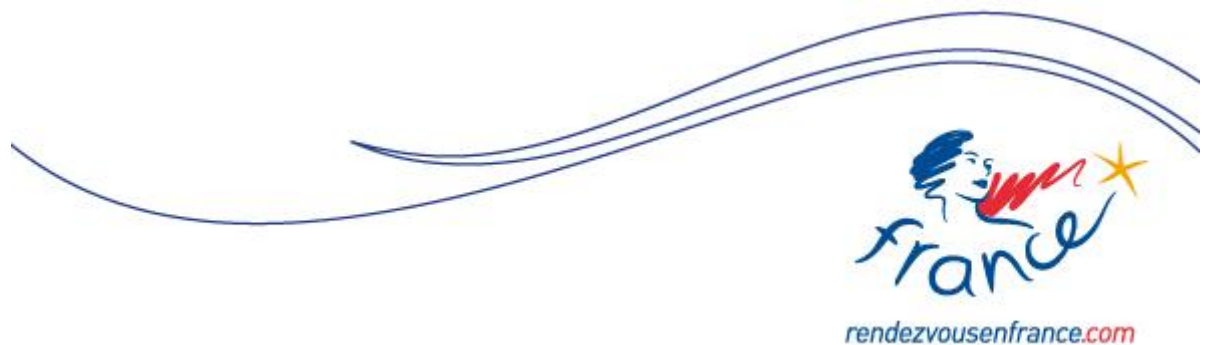


The Annual French Press Awards 2011



Wednesday 2nd November 2011

Spencer House, London



The French Press Awards 2011

ATOOUT FRANCE receives over 6,000 articles on travel and tourism every year from national and regional publications, both printed and online, which amounts to a readership of 6 billion people! These articles are written thanks to the efforts of Tour Operators, to the hospitality of the French Regions and to our PR team's work to bring you all the support you need.

After having received numerous nominations and having scanned and scouted for the best travel articles on France, it hasn't been easy to whittle down the shortlist to the final few.

With much deliberation and discussion, the team at ATOOUT FRANCE has hand-picked articles based on Heritage and Culture, City and Regional Guides, Family Holidays and "Art de Vivre", which best encapsulates the country's character and charm.

Tonight we are happy to announce the 20 nominees, the four runners-up, and the four lucky winners of the 2011 French Press Awards.

We would like to thank our partners in this venture: The Riviera Tourist Board, The Poitou-Charentes Tourist Board, The Midi-Pyrenees Tourist Board and The "Grandes Etapes Françaises" Luxury Hotel Group, for their generosity and for the magnificent prizes they have donated.

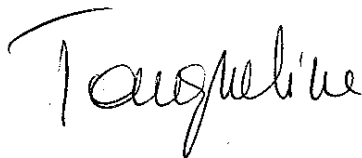
In this press pack you will find the information relative to those exceptional destinations who have participated in our inaugural Annual French Press Awards.

We would also like to express our gratitude to you – all the journalists, both in-house and freelance, for their contributions to the promotion of France as the place for family, for low-cost, for regional, for luxury, for gastronomic, for adventure, for ecological... Holidays!

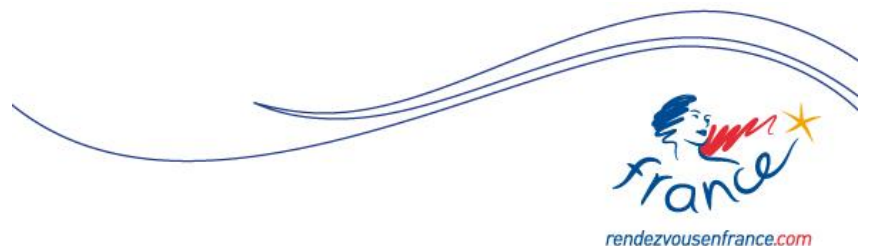
We wish we were able to give each and everyone of you an award, but with so many great articles to choose from and so many loyal journalists, the choices were tough! Please don't let that stop you from joining us next year, and putting forward your pieces in order to be named 2012 champion!

