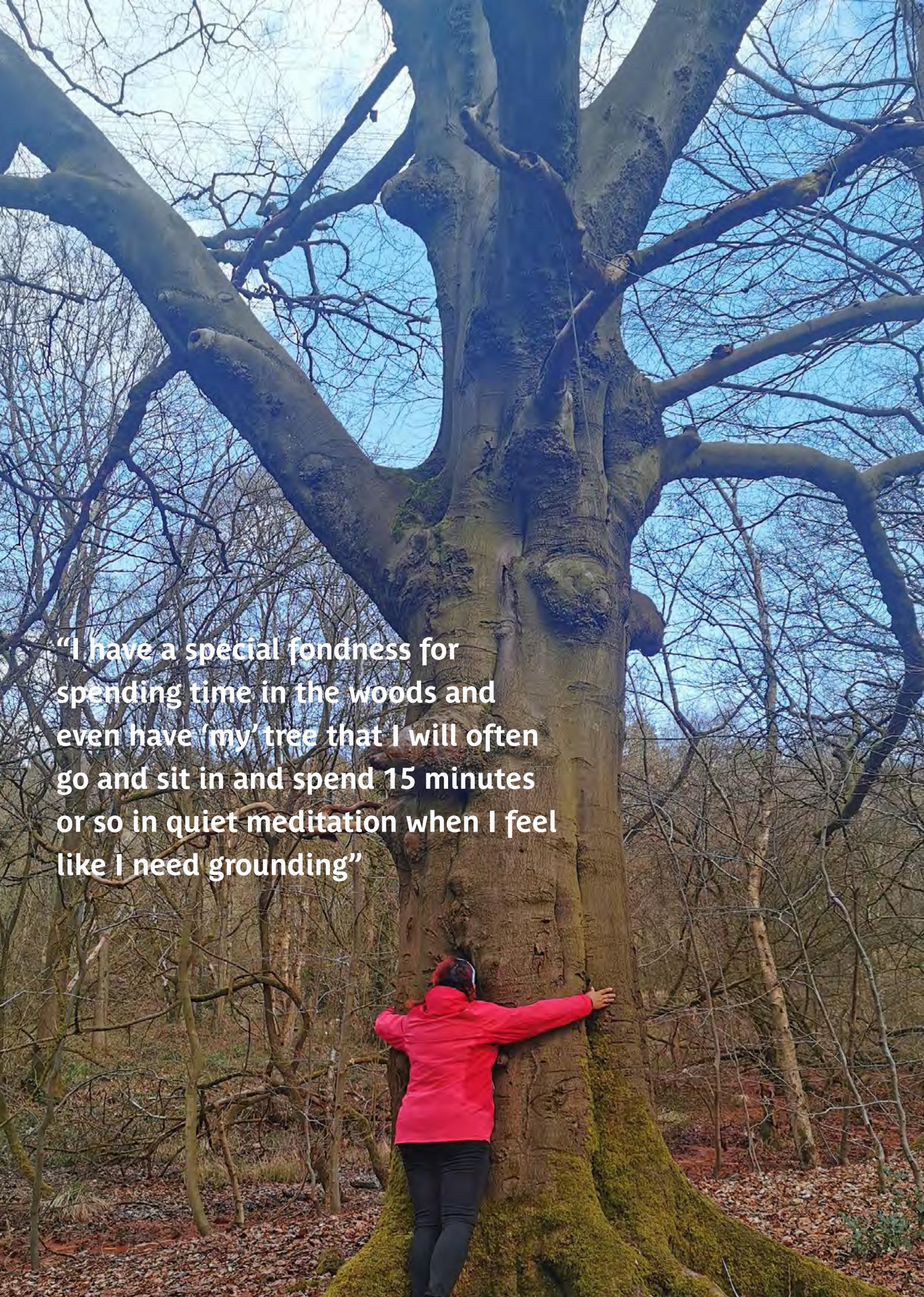
Growing up as part of Gen X, I knew all my friends phone numbers off by heart, but now, we just don't need to remember things.

