

# Welcome to Cantou at La Teulière!

## 2012 Edition

*This book contains essential materials for you about the house. I've also included other information that will enhance your enjoyment. It's arranged this way:*

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*Please read especially the material about the house, to save yourself time and avoid aggravation*

## The House

**ATTIC (les combles):** if for some reason you need to get into the space above the rooms, you can use the ladder in the front basement. Access is through the trap door in the living room ceiling just to the right of the door into the kitchen; it is labeled.

**BANKS (les banques):** there are ones in Biars are Caisse d'Épargne, Banque Populaire, Crédit Agricole and Crédit Lyonnais; and the post office in Bretenoux distributing French money from ATMs (les distributeurs de billets, les guichets automatiques); and several in Saint Céré; always with an even better exchange rate than traditional money exchange. Never change money anywhere but in a bank, or you will lose as much as 20% through unfavorable exchange transactions.

**BARBECUE GRILL (la grille barbecue):** there is one in the basement. There are also charcoal and lighter "allume-feu" lighter.

**CANDLES (les bougies):** because of occasional brief outages, the candles on the bottom shelf of the kitchen cupboard are for your emergency use. Be sure to leave them for that purpose. You can use any red ones you find; they are for casual use.

**CATS & DOGS (les chats et les chiens, les animaux domestiques):** village animals may visit from time to time. A recent guest had a strong allergic reaction to previous cat presence in the house, so please try to keep them outside if you welcome them.

**CHECK-IN and CHECK-OUT (l'arrivée et le départ):** unless you've arranged differently, I've asked you to arrive after 4 p.m. on your first day. Similarly, I ask you to leave, reluctant though you may be, by 10 a.m. on your last day, to allow linen pickup and inspection.

**CLEANING MATERIALS (les articles de ménage):** there are detergents, garbage bags, window cleaner, oven cleaner and the such beneath the kitchen sink or on the bottom shelf of the tall bathroom shelf; and vacuum cleaner bags in the closet of the smaller bedroom, where the cleaner itself stays. Please replace them as they run out, as you would at home. There is a summary of cleaning procedures below, p. 22.

**COFFEE POTS (la cafetière):** the urn (la verseuse) of the drip maker is fragile. If you spend a month or more in the house, please use the liquid or crystals to *détartre* (de-scale) the works: it will make cleaner coffee, and the machine lasts longer.

The new Saeco Odea Giro grinder/coffeemaker requires more attention, so please use it only if you are comfortable with that. You need to read the instruction booklet that shows how to fill the well with beans (*not* ground coffee), and to keep the water container filled with *filtered* water you get from using the filter on the kitchen tap. The dials on the front adjust for strength and size of cup. Be careful because if you put one cup under the outlet it the coffee can overflow. When you first turn on the machine it has to warm up and reset. As you use it, after a few minutes it goes into "sleep" mode, so unless you are on a "red" electric day (see "A word about energy conservation" below you can just leave it turned on and it will revive when you want more coffee.

**DRYER:** it is electric and sits in the front basement. Note that you set a level of dryness you want to end up with, then hold the start button in for a couple of seconds to start it, and it starts running; "très sec" is about right for most purposes although you can choose "prêt à repasser" for things you want to leave damp for ironing. It stops periodically and then restarts, until the clothes reach the desired dryness. Please clean the filter in the door with

each lot of clothes. If it's winter, please see ELECTRICITY below, and also page 21, for information about electricity cost and energy conservation.

DVD player (le lecteur DVD): it uses a separate remote-control unit and plays any DVDs from any region. You run it by its own remote control, and you view the DVD by selecting "AV" on the satellite remote control.

DISHWASHER (le lave-vaisselle): please use the detergent, salt and wetting agent provided, try to wait till it's full to run, and be careful to put only suitable items in it.

ELECTRICITY (l'électricité): in the front basement (la cave) immediately to your left as you enter is the electric meter (le compteur). All you have to do is push the gray button to turn it on. Conversely, when you vacate you have only to push the red button. It is 50-cycle, 220 v., so you need a transformer to run appliances from North America, and analog clocks running on line current are 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ % slow. For safety's sake, it's best to use only the appliances supplied in the house. Turn the electricity off when you vacate the house. The meter reader comes on or about February 8 and August 8. Please let him in the basement if you encounter him; he will have an É.D.F. badge. There are occasional power outages, particularly during electrical storms, but EDF is pretty good about restoring the service.

ABOUT WINTER ELECTRIC RATES: If you are at Cantou between November 1 and March 31 you may see a small red-orange light (un voyant) on the panel in the basement from 6:30 a.m. one day till 1 a.m. the next day. That means it is a peak-demand day and the rate quintuples (that's 5 times) for the period, so please try to delay heavy-duty electric use like clothes washing and drying until a day when it's off; but of course don't let it ruin your holiday. The clothes- and dishwashers have a timer feature that allows you to delay wash until the middle of the night (1 a.m. to 6:30 a.m.), when the peak rate is not in effect. The "red" rate is not in effect on weekends, when offices and factories are mainly shut, reducing the demand on the national grid. Around 5:30 p.m. you can see tomorrow's status at [http://bleuciel.edf.com/abonnement-et-contrat/les-prix/les-prix-de-l-electricite/option-ejp/l-observatoire-2584.html&coe\\_i\\_id=2584](http://bleuciel.edf.com/abonnement-et-contrat/les-prix/les-prix-de-l-electricite/option-ejp/l-observatoire-2584.html&coe_i_id=2584). See further information about energy conservation below, page 21.

FIRE (un incendie): there is a firehouse (les sapeurs-pompiers) on the Route de Glanes, outside Bretenoux. Reach them by dialing 18. You shout "au feu!" (ô fô) and if you want to tell them there's a fire you say "il y a un incendie à la Teulière, par Gagnac," 'eel ee ah uhn ansahndee ah lah tulyair, pahr ganyak.' The firemen know your telephone number from their display. In case of a fire also notify me immediately at +1 212 866 4558.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER (l'extincteur): there is a fire extinguisher in the kitchen directly