

Clients Cornered

It's now ten months since Robert & Suzie Booth set up their LetSites website (www.bicary.com). During that time, they've moved back to England after seven years in the Tarn, but are still in two minds as to whether their future lies in England or back in France again...



"Robert and I bought our farmhouse - Le Domaine de Bicary - in 1995 and opened for business in 1997. It's amazing to look back and remember how chaotic life was then. Combining a 'normal' family life for our two small children with major building works was certainly a challenge - especially since we only had a very basic grasp of French in those days!

Seven years on, we've now reached a turning point. Should we finally sell our house in England (which we've been letting out all this time) and make the definitive decision to stay in France? Or vice versa?

To help us make our decision, we decided to move back to England last September to see how we'd get on.

As I'm sure you can imagine, after seven years of tenants, the house in England needed to be completely refreshed and redecorated. But with our experience of converting Bicary, we found we'd developed rather a taste for working with builders - even if this time it was long distance via the telephone! We made the house quite 'Frenchified' with French furniture, tiled floors and outrageously expensive French handles on the new kitchen cupboards to make us feel at home.

We finally moved back in time for the children to start as weekly boarders at the local prep school. Theo, our elder child, settled in very easily, but Francesca, our younger child, had a tougher time. She missed her friends and also missed speaking French, although both children have the chance to do three hours of French a week with an individual teacher at the school.

Robert and I, meanwhile, were discovering the delights of running a gîte business from England. We were lucky enough to find tenants for the French farmhouse during the winter months which has given us a steady income. The two apartments have also had a lot of holidaymakers during the last six months, so the lady we employ for the changeovers has had to become a real trouble-shooter and 'odd-job-man'. We do miss being there on Saturdays to welcome new guests and to share a glass of wine with them by the pool!

So, as we prepare for a trip back to Bicary to get the farmhouse and apartments ready for the summer season, Robert and I can honestly say that we don't know where we'll be living this time next year. We've loved being back with our English friends, but then we left a lot of wonderful friends behind in France - especially fellow British ex-pats.

After nine months away from France, we definitely crave 'set menus' in good-value French restaurants and we certainly miss the French attitude to children. In France, we found our children were positively welcomed in restaurants and cafés - sadly in England, we've often found quite the opposite. We've also found that the cost of food in England is quite high compared to France, and that the quality rarely justifies the higher prices. We often yearn for Gaillac market and its fresh local produce.

We're really hoping our trip back to France will help us make a definite choice between England and France - but we're pretty sure that, whichever country we choose, our French Adventures are far from over..."

If you'd like to share your French Adventure with other LetSites clients, please contact emma@letsites.com and we'll "corner" you in a future Newsletter!

LetSites Newsletter

Issue N°1 May 2003



www.letsites.com

Welcome to the very first LetSites Newsletter!

As the 2003 holiday season finally gets under way, now is the time to start thinking about your 2004 season. Below are some **dates** for your 2004 advertising deadlines, as well as a reminder of the information which LetSites will need from you soon for next year's tariff and availability charts.

If there is anything you would like to see mentioned or featured in the next Newsletter, please contact emma@letsites.com Meanwhile, we wish all LetSites clients a happy and highly successful holiday season!

Some Dates for your Diary...

The **2004 advertising deadlines** are rapidly approaching. Here are the relevant dates for the main brochures:

Chez Nous have no dates yet, but will be sending out Advertisers' Packs at the end of June.

Owners in France have a final deadline of 15/08/03 for their brochure (but for a free listing on their website, it's 15/07/03).

Bonnes Vacances offer 25% & 15% discounts for ads submitted by 30/05/03 and 31/7/03 respectively. Their final deadline is 30/09/03.

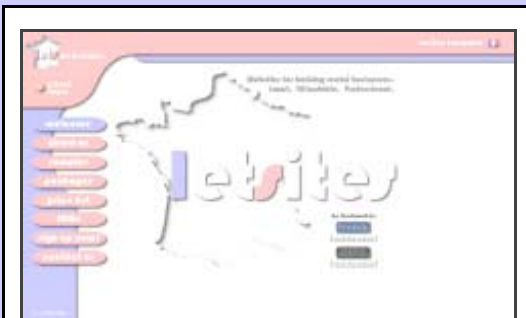
Where do you advertise? If you would like to recommend other brochures or listings to LetSites clients, please let us know for inclusion in future Newsletters.

Update your website for 2004 and you can start to fill in your 2004 availability chart. Email us as soon as you can with your 2004 prices and dates so that we can add the 2004 tariff and availability chart to your website.

Recommend-A-Friend and get 20% off next year's hosting charge when they set up their website. If two sign up, that's 40% off... (Don't forget to remind them to sign up in time to include their website address in their 2004 ads.)

LetSites were delighted to be featured amongst "the most informative and fun websites for lovers of all things French" in issue 12 (June/July 2003) of...

french magazine



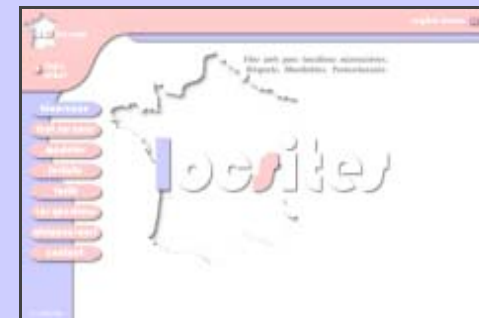
With the massive boom in British people buying French gîtes to run as businesses over the last decade, there has been an inevitable growth in associated industries, including internet advertising. This clear and clean site, which offers affordable and smart website design services to UK owners of French gîtes, is a great first stop for anyone keen to exploit the power of the internet for the purposes of letting their property. Simply choose from four styles, with each available in three colours.

Vive La Différence!

LetSites are pleased to announce a new service for francophones:
www.locsites.com

It's exactly the same as LetSites but 100% French!

LocSites is for French-speaking owners of holiday rental properties who want a French or bi-lingual website — and who prefer to deal with us in French. So if you have any French neighbours with letting properties who might be interested, just ask us to pop a LocSites brochure in the post to them. *By the way, our **Recommend-A-Friend** scheme applies to your French friends, too!*



New Value-Adding Features for your LetSites Website



If you are offering discounts for late bookings or special out-of-season rates, why not add a **gadget** to your website? Go to the LetSites Control Panel and click on "**Gadgets**" to see some examples. They can be added anywhere on your website — contact us for more details.



Don't forget that you can track visitors to your website using our **Graphical Statistics** service. For a live example of the statistics running on an actual website, just log in to the Control Panel as **guest** and click on **Statistics**.



Away from home on holiday or business? Need to access your email? Our **Webmail** service allows you to read (and reply to) your email@your-domain-name from any computer, anywhere in the world, at any time — all you need is access to the internet.



Use our **e-Postcards** service for your PR. Why not send your clients an e-postcard to wish them a safe journey before they set off? Or remind last year's clients what a good time they had *chez vous* in 2002 and mention that it's time to think about booking for 2004...



If you would like your website to include **links** to your local Mairie, Office de Tourisme, Préfecture... just let us know — it's entirely free of charge! Visit the Local Area page on **www.bicary.com** for an example.