



Bonjour Madame – Taking the MG to France!

Can you remember the days when the roads in the UK were quiet? A spin in the MG on a summers afternoon where you never encountered a traffic jam or parking problem and you could sit in a shady spot near to the road for a picnic. As a young boy I can remember those



One of the many beautiful Châteaux in the Loire 40 minutes from the gite

days in my grandfathers Ford Popular, his amazing plywood picnic box, complete with Thermos flask, in the boot. I am sure some of you still know some secret car free roads but my experience of late is that in most parts of the UK they are very hard to find.

Well dear friends those days of motoring bliss can easily be relived here in central France. A quick 330 miles from Calais and you can discover the roads of yesteryear – traffic free driving, the warm wind in your hair and so many picnic spots you are completely spoilt for choice.

Expensive in France, I here you say, but with some careful planning you can have an excellent holiday at a very modest cost to say the least. Cross Channel ferry fares have fallen significantly in recent years and it's possible, even in high season, to pre-book a return for as little as £45 for MG and passengers. Accommodation in typical chain hotels will cost around £38 for a room for 2 per night not including breakfast. A week in a good quality gite (rented holiday house or cottage) can cost around £400 in high season, this will normally sleep up to 4 people. So ferry, two nights hotel and a week in a gite would total about £570 or £370 if travelling with friends in 2 cars and sharing the cost of the gite. Even plus food, petrol etc you still have *very manageable costs*.

Central France, just south of the beautiful Loire Valley is one of those regions that people pass through on the way south - so tourists of any description are few and far between. Exploring the lanes of Central France in the MG is always a joy, discovering a hidden gem of a café or restaurant makes the day extra special. Recently we had a day visiting the vineyards of the Indre region just south of the town of Vierzon. The small towns of Reuilly and Quincy produce excellent white wines much admired by the French but virtually unheard of elsewhere. After tasting a variety of white wines at the caves of Jean-Michel Sorbé we bought 6 bottles of the

Menu of the Day - May 2010

Five courses including lovely fresh baguette, plus very nice local red wine for 11 Euro (£9.30) pp

- *Home made terrine (Pate) accompanied with baby gherkins and miniature tomatoes marinated in cider.*
- *A lovely composed dressed salad sprinkled with a generous helping of warm lardons and egg.*
- *Two slices of melt in the mouth tongue on a bed of creamed and pureed celeriac with a red wine sauce.*
 - *Help yourself cheeseboard*
- *Desert of your choice (we went for the Ille flotant)*

2009 Silver medal winner – a special white with great character for 6,7€ a bottle (circa £5.70). It was then back on the road looking for a suitable lunch stop. A small board outside a village restaurant announced the menu of the day for 11 € including wine – we noticed that work vans and locals were arriving, always a good sign! Central France has many restaurants that offer a fixed price menu at lunchtime, primarily designed for workers so value and quality is practically guaranteed and this one proved to be no different. The menu changes every day – steak and frites is popular on a Friday for the main course.



Back at the gite after an excellent days driving – as advertised in this magazine.

The meal was simply excellent, superb value for 11€ and certainly more than sufficient to sustain body and soul for the remainder of the day.

We continued on our little tour travelling on small deserted roads covering a further 60 miles before we returned to our Gite at Chatillon sur Indre. The region has so much to offer the difficulty you have is

deciding where to go. Within 40 minutes drive you have the

beautiful chateaux of the Loire, a world heritage site. You can expect tourists in high season but the roads remain a traffic free joy other than those very close to the chateaux.

The tourist offices in all the towns are full of

information and provide a variety of guides for exploring the region in a car. We used



My poor little MGF surrounded by the masterpieces of yesteryear

one of these to visit the historic town of Richelieu, needless to say the town was tourist free so we decided to sit and have a large café in the town square before commencing investigations! The 'F' was parked in the

picturesque empty square under a shady tree when I heard the distinct roar of high capacity vintage car engines. Within minutes the square was packed with nearly 50 classic sports cars from all over France and a few from the UK heading, it appeared, for a vintage race nearby later that week. The town had offered to provide lunch for the drivers and passengers as part of the support for the historic sports car event – my MGF unfortunately did not qualify for a free lunch.



You never know what you will discover when you stop for lunch. There we were parked quietly having a coffee in Richelieu when my poor little MGF was surrounded by masterpieces of yesteryear like this magnificent MG

picturesque



The small Auberge at Le Fel in the Lot valley near Entraygues is a hidden gem of a hotel, the location has to be experienced to be believed. The mountain roads in this region are just great in the MG.

Central France is also convenient as a stop over for those wishing to explore the southern areas of France. We love the Lot Valley around Entraygues, We discovered this area nearly 30 years ago in our motorcycling days and the twisty roads through the mountains and valleys are just perfect for motorcycle and the MG. We also discovered 'Le Fel', a tiny little hamlet with a super Auberge (small country inn with rooms). The place only has 11 rooms but the location is just perfect, the views stunning, great food and the village beautiful.

So what are you waiting for.... Get on the internet book the ferry and off you go!

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Here we are at the gite in the heart of central France.