I sincerely hope that you have had a truly special evening with us here in this fabulous location. All that's left for me to say is keep on visiting France, keep on writing about it, and most of all keep on enjoying it.

Kind Regards,



Jacqueline Mirtelli
Head of PR
ATOOUT FRANCE UK & Ireland



2011 NOMINEES AND CATEGORIES

➤ Best Travel Article on French Heritage and Culture

✓ Nominees:

Carmen Konopka, *Painting with Flowers*, Destination France, Spring 2011

Eve Middleton, *Pagnol's Provence*, France Magazine, June 2011

Frank Barrett, *In the footsteps of Vincent van Gogh*, Mail on Sunday,
3rd July 2011

Jonathan Lorie, *The Paris Commune*, The Independent on Sunday,
9th October 2011

Nick Trend, *Leonardo da Vinci's Loire*, The Daily Telegraph,
22nd October 2011

➤ Best Travel Article on French Family Holidays

✓ Nominees:

Debbie Taylor, *A little break in Paris*, Food and Travel, April 2011

Jane Anderson, *Family Brittany*, The Independent, 23rd July 2011

Kevin Rushby, *Come on dad, keep up!*, The Guardian, 9th July 2011

Peter Bailey, *Bois & girls*, The Sun, 26th February 2011

Robert Hardman, *France en famille*, Daily Mail, 5th February 2011



➤ **Best Travel Article on the French *Art de Vivre***

✓ **Nominees:**

Allan Jenkins, *Vive la France*, Observer Food Monthly, February 2011

Anthony Peregrine, *Vine art*, The Sunday Times Travel Magazine,
August 2011

Jane Clare, *Chablis: Not just a wine ... a way of life*, Liverpool Echo,
22nd February 2011

Mary Novakovich, *Taking stock*, France Magazine, April 2011

Stephen Rigley, *Raise your glasses to Bordeaux*, Sunday Express,
13th March 2011

➤ **Best Travel Article on a French Regional or City Tour**

✓ **Nominees:**

Chris Leadbeater, *Marseille*, The Independent, 22nd October 2011

Helen Beatty, *On the rue to romance*, Sunday Mirror, 15th May 2011

Ray Kerhsaw, *Life on the Edge*, The Sunday Telegraph, 14th August 2011

Tom Chesshyre, *A little bit of France in the Indian Ocean*, The Times,
15th October 2011

Various, *Introducing France* special series, Lonely Planet Magazine,
July 2011



Best Travel Article on French Heritage and Culture

Winner: Nick Trend, *Leonardo da Vinci's Loire,*

The Daily Telegraph, 22nd October 2011

**Prize kindly donated by the
Riviera Regional Tourist Board**

**In the footsteps of a great painter:
COCTEAU AND THE FRENCH RIVIERA**
3 nights / 4 days for two people

**Runner-up: Carmen Konopka, *Painting with
Flowers,* Destination France, Spring 2011**

Best Travel Article on French Family Holidays

Winner: Kevin Rushby, *Come on dad, keep up!*

The Guardian, 9th July 2011

**Prize kindly donated by the
Midi-Pyrenees Regional Tourist Board**

A stay of 4 days / 3 nights for 2 people
in the Hautes Pyrenees and
Midi-Pyrenees Region

Runner-up: Debbie Taylor, *A little break in Paris,*
Food and Travel, April 2011

THE PIC DU MIDI OBSERVATORY AND HAUTES-PYRENEES MIDI-PYRENEES REGION

Midi-Pyrenees boasts many exceptional sites that are known the world over, such as Rocamadour, Lourdes, Millau Viaduct, Cirque de Gavarnie, Canal du Midi and of course the Pic du Midi.



Midi-Pyrénées is a region steeped in **aeronautical and space culture** since the beginning of the 20th century. In this region, science and the exploration of the sky set the tone for holidays, from the Space City and Airbus in Toulouse to the summit of the Pic du Midi in the Pyrenees.