I'm not saying that's a bad thing, arguably things like that aren't important (though if you ever lose your mobile phone, you'll learn pretty fast that that's not the case!), but technology is changing our brains and with more and more of us reporting that we're feeling stressed, overwhelmed and anxious, it's the relentless march of technology and living in increasing isolation from the natural world that I believe are at least part of the blame.

The good news is, thanks to neuro-plasticity, we aren't set. We can rewire our anxious, unhappy brains and I've found that removing certain apps and turning off all notifications was a good first step, but it does require conscious effort.

By being less distracted by my phone, I then naturally had a little more time to fit nature into my life and slowly began to actively seek it.

Modern life is extremely complicated and can at times be overwhelming to navigate, a walk in the park or woods however is as simple and as natural as can be and is a great antidote to our tech-connected lives.

A photograph of a person in a red jacket hugging a large tree trunk in a forest. The tree is very thick and has a textured bark. The person is standing at the base of the tree, with their arms wrapped around it. The background shows a dense forest of bare trees under a blue sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**“I have a special fondness for spending time in the woods and even have ‘my’ tree that I will often go and sit in and spend 15 minutes or so in quiet meditation when I feel like I need grounding”**

# Interview



## Camping With Style

***Some people associate camping with discomfort but you manage to make it look comfortable and...well, stylish. What do you consider some essential gear for cozy camping?***

One of the things I seek to do on the blog is to continually challenge the assumption that camping means roughing it or something that poor people do because they can't afford a 'proper' holiday.

I go on plenty of luxury overseas holidays and stay in nice hotels, but actually, camping is something I choose to do because it simplifies my life and brings me closer to nature. Some people are happy to camp with a really basic setup and that suits them, but for me and my back, it's all about comfort.

Many people have tried camping and have been put off, usually because they had a tiny tent they couldn't move in and ended up on a flimsy roll mat or air bed that deflated in the night leaving them cold, tired and uncomfortable.

It's understandable that a bad experience can put some people off, but the reality is, camping is something that can very easily be done in both comfort and in style!

My own camping set up is considered "extra" by some, but I don't care. I camp in a way that makes me happy and is comfortable for me. I don't believe camping ever has to mean discomfort and it doesn't have to be an exercise in endurance – unless of course that's yours thing!

I favour tents that are standing height and I always use a tent that's bigger than I strictly need, so when it's the two of us going away, we'll typically be in a 4 or even 5 person tent so there's plenty of room.

I have various camp bed options which including a double height air mattress or better for winter camping, a double folding camp bed and on top I use a double SIM (self inflating mattress) which adds extra warmth and padding. I always use a good sleeping bag that's suitable for the season, something light with an extra blanket in summer and a good 4 season super warm and cosy sleeping bag for Autumn through to Spring camping.

A hot water bottle is a must outside of the summer months and I take extras like blankets, brightly coloured rag rugs, cushions and of course, fairy lights are non-negotiable in my camp setup!

I also have a full camp kitchen with a double gas hob which means I can cook proper food from scratch →



## Interview

while camping. I wouldn't eat a Pot Noodle or beans at home and the same applies to when I'm camping.

A great tip for food when camping is to make something at home and freeze it, I often make casseroles, soups, curries and things like pulled pork which I freeze and pop in the ice box.

If I'm making something like a stir fry, then to make life easier, I'll prep all the veggies and fish or meat at home first and I always make sure I've got a kitchen essentials box containing things like olive oil, seasoning, ketchup, cutlery, chopping board and so on.

### ***Do you have a favourite camping spot in the UK? What's special about it?***

Snowdonia is the place I've camped most and is so diverse, I absolutely love it there and have a few special campsites I love (check out the Camping with Style blog [www.campingwithstyle.co.uk/campsite-reviews/](http://www.campingwithstyle.co.uk/campsite-reviews/) if you want to see some of my fave campsites), I even got engaged at one very special campsite overlooking Cardigan bay.

