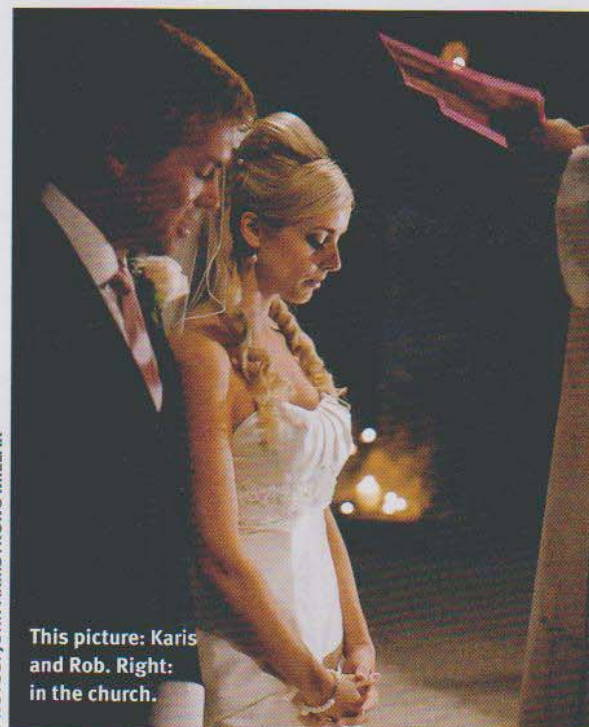


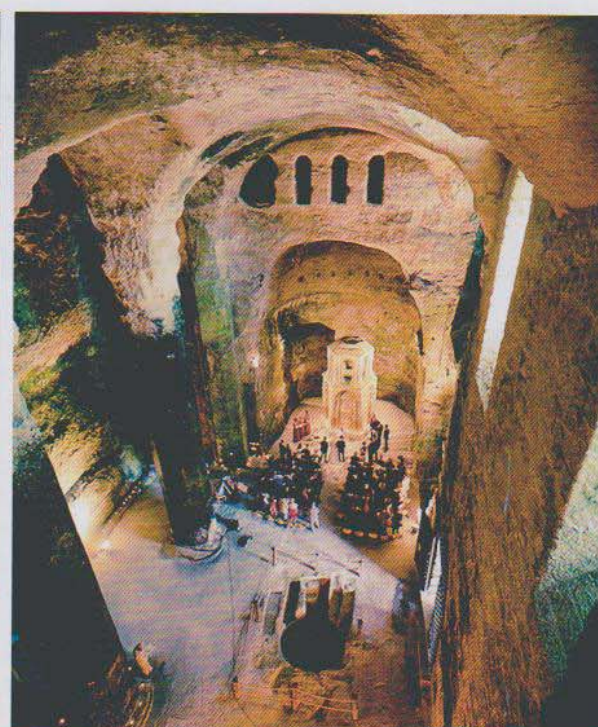
Just a perfect day...

Golden sunflower fields and the fresh green of cognac vineyards, fairytale châteaux and atmospheric old mills; celebrations that last long into the night under star-filled skies... dream weddings are made of this. Locals have long-known the charms of the Poitou-Charentes but now more and more visitors are discovering the region as a wedding destination. If you're planning your perfect day, look no further than our 14-page guide to getting married here with ideas for venues, flowers, photography and more. To begin, we speak to five couples who chose the Poitou-Charentes for their wedding...



PHOTOS: JOHN ARMSTRONG MILLAR

This picture: Karis and Rob. Right: in the church.



The 'church' wedding

BRIDE & GROOM

Karis Browne & Robert Kettlety from southwest England.

WHERE MARRIED

The underground Monolithic Church in Aubeterre - the largest monolithic [rock-hewn] church in Europe. The reception was at Manoir De Longeveau (www.longeveau.com).

NUMBER OF GUESTS

90 for a sit-down meal

MENU

Terrine of foie gras and duck served with a compote of figs, cornichons, 'silverskin' onions and crusty bread or an asparagus tart with hollandaise sauce
Monkfish served with a risotto of peas and citrus fruit
Confit de canard served with dauphinoise potatoes or filet mignon served with mushrooms and dauphinoise potatoes or a mille-feuille of tomatoes, goats' cheese and pesto
Cheese platter
Lemon tart with raspberry coulis or chocolate tart with raspberry coulis

WHY HERE?

We are both from the country and wanted somewhere with picturesque countryside and good food and wine says Karis. Having been on holiday to France and loved it, it ticked all the

boxes. We also wanted somewhere all our guests could stay together in one location and Longeveau could do that.

DESCRIBE THE DAY

The best day of our lives! We just want to do it all over again. The scene was set for the day as soon as people entered the church and got a wonderful surprise at its breathtaking interior. After the ceremony we all walked to the square in Aubeterre for drinks at the Hôtel de France (www.hotelde-france-aubeterre.com), as well as to have our pictures taken. After that we were driven back to Longeveau where we were served champagne and canapes and had a fabulous band playing strolling jazz. This was followed by a five-course sit down dinner which was amazing! The menu was devised along with Rob who is a real foodie and



This picture: the reception. Right: a pretty bouquet. Far right: 'I do'



A kiss!



Vintage cars add to the romance of the day

each table was served with alternate dishes so everyone could try as much of the food as possible. The dinner went on for hours with speeches in between each course, as we wanted it to be done the French way - a long, lazy meal. The partying went on long into the night and we had a family member playing the piano and song sheets for everyone to sing along to. I think we all finished up about 4am.

WHAT MADE THE DAY SPECIAL?

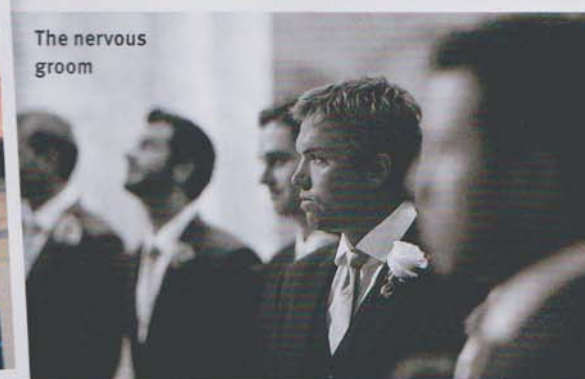
Everything about the day was special.... We made the wedding about us and the things that we enjoy and that was the most important thing as people could identify with this.

WHO ORGANISED IT ALL?

Beth Stretton and her team at Get Married in France (www.getmarriedin-france.co.uk), although I knew exactly what I wanted for my wedding and really wanted to be involved in every



The nervous groom



PHOTOS: JOHN ARMSTRONG MILLAR

part - which I was. Having a wedding planner was like having an advisor helping me to make my ideas even better as well as getting the best value for my money. I thought I would be stressed on the day but I wasn't at all as every last detail had been sorted for me. If not for Beth we would not have been able to marry in the Monolithic church as she organised it all, and she also knew who to recommend for every part of the day - photographer, florists, vicar, music, make up, hair...

YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER COUPLES

The Poitou-Charentes is a truly beautiful area in France and we would recommend it to anyone. Go and see the area / venue you are interested in as it's a lot easier to decide this way and most importantly - get a wedding planner! Knowing what I do now, even if I were getting married in my home country, I would still use a wedding planner to support me.