

Clients Cornered

This month, we've "cornered" Roger Newman-Coburn & Sarah Maddison. Thoroughly addicted to "A Place in the Sun" and "No Going Back", they've found "their place" in the Lot (www.masdetrugal.com) - and they say that they're definitely NOT going back!

Two years ago, Sarah and I decided that the time was right to move to France, and by April 2002, we were on our way to St-Jean-de-Laur in the Lot.

We bought a caravan and made the momentous crossing to France - complete with three dogs and the houseplants. We then stayed on a nearby caravan site until the purchase of Mas de Trugal (our farmhouse with gîte) was completed in June. The caravan was a vital part of our plan - we intended to move into it whilst letting out the farmhouse and gîte to fund our new way of life.

Once Mas de Trugal was officially ours, we rushed around trying to get the place presentable so that we could take a few bookings for the summer. In fact, we managed to fill both properties for August just from an advert in "The Sunday Times". Encouraged by the success of our new business, we were certainly looking forward to the 2003 season...

All was going well. We were enjoying getting the place spruced up ready for the summer and took great pride in planting lots of new plants and shrubs during the spring. But then I managed to crash our elderly Range Rover with a roll and a spin that any ice-skater would have been proud of (even if the landing was decidedly dodgy)! Needless to say, the car was a write-off - but it did solve the problem of trying to import it!

Fortunately, we both escaped serious injury, but the season's preparations were delayed somewhat - and even now the boules piste has still to be built. We needn't have panicked, though, because the spring and early summer bookings didn't happen (thanks to the war), but after mid July, everything picked up and we enjoyed a reasonable summer.

And what a summer it was. The grass - and most of our newly planted shrubs - died fairly early on, followed by the trees starting an early "autumn". Living in our caravan was literally hellish, with the temperature in the awning reaching 120°F by 10am every day! And all our good intentions for summer tasks fell by the wayside since we could barely cope with doing the essential chores in the heat. Periodically, we'd throw ourselves into the pool to cool down, but then we'd have to rush back to the shade for a cold drink. On the plus side, however, there was no grass to cut, and the pool maintained an almost blood-heat temperature for three months.

Looking back over the last year, we've met some nice people whom we hope will come back again - as well as a good smattering of those who we hope will go elsewhere next year. You can't like everybody, but doesn't it drive you mad when people break or ruin things and don't let you know? A large cream throw was carefully folded so that we wouldn't "notice" a huge stain in the middle of it...

This winter, we're going to make a self-contained apartment in the farmhouse in the hope of attracting some out-of-season guests. And we're also hoping that some French lessons will help us get to know our French neighbours a little better. It's a bit difficult to bump into people at all round here, but now if we do, at least we'll be able to talk to them!

What drew us to France in the first place was the countryside, the architecture, the people, the food and the wine. We haven't been disappointed - although if we never have to eat duck again, it will be too soon!

Santé!



LetSites Newsletter

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www.letsites.com

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!

The LetSites Newsletter – November 2003

Welcome to the second LetSites Newsletter – and many thanks for all your positive feedback about the first issue!

Listed below are the publication dates for the three main holiday brochures, so do try to let us have your 2004 tariffs before the end of October if you haven't already done so. We're delighted to announce the launch of www.frenchpropertywebsites.com. It works just like LetSites, but is designed for owners selling their properties rather than renting them out. And on the back page, we've cornered some more LetSites clients, Roger & Sarah (www.masdetrugal.com).

If there is anything you would like to see mentioned or featured in the next Newsletter, please contact emma@letsites.com Meanwhile, we're keeping our fingers crossed for your 2004 bookings!

Some Dates for your Diary...

The **2004 holiday brochures** are due out any day now... *Chez Nous* and *Owners in France* should be out in early November and *Bonnes Vacances* in mid-November.

Where do **you** advertise? If you can recommend any other brochures or listings that have worked well for you, do let us know and we'll list them in future Newsletters.

And don't forget to **update your website for 2004** before the brochures come out. Just send us your 2004 tariff, as well as any bookings you've already taken for 2004 for your new Availability Chart.

By the way, if you already know dates and prices for your **2005 season**, those can be added to the website even now!

Tell me all about... e-postcards



As the festive season approaches, you might like to think about adding e-postcards to your website. Here's how they work. When a visitor clicks to enlarge any photo on your site, a "send as e-postcard" button appears just below the enlargement. Click the symbol and a form appears: add the recipient's details, write your message and then click to send. It's as simple as that!

e-postcards are an excellent method of doing cost-free international marketing with a direct link to your own website! Why not send past clients an e-postcard? Suggest they take a look at your website to remind themselves of the great holiday they had *chez vous* and they might just feel inspired to book their 2004 holiday with you! Why not send next year's clients a postcard every month before their holiday to build up their excitement? And don't forget to wish them *bon voyage!* Or you could just send out Christmas & New Year greetings to all your family and friends – you might even generate some unexpected bookings!



Know anyone selling up?

LetSites now has a sister service – this time for people selling their properties: www.frenchpropertywebsites.com

If you know of anybody selling up, why not suggest to them that they take a look at the **fpw** website?

Many people try to sell their properties privately, so might well see the benefit of having a smart website to include in their advertising and to act as an online brochure. Even those using estate agents will find life easier if there's a website available. Agents will be able to take potential buyers on a 'virtual visit' – and buyers will get an immediate feel from the details and photos on the site whether it's what they're really looking for.

Our **Recommend-a-Friend** scheme applies to your selling friends, too! When anyone signs up to **fpw** on your recommendation, we'll give you a commission of 10% of their initial fee as a credit against your next LetSites renewal.



New Swimming Pool Safety Requirements for 2004

You probably already know that new obligatory safety regulations are being introduced for all French properties with outdoor pools.

Rental properties with pools must have certain safety measures in place by 1st January 2004. Although the precise requirements have still to be announced, the norms will probably be based on standard XP P90-306. The fine for breaking the law will be 45,000 €.

To summarise, the law requires that access to a pool should be "impossible" for children under five without an adult there to help them.

Standard XP P90-306 prescribes a permanent physical barrier (a fence or wall) all the way round – hedges are not accepted. Access to the pool must be via a child-proof, self-closing, locking gate and the lock must not be operable by children aged five or under.

This summer alone, two British children drowned in gîte pools. Although the pools in both cases had fences and gates, the gates had been left open by other gîte guests.

(Please note that the above is for general information only – for up-to-date advice, we recommend that you contact your Mairie and your insurance company. And until the precise rules have been announced, beware unscrupulous sales reps...)