Due to where I live, both the Peak District and Lake District are relatively close, so really I'm spoilt for choice when it comes to great camping locations!

### ***But you're not opposed to a bit of Glamping?***

As a result of the blog, I've been lucky enough to go on some incredible press trips and have glamped all over the place, from converted horse boxes at Thorpe Glamping in Oxfordshire <https://www.glampingoxfordshire.co.uk/> to a Caribbean inspired bungalow at Cambrils Holiday Park in Spain, <https://familyresort.cambrilspark.com/en/> but I think the most memorable has to be a week spent glamping in Antigua earlier this year. I stayed at Wild Lotus Glamping and with fully furnished canvas bell tents located right on the beach with the





stunning Caribbean sea only steps away, I think you'd be hard pressed to find a better glamping location!

***Has camping led you towards discovering other outdoor activities? What do you do to entertain yourself on your camping trips?***

In the past I used to go camping maybe once or twice in the summer and it was always just an excuse to go to the beach and have a bit of fun and it wasn't until I started camping purely for the love of being outdoors after my accident, that I started to seriously fall in love with the

great outdoors and discover all it has to offer.

Coming to it late, it still feels very new to me, so walking up hills and mountains is something I love doing and get a huge buzz out of and I can't resist a good trig point selfie!

Whenever I camp I explore the local area on foot as much as possible and I always take time to connect with the energy of where I am staying through meditation. I'll generally do a bit of gentle yoga too and always make sure I have a good book and my current crochet project with me. My other love is open water swimming and it's now something I try to do as often as possible. Without camping, I'm not sure I'd have ever discovered my love for open water swimming and mountain hikes.



**“Whenever I camp I explore the local area on foot as much as possible and I always take time to connect with the energy of where I am staying through meditation”**

# Camping With Style

***Does the idea of a campervan life appeal or are you a canvas purist? What is it about a tent that is so special to you?***

The whole Vanlife phenomenon has me so envious of those who have vans and I'm obsessed with #vanlifers on the 'gram! It's something I'd love to do, but I'm nervous about driving something as big as a van and with none of skills needed to do one up, the financial outlay is definitely the biggest barrier! I'm not ruling it out for the future, but even with a swanky van, I think there would always be room in my life and my heart for canvas. ●



If you like the idea of camping in comfort and in style, or if you're wondering how to use camping and the great outdoors to support your wellbeing, head to **Camping with Style** [www.campingwithstyle.co.uk](http://www.campingwithstyle.co.uk) where you can find whole sections of the blog dedicated to everything from wellbeing

to family travel as well as lots of UK walks, campsite and camping gear reviews and recommendations and more!

You can also follow **Camping with Style** on Instagram [@campingwithstyle](https://www.instagram.com/campingwithstyle) and Twitter [@campwithstyle](https://twitter.com/campwithstyle)



**CHRIS McCOOEY** GIVES US A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE  
LESS-THAN-FLUFFY HISTORY OF THE WOOL TRADE

# SHEEP & WOOL



**A**fter the humiliating retreat of the British Army from continental Europe in the first five months of 1940, Hitler set his sights across the Channel. He issued Directive 16 on 16 July the same year. It read: 'as England, despite her hopeless military situation, still shows no sign of willingness to come to terms, I have decided to prepare, and if necessary to carry out a landing operation against her... The aim of this operation is to eliminate the English motherland as a base from which war against Germany can be continued and if necessary to occupy the country completely.'

The British government realised an invasion attempt was imminent and drew up plans accordingly. This included the evacuation of Romney Marsh... not the people who lived there but the 85,000 sheep that grazed there. At least it would deny the enemy a valuable source of food. As we all know the Battle of

Britain, fought in the skies above Kent and Sussex, removed the imminent threat of invasion and the sheep remained, chewing the cud contentedly with their ears at ten to three...