The region has set itself apart by implementing the **Great Tourist Site** seal of approval.

25 such sites have been selected as part of this scheme (the Observatory of the Pic du Midi being one of them), in an aim to:

- **Promote the Midi-Pyrénées region** with a communication campaign focusing on a group of well-known tourist sites. Useful resource: the website www.greatsites-midipyrenees.co.uk featuring films about the Great Sites.
- **Facilitate exploration of Midi-Pyrénées**, France's largest region, by inviting the public to visit emblematic sites rich with historical, cultural or natural interest.
- **Enhance and protect these sites**, their distinctive features and heritage.
- **Ensure that high-quality facilities and services are available for visitors at each Great Site:** well-trained staff, a 3-star tourist office, modern infrastructures, sustainable development and accessibility, etc.

The Great Sites of Midi-Pyrénées operate as a network, each one showcasing the region while providing a gateway to the other Great Sites.



THE OBSERVATORY OF THE PIC DU MIDI

The Pic du Midi was opened to the public for the first time in 2000. For over 135 years at this unique site, researchers and astronomers have studied and photographed the skies. The visitor reaches the Pic by cable car from La Mongie- it takes only 15 minutes to reach the summit at 2877 metres of altitude.

SEE EVERYTHING FROM THE PIC

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF THE PYRENEES

The particular geographical position of the Pic du Midi offers an extraordinary panorama on the whole of the Pyrenean range. The purity of the air allows a rare quality of observation of the stars and the terrestrial panorama.

THE HIGHEST MUSEUM IN EUROPE

Visitors can discover:

- **A short film** explaining the history of the Pic with a particular emphasis on the human exploits in first conquering the Pic and then building the Observatory.
- **Instruments** of scientific research and observation
- **An image** of the sun, captured by a Siderostat

VISITS: FROM THE MORNING... AND INTO THE NIGHT

Open all year round, the Pic du Midi offers a wide range of visits adapted to all interests and all types of visitor.

A DAY OF DISCOVERY AT THE SUMMIT

From just a simple visit to enjoy the panorama and the museum, the Pic du Midi also opens its doors to a guided tour of the scientific installations. Guided audio visit is available in 5 languages (on the history and the daily life of the Observatory, together with a commentary of the local wildlife).

A PRIVATE EVENING AMONGST THE STARS

To enjoy the spectacle of sunset over the Pic and to discover the heavens the Pic du Midi offers public evenings on certain dates and also allows pre-organised group visits. The programme on offer depends on the season and will include a visit and observation, astronomical workshops with a resident astronomer. A unique and convivial experience accompanied by a delicious meal which highlights the local gastronomy.

A NIGHT ON THE SUMMIT

Since 2000 the Pic du Midi has been offering nights on the summit. Accompanied by an astronomer your group (maximum 19 persons) can spend an unforgettable night observing the stars, whether with the naked eye or with a telescope. Bedrooms for one or two persons have been recently refurbished. Early in the morning one can enjoy the fabulous sight of sunrise over the Pyrenees.

A SPORTING SUMMIT

DESCENT ON SKIS OR SNOWBOARD IN WINTER

At nearly 3000 metres of altitude the Pic offers an exceptional off-piste high mountain descent to experienced skiers and riders. As the descent is neither way marked nor supervised an experience of high mountain practice is needed. To fully enjoy the experience it is recommended to be accompanied by a local mountain guide.

DESCENT ON MOUNTAIN BIKE IN SUMMER

Now mountain bikers can enjoy this thrilling descent as well, between 1st July and the 30th September- a descent of 1700 metres. Two cable cars per day are reserved for 30 happy bikers.



The Observatory of the Pic du Midi is one of the 4 GREAT TOURIST SITES of Hautes-Pyrenees, a mountain area rich with heritage and amazing nature.

