

Newsletter No. 6 Dec 2008

ALASTAIR SAWDAY'S
SPECIAL PLACES TO STAY

[South of France Hotel](#)

Le Domaine aux Quat'Saisons offers quality accommodation and cuisine in a restored Languedoc country mansion with 2 acre landscaped gardens and pool, 20 minutes drive from Carcassonne.

Some Recent Press Comments

"A gastro hide-away in the Languedoc."

i-escape.com (Top Travel Website for Boutique Hotels 2008 - Travel and Leisure)

"I'm so surprised to find such an amazing place."

Comment of Owner of Secretplaces.com (Recommended by the New York Times)

Le Domaine aux Quat'Saisons is independently ranked # 4 out of 226 hotels in Languedoc-Roussillon on trip advisor.com

But don't worry, we will never lose our attention to detail, care and personal touch. If you are not happy, we are not happy!

2009 Price Freeze and Reductions

We are truly committed to providing high quality at a reasonable price, particularly at these times of economic austerity.

In the house, we have decided to freeze all high season room prices in € to 2006 levels.

We are also re-introducing our low season price tariff for the period from 1 May to 20th June, a saving of 20% on current high season rates.

(Hotel de la Cite in Carcassonne, ranked #3 out of 226 hotels in Languedoc Roussillon compared to our #4 ranking charges on average €332 per night compared to our €112. Source: trip advisor.com)

Food and Wine Corner

commitment to remains as strong as ever. In climate it would be all too easy farmed ingredients; we say 'buy locally and seasonally' small producers and everyday provides our clients with the truly taste wonderful and have near them. We care that the eating come from the market and have been picked that very come from a free range flock our own leftover bread and that range, fed on a 100% natural come from a local Domaine with a similar commitment to quality. The Domaine des Homs has been in the same family for 3 generations and uses only organic techniques.



Local and Seasonal Our quality ingredients the current economic to move to cheap factory absolutely no way! Our policy not only helps the villagers of France but freshest ingredients that never had a pesticide vegetables that you are stall owner's back garden morning, that our eggs that are nourished from all chicken meat is free diet. Our wines

Long live the small producers of France.

Cooking Simply and Appropriately and Serving Elegantly

Le Nid Vacancies



We still have reasonable availability in Le Nid (self catering apartment) for the 2009 season; please contact us for more details. Click below for more details of the apartment.

[Le Nid link](#)

Back Breaking Work in the 2 Acre Garden

In the autumn, following a heavy storm, one of the 125 year old maritime pine trees fell down. Never to be daunted by any gardening opportunity we set about clearing 5 tonnes of wood and have made a new seating area, using slices of the recycled trunk as decking, for clients, complete with large wrought iron pergola.



Another development in 2008 was the creation of a large composting area for kitchen, garden and all paper/cardboard waste. In only 3 months we were able to produce 37 wheelbarrows of well rotted compost.

The most arid and hot areas of the garden have always been difficult; on the south western side of the garden next to a large hedge of conifers summer shade

We always prefer this approach in our cuisine; we do not cut corners and use bought in items. We take a lot of care to get it right. Everything is home made, we are not afraid of flavours but these must not overwhelm, only enhance the natural flavours of the ingredients. Fussy, cheffy creations are just too heavy and jade the plate quickly.

Our forthcoming recipe collection will feature **Asparagus Uzès style (right) and Camargue red rice salad (top right).**

2009 Wine Tours

Vin en Vacances, is a wine tour company based in the Languedoc and run by Wendy Gedney. Wendy is a qualified wine taster and wine teacher who runs a wine school in Birmingham.

Over the years she has become an expert in the wines of the Languedoc and during 2009 she will be based in the area. Her tours are a great way to see the region, enjoy the food, taste the superb wines and meet the characters producing them.

Wendy offers a choice of day-tours covering many of the regions in the Languedoc including St Chinian, Minervois, Corbières and Limoux and she is also pleased to arrange bespoke visits for you.