Southdown sheep used to be the main grazers of the Downs and the breed was really established by John Ellman (1753-1832) who farmed in Glynde from 1780 to 1829. He was a kindly autocrat in the village and looked after his workers as if he was their father. All the unmarried ones lodged with him under his own roof, and when they married he gave them enough pasture for a pig and a cow and a little more land for growing fruit and vegetables. He built a school for the children of his men, and permitted no licensed house to exist in Glynde. Not that he was a teetotaller; on the contrary he considered ale the true beverage for farm labourers; but he preferred that they brew it at home. However the man's main legacy was bringing the Southdown breed of sheep to perfection.

Which is what Arthur Young describes in his

# History

book *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sussex*: 'The shoulders are wide; they are round and straight in the barrel; broad upon the loin and hips; shut well in the twist, which is a projection of flesh in the inner part of the thigh that gives a fullness when viewed behind, and makes a Southdown leg of mutton remarkably round and short, more so than in most other breeds.'

When Ellman Senior retired from farming and handed over to his son, also called John, a survey carried out about that time estimated there were 150,000 Southdowns grazing the Downs between Eastbourne and Shoreham. A hundred years ago, the same springy turf supported about a third of that number. Today, Southdown sheep are a rare breed, with less than 2,000 breeding ewes.

At the Seven Sisters Sheep Centre at East Dean, near Eastbourne, owner Terry Wigmore looks after 47 different breeds of sheep. "Sheep have been around for 10,000 years and the North Ronaldsay and Soay sheep that we have here – scrawny, diminutive with spindle legs – most resemble the ones our ancestors first domesticated. As for Southdown sheep, I have 30 breeding ewes. They are my favourite sheep for eating – they have got a lot of fat in the meat which makes it particularly succulent. Butchers demand lean meat so this traditional breed has fallen out of favour, as opposed to flavour..."

As well as meat, sheep provide wool. For centuries England's chief raw material was the fleece of the sheep's back; it was the indispensable basis of her greatest industry and the most highly prized of her products by other countries. Cloth makers of the Weald were particularly fortunate as deposits of Fuller's Earth occurred in the region. This is a kind of clay and marl containing nitre, which the hammers beat into the cloth until it was clean and dry. Another useful Wealden product was the teazle for refining the wool, a process which the Romans carried out with hedgehogs. Every class in the community, whether landlord, farmer, manufacturer or artisan had a direct interest in wool and it

was justly accorded the titles 'Goddess of Merchants' and 'England's Golden Fleece'.

The export of wool and woolfells (skins with the fleece on) quickly attracted a tax which became the main source of royal revenue – in 1275 Edward I imposed a custom duty of half a mark for each sack of wool exported. On the continent the main centre of cloth making was in the valley of the Schelde in Flanders where English wool was highly prized for its texture and length of staple and was used in the manufacture of the best quality cloth. Spanish wool, though fine, was short and required an admixture of English or Irish wool to make quality thin cloth; most other kinds of wool, German or French, were so coarse that the cloth was not merchandisable unless mixed with British wool. The long staple of 'combing' wool in particular was claimed to be 'absolutely necessary in some of the French manufacturers'. Occasionally an embargo was placed on its export by English kings but the prohibition was usually short-lived. And even when it was nominally in force it was easily evaded by the purchase of licences, granted for revenue purposes, allowing wool to be sent abroad.

With this government interference and the levying of custom duty on goods sent abroad, the door opened to a highly lucrative business for the people of Kent and Sussex – smuggling, which has continued down through the centuries. But it began in the 13th century when wool was sent abroad clandestinely and this early 'free-trading' even had its own name – it was called 'owling' as the smugglers usually operated at night and signalled to each other with whistles that mimicked the hoots of the birds. ●

*Chris McCooey writes non-fiction books on Kent and Sussex and gives talks on the same subjects as his titles. He owned a motorhome for a number of years and his Swift 600 was a great way for him to explore and research his books.*