LOURDES

Lourdes, nestling in the foothills of the Pyrénées, shines because of its architecture and its history. Lourdes welcomes six million visitors a year with around 10 per cent of this number, hoping to find a cure for various serious conditions or ailments. The number of pilgrims has grown ever since Bernadette Soubirous saw the apparition of the Virgin Mary on the banks of the River Gave in 1958.

www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

CAUTERETS – PONT D’ESPAGNE



In the heart of the National Park of the Pyrénées the Pont d’Espagne has fantastic flora and fauna – marmots, birds, ibex...This is a kingdom of granite and water with glorious waterfalls. The Pont d’Espagne consists of two principal valleys: Marcadau, which resembles parts of the Canadian Rockies, and Gaube, which is next to the lake of the same name and can be reached by chairlift. Typical little villages have welcomed many Romantics in the past such as Victor Hugo. The end of the valley is marked by the highest peak in the French Pyrénées – the Vignemale, at 3298m.

www.cauterets.com

LE CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE

Situated in the National Park of the Pyrénées, the cirque of Gavarnie was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It owes its beauty to a series of three concentric terraces that were formed thousands of years ago and go from 800 metres at the base to four kilometres at the top—all dominated by a series at 3000 metres. www.gavarnie.com



MIDI-PYRENEES' MAIN FEATURES

NATURE

PROTECTED LAND

The Hautes-Pyrénées have always tried to preserve their precious environment so that hikers and walkers will always have a most beautiful landscape to explore. Over 50% of the mountain areas in the 'department' are protected in some way or other – by UNESCO, Natura 2000, National Parks, Regional Parks...

PYRENEAN NATIONAL PARK

For 41 years more than 45700 hectares of nature have been protected. It is an exceptional environment, almost uninhabited and preserved. There is a wonderful concentration of way-marked routes to discover an exceptional scenery with a rich and diverse biodiversity. The Pyrenees National Park possesses the most original flora in Europe: 160 endemic species. The fauna shows great diversity but is very fragile, and is worth seeking out: the Isard, the Bearded Vulture (largest European bird of prey)...

THE LAKES OF NEOUVIELLE RESERVE

The glaciers that carved this dramatic scenery have left lakes, waterfalls, cirques, cretes and peaks that culminate in the granite heights of the Pic de Neouvielle at 3,091metres. The views are fantastic. The reserve was created in 1936. This is a very original place because of its bio climate. Pines seem to live longer here; there are 570 different types of seaweed and more than 70 lakes.



WELL-BEING

The healing properties of the waters of the Pyrénées have been known since Roman times. The Hautes-Pyrénées offers the largest number of thermal spas than any other 'department' in France and is now an excellent centre of well-being.

NEW FOR 2011!

➤ **New spa at Argeles-Gazost**

Les Jardins des Bains opened this year in Argelès-Gazost. Very exotic with hanging gardens reminiscent of Babylon, tumbling waterfalls, emerald forests and the mysterious Inca wells.

➤ **New Onsen area at Balnéa**

Balnéa was the precursor in 2000 of what today is a selection of eight thermal centres. This year they are adding a Japanese inspired space 'Onsen' with three open air pools at 33-40°C looking out onto the surrounding stunning countryside, a Japanese zen garden, a Japanese Pavillion with Tai Chi area and breathing practise area and two saunas with mountain views.

NOT ONLY BUT ALSO...

- **Aquensis in Bagnères-de-Bigorre** welcomes you into a magnificent architectural and ecologically designed space, a harmonious blend of wood, glass and light. The 3000m² spa is divided into 3 areas devoted to the body and well-being. Apart from being an architectural jewel, it has some exceptional facilities such as the amazing hammam and the nineteenth century lounges.
- **Cieléo in Bareges** Specially conceived for relaxation the Bareges spa offers an infinite range of pleasurable experiences. Between enjoyment, contemplation and body treatments, a visit is a wonderful mixture of blues from the sky and blues from the waters, to illuminate that feeling of wellbeing.
- **Edenvik in Capvern-les-Bains** is one of the smallest resorts in the Pyrénées at 475 metres. Capvern is known for its excellent water. It has a new signature Viking lodge – Edenvik - a combination of a sauna and a Turkish bath that unifies warm and cold treatments.
- **Les Bains du Rocher in Cauterets** has been expanding its spa facilities and the new centre within the walls of the old Thermes du Rocher including an interior lagoon of 150 square metres with geysers, mushroom fountains, Turkish baths, a sauna, a Jacuzzi and a herbal tea bar, new treatments rooms, and an exterior pool of more than 200 square metres.
- **Luzea in Luz Saint Sauveur** is situated in a magnificent neo-classical building richly decorated with marble, glass, mosaiques of precious stones and superbly located overlooking the river valley.
- **Sensoria in Saint Lary**, the setting is both deco and zen! This thermal spa is flooded with pure natural light. The centre offers four original areas: Sensoria Beauty: a range of treatments- Sensoria Form: water therapies- Sensoria Fitness: gymnastics, cardio training, weights- Sensoria Rio: all in a mountain canyon setting!

THE PYRENEES WITHOUT FRONTIERS - YEAR OF THE PYRENEES

For more information visit www.pyrineo.eu

2011 marks the first time that the two sides of the Pyrénées - French and Spanish - have worked together to promote similar principles. The Parc National des Pyrénées and the National Park of Ordesa and Monte Perdido are together promoting the conservation, protection and familiarisation of the mountains in various ways including being signed by UNESCO - Pyrénées, Mont Perdido - cirques and canyons.

THE HAUTES-PYRENEES - STRONG SENSATIONS!

Whether in the air – paragliding, delta planning, ballooning etc, or on the ground – cycling, cross country biking, mountain biking, hiking, or inbetween the two - mountain climbing, rock climbing, or in the water with the abundance of streams, rivers, waterfalls – rafting, canyoning, fishing, the Pyrénées are for you. Gavarnie is the most sublime spot for climbers.



SKIING IN THE HAUTES-PYRENEES



The Hautes-Pyrénées include nine ski stations – **Peyragudes, Val Louron, Saint Lary-Soulan, Piau Engaly, Grand Tourmalet, Gavarnie, Luz Ardiden, Cauterets and Hautacam**. They are considered as ski resorts of the next generation, for leisure holidays in beautiful, natural surroundings. The ski domains here are developed at a smaller scale than the world-known massive terrains. What makes them attractive though are their equally first class lift systems, good snow reliability and snowmaking from top to bottom of the main runs. The slopes here are undulating below and above tree line and thus suited to beginners wanting to build confidence and the intermediate skiers and snowboarders looking for a challenge.

www.picdumidi.com

www.pyrenees-holidays.com

www.tourism-midi-pyrenees.co.uk

Best Travel Article on the French *Art de Vivre*

Winner: Allan Jenkins, *Vive la France*,
Observer Food Monthly, February 2011

**Prize kindly donated by the
Poitou-Charentes Regional Tourist Board**

A short break 2 nights/ 3 days
in *Cognac Country*
for 2 people

Runner-up: Stephen Rigley, *Raise your glasses to
Bordeaux*, Sunday Express, 13th March 2011

Best Travel Article on a French Regional or City Tour

Winner: Editorial Team, *Introducing France* special series, Lonely Planet Magazine, July 2011

**Prize kindly donated by the
“Grandes Etapes Françaises” Luxury Hotel Group**

**An *Elegance* package for 2 people
at one of nine properties located
in the Alps, Alsace, Burgundy or
Loire Valley**

**Runner-up: Ray Kerhsaw, *Life on the Edge*,
The Sunday Telegraph, 14th August 2011**

**Information concerning the
“Grandes Etapes Françaises” Luxury Hotel Group**

can be found in:

**The Annual French Gala Dinner and
Press Awards 2011**

Press Pack