On a typical day-tour you will be collected by Wendy and taken to visit Châteaux Saint-Jacques d'Albas where award winning AOC Minervois wines are produced. Following a superb tasting and lunch you visit Clos Du Gravillas in the village of St Jean du Minervois, home to the wonderfully aromatic VDN Muscat, which you will taste along with the amazing white Minervois "L'Inattendu".

Further information about the wine tours can be found on Wendy's web site www.vinenvacances.com. To arrange a tour emailing her at wendy@vinenvacances.com (or we will be happy to arrange the tour for you).

Recent Upgrades to Facilities

In 2007 we opened our second guest salon on the ground floor, providing facilities for seating all our guests at once, not to mention quiet reading and relaxing areas in the library as well as those for enjoying a film or using the Internet. The second salon has an Internet PC (free) and terrestrial TV with DVD player.

The garden has always had plenty of seating; on the terrace (breakfast, lunch or dinner or merely for relaxing), by the swimming pool, the pond and from 2009 under the new pergola.



temperatures easily exceed 50 degrees centigrade and actual rainfall is well below 22 cm per year. Tired of irrigating struggling shrubs, we have planted a new 25 m gravel bed of *Aloes*, *Opuntias*, *Agaves* and *Yuccas* and their relatives, all desert perennials.. This is partly an experimental garden and a testimony to Beth Chatto, the queen of 'right plant, right place'.

On the easterly edge of the garden we have planted 17 *Eucalyptus gunnii* trees; fast growing and drought tolerant these will grow up and form a strong boundary on this side of the garden

We have substantially extended plantings of *Agapanthus*, drought tolerant grasses (*Stipa*, *Ampelodesis* and *Miscanthus*), the showy yellow flowering bulb *Sternbergia lutea*, purple *Verbena bonariensis*, bamboos, and yellow *Cassia corymbosa*.

During this winter we have entirely renovated the wood paneling and doors in the ground floor hall and the dining room, restaining the wood and coating it with a mixture of linseed oil and turpentine. We have also re-decorated our suite Muscat, painting the walls a soft yellow and upgrading the bespoke art work in the room.

WiFi is available throughout the main house at no charge.

We also serve a light lunch and all day drinks are available at the hospitality fridge by the pool

In order to reduce our carbon emissions we have replaced every light bulb in the main house and garden with energy efficient bulbs (amazingly saving 6 kWh at peak consumption) and upgraded the hot water systems to heat all hot water overnight using the idling capacity of the electricity grid. Wherever possible we also wash using cold water, or at least at temperature minimums.

A Taste of Tourism and Activities

The original purpose of the **Canal du Midi**, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was to make it easier to transport goods from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean; nowadays it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in France for the beauty of its scenery, its river barge tours and its history. In the 17th century this was an incredibly ambitious technological project. The canal, still a marvel of hydraulics, engineering and stonemasonry more than 320 years later, winds its way through the vineyards, passing only six kilometres away from Le Domaine; boats and barges are available for hire at several nearby canal ports. We can advise on anything from a week long cruise, complete with full catering, a day hire, or a commented 2 hour cruise in a converted barge.



For the more adventurous **caving in the nearby Gouffre de Cabrespine** with an experienced guide is a truly unique experience. Throughout the summer months small groups can explore the 26 km underground caves at a depth of 250 m. Not for the faint hearted but well within the reach of most people.

Perhaps following caving and wine tasting, you may prefer to enjoy the **hot thermal waters at Rennes-les-Bains**; a lovely relaxing and therapeutic experience.

The Domaine is also close to beaches, walking trails, unrivalled fishing, water sports, horse riding, tennis, and many of the famous tourist sights of the Languedoc.

We will advise on all of these options, just let us know when you book or while you are with us.

2009 Opening Dates

Hotel Le Domaine aux Quat'Saisons is now closed for guests until 1st May 2009; please contact us as normal for all enquiries.

Contact us

Low cost UK dialing

0844 837 6703 (if you are pre-selected with an alternative operator to BT, dial 1280 0844 837 6703).

International dialing

+33 (0) 4 68 24 49 73

Email us

info@southoffrancehotel.com

Thank you for reading our latest newsletter. We hope that you have enjoyed the articles. Should you require any further information about Le Domaine aux Quat'Saisons, please do not hesitate to contact us.