**For details go to [www.chrismccooey.co.uk](http://www.chrismccooey.co.uk)**

# touring magazine

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# Hipos Hooras



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**TOTALLY WILD** INTRODUCES  
US TO THEIR KING AND  
QUEEN OF THE HEDGEROW,  
HAWTHORNE AND ROSEHIP

# Foraging

**A**s the nights begin to draw in and the sun begins to lose its summer strength, the hedgerow and the forest floor become laden with the bounty of Autumn. Brambles protect their juicy blackberries from picking fingers with their thorns. Apples, pears, haws and more hang heavy on trees with their edible decorations, in my opinion, making their hosts look better than Christmas trees. Fungi also begin to pop up everywhere, tempting us out into our wooded spaces and parks on foraging adventures!

This is the last push for plants to store some of the warmth of the Autumn sun ready for the cold winter ahead. It is the time for us to gather the glut of food hanging out there in nature to preserve, pickle and brew, to get ourselves through the winter. Autumn, along with spring are my favourite times of the year as you can see nature at work building and dismantling its empire ready for the year ahead, all the while providing great food for us.

There is so much great produce in Autumn and it's hard to pick one edible to talk about, so I have picked two. They are, for me, the King and Queen of the hedgerow as they are abundant and not too difficult to find as they are often planted in parks and gardens. They are Hawthorn and Rose.

## HAWTHORN:

Found in every hedge in the UK, hawthorn is a shrub or small tree that has been planted all over the place. The green, easily recognisable and deeply lobed leaves of hawthorn contrast with the bright red clusters of hanging haws or haw berries that festoon the trees from late summer right through to early winter. They are some of the first autumn foragables and are both versatile and very tasty! But beware of their long woody thorns as they have a nasty habit of giving you a jab when picking the berries.

## ROSE:

Perhaps you were spared rosehip syrup growing up, I was not. However, with age I have come to appreciate it and the rose plant for a completely different reason. Booze. Versatile in its ability to add strongly perfumed or sweet fruity notes to drinks, the rose is full of flavour and vitamin C. The rose hip can also be eaten and is a great ingredient! Look out for clusters of oval orange/red berry-like hips. They grow absolutely everywhere, often in parks and gardens, so they are a great wild edible that you can come across not too far from home! If you are planning on eating them it's best to cut them in half and remove the hairy seeds, as these can cause irritation when eaten. ●



## Hawthorn and Rosehip “Haw-t Sauce”

Here is a quick recipe using both of these hedgerow heroes that can be used deep in winter to add a touch of warmth to your cooking and drive the cold from your bones! It is Hawthorn and Rosehip hot sauce or as it is known in my house “Natures Nandos”.

### Ingredients

- 250 grams of Haws
- 50 grams of rosehips
- 210 mls of water
- 210 mls of cider vinegar
- 50 grams of brown sugar
- 3-5 red chillies
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 medium onion
- 1 tsp each of cumin, caraway and coriander
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Method

1. Add the water and vinegar to a pan a bring to a gentle simmer.
2. Add the haws and the hips and allow to simmer for 20 mins.
3. Whilst this is simmering, put your chilli, garlic onion and spices into a blender and pulse until it's a rough paste.
4. Take the pan off the heat and pour the liquid and the fruit through a sieve and using a wooden spoon push the pulp through the sieve.
5. Add the liquid and the pulp back into the pan along with the sugar and the spice paste and stir vigorously to combine.
6. Once it has a thick, pourable consistency take off the heat and allow to cool before putting into a clean glass sauce bottle.

Keep in the fridge for up to a month (if it lasts that long!).

