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Food plays an important part in French life. You are never far from a bakery or a restaurant



Why France? My France! an Irish Photographer's view

By John Armstrong-Millar

Deciding to leave London was a relatively easy decision, the M25 on a Friday evening was a great persuader. However where to go?. We had 2 school age children, Hamish and Freya then 11 and 7. I suppose we started to look at France because we had both been there on family holidays and had fond memories of the place.

Would it be the same? Things change, don't they? Well needless to say France hadn't changed all that much, and we were soon looking at houses, sampling "le plat du jour" in little restos populated by truckies and business men.

That was 5 years ago and it's safe to say we have never looked back. The kids are now bi-lingual. Freya goes skiing every weekend in the season with her school and Hamish is playing with his mates in a band.

So what do we like about France? Well there are a few things that are not obvious: for example the remarkable absence of pay&display car parks. The refreshing approach to Health & Safety (as in: "Yes! It's important, but weren't you looking where you were going?"). The way when people get married, everyone drives around honking their horns.. The friendly French drivers who like to snuggle up to your rear bumper. The way I'm trusted to pay for my coffee, after I have enjoyed it sitting outside watching the world go by. Walking in the Pyrenees. Taking 10 mins from arriving at my local airport to sitting in the departure lounge with a coffee. Eating food "in season", from the incredible "Napoleon" cherries in late spring to the wonderful Corsican tangerines just before Christmas.

Then there are the weddings. I love the light, the backdrops and of course the people. At one wedding, recently, I took the Bride & Groom off up the back streets of a lovely French town for some portraits. On the way back we saw a lovely little house with a riot of flowers in the front garden. as we hovered outside; me thinking "shame about that car in the way". The owners rushed out and asked if we wanted it moved.

All smiles and a treasured picture for everyone. I sent them a copy; after all where else can you stay in a 200 year old Chateau, drive to a 12th century church in a 1930's classic car, and celebrate it all with some wine, lovingly harvested before your were even born?

France of course!

John's Website
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