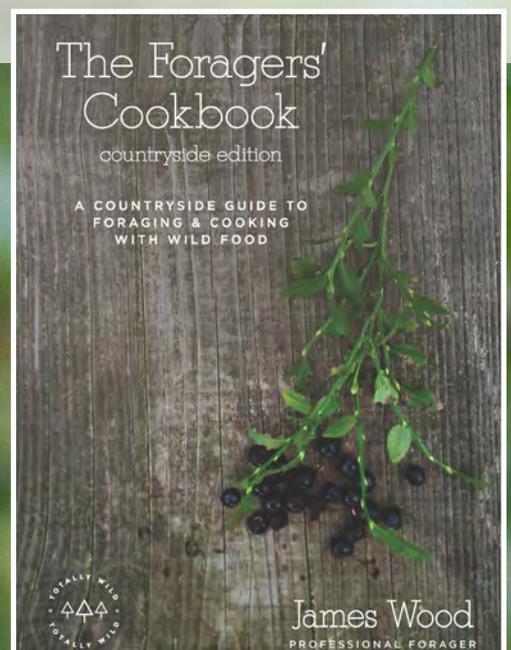
I've used mine here on a steak sandwich, but use it as a marinade for tofu or chicken, add to stews and soups, or mix through mayonnaise to make a spicy burger sauce.

Haw-t Sauce is ripe for customisation: swap the cider vinegar for rice vinegar and the sugar for honey and then add soy and ginger instead of the dry spices to make a great stir fry sauce!

### Totally Wild

James Wood is a renowned experimental wild food expert. His company Totally Wild UK offer foraging experiences throughout the UK *The Foragers' Cookbook* by James Wood is priced at £14.99 and available at

[www.totallywilduk.co.uk](http://www.totallywilduk.co.uk)





# What's cooking?

**TOURING MAGAZINE** CHECKS OUT *CAMPER VAN COOKING* THE LATEST BOOK FROM CHEFS CLAIRE THOMSON & MATT WILLIAMSON



In *CAMPER VAN COOKING*, chefs Claire and Matt have created 70 inspiring, easy meals for any outdoor eating scenarios, guaranteed to satisfy the hunger of family and friends. From first-night meals for your tired-on arrival sustenance, to one-pot classics, lunches and picnics for daytime adventures and sweet treats, there are plenty of dishes to cook over flames, a charcoal grate or gas burner.

Start the day with a one-pan breakfast of mushrooms with eggs, feta cheese and chilli butter. Enjoy great family fillers with cornbread toad in the hole or egg-fried rice with prawns, ginger and peanuts. Stoke the fire and try halloumi, potato and jalapeño skewers with sour cream or fried mackerel with horseradish butter, gherkins and lettuce in brioche buns. For day trips, there are ultimate sandwich combos, such as fried ham with pickled vegetables and hoisin in a baguette or spanish tortilla sandwiches with aioli, and don't forget the sweet treats with an easy no cook lemon custard cheesecake or on-the-go peanut butter brownies. With great prepare-ahead ideas, a store cupboard guide of useful ingredients and an essential equipment list, *CAMPER VAN COOKING* will be your ultimate companion for making stress-free meals and your roadtrip an absolute breeze.

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# Pearl



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TOURING MAGAZINE CAUGHT UP WITH RICK AND HEATHER, OWNERS OF "PEARL" THE ELDDIS CV20, TO DISCUSS THEIR TRAVEL ADVENTURES AND YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Adventure



**Names:** Heather and Rick

**Location:** The Midlands

**Youtube channel:** Pearl the CV20

Your YouTube channel *Pearl The CV20* began with a trip to the dealer. What in particular was it about this CV20 that made you choose Pearl out of the vans on offer?

“Heather had done a lot of research during the lockdown period when we were both furloughed,” Rick says.

“We had a motorhome at the time that had quite a wide body. It was very awkward to get on-and-off our drive so we were looking at going back to a van conversion as we had gone from a T5 Volkswagen to →







the motorhome. We loved the motorhome but it was restricting the type of camping we were used to doing with the T5 so she started looking at van conversions.

“We quickly discounted a lot of vans as, being 6’4” I can’t lie transversely across a van, so we had to look for vans that had 2 single beds or could convert into a double bed that that went front to rear. The Elddis CV20 was one of those. Swift 122s were another. So we went looking at the dealership and the CV20 dealer special from Brownhills Motorhomes came in at £6000 less than the nearest competitor.”

“When we saw the CV20 we just really liked the style of the van and it gave us some of the options we didn’t have on our motorhome, like an oven, and the dealer special had got a solar panel and awning and they were important as well,” says Heather.

“Everything we had on the T5 was in the CV20 - but bigger! All the vans we looked at were based on a Fiat Ducato and other than the fixtures and fittings being slightly more expensive on the Swift one or Auto-Trail one, the CV20 just fitted the bill,” adds Rick.

### How did Pearl get her name?

“Rick always names his vehicles after girls names,” says Heather.

“I have never been one for naming vehicles but we’re big movie fans and during furlough we were watching Pirates of the Caribbean, which we’re massive fans of. I said to Rick ‘What about Black Pearl?’ The Elddis Evolution dealer special was black, we have adventures in it so it was suitable, really!”

### It must have been frustrating buying Pearl and then not being able to take her away due to lockdown. How did you improvise?

“It was very frustrating!” says Rick.

“Neither of us had ever had a brand new vehicle before. We picked Pearl up after lockdown eased and then lockdown started again so we watched our brand new van sitting on our drive for four months and we couldn’t go anywhere. Because we couldn’t take it away, we slept in it on the drive a few times, testing things out and pretending we were on a campsite!

“We’d order a takeaway, watch a film in the van. One particular weekend we made a full weekend of it and went out walking locally, and did a video for our →

# Channel Hopping



channel as if we were on holiday, as a practice really, walking round the local area, filming stuff. So we just had fun with it.”

## What was it that inspired you to make a YouTube channel about your travels?

“I did a YouTube channel originally,” says Rick “I bought an old car and started doing a restoration channel and I really enjoyed doing it. Every time we went somewhere in our motorhome Heather would write a journal so it seemed the natural progression to start a YouTube channel so the inspiration was Heather’s journal and my other channel. We didn’t want to do it for financial gain or for getting free stuff. – because quite frankly that hasn’t happened anyway! It was basically for our memories and it also encourages us to do more, I think. Because we’re filming it with an audience in mind, if the weather’s nice or whatever we tend to go out and do something or see something instead of just sitting and watching the sun go by!”

“Other YouTube channels have inspired us as well,” says Heather.

“Because YouTube has become such a big part of

peoples lives, wherever we go now, I will see whether someone else has already reviewed that place and what it’s like and what you should expect.”

## You have made a few modifications to Pearl yourselves. Can you tell us about them? Are you happy with the van overall?

Because we’ve done this for years, especially with smaller vans, storage is king. I’ve made shelves everywhere I could to store little things, boxing things in and protecting things like the pump and the pipework. We’ve put in a second leisure battery so we can go off-grid for longer, we’ve put mudflaps on, mirror protectors. Little things mainly,” says Rick

“We’re really happy with the van, especially for the price. We’ve done 54 nights this year and over 5000 miles.”

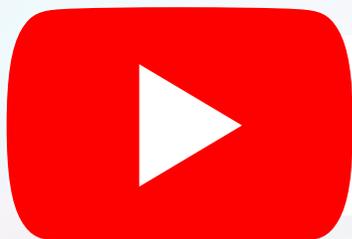
## What are some of your favourite destinations?

“Without a doubt, Scotland. I love it,” says Rick. “But that said we’ve been all over the country this year. I



don't know how it came about but I had this crazy idea in May when we were in Lowestoft, which is the most Easterly point of the UK. I wondered if we could do all the extreme mainland parts of the UK this year. So we just got back from Cornwall, where we did Lizard Point and Land's End, and we've also done John 'O Groats and Dunnet Head. Then we did the mot Westerly point of the UK, which believe it or not is in Scotland – Ardnamurchan lighthouse.

“We like being by the sea, says Heather - we enjoy the clifftops, the mountain ranges and the valleys. Scotland was like that, but we've only touched on Wales this year. Cornwall and Devon are just amazing. The one thing Rick really loves is me finding a really narrow lane for him to drive down!” ●



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# The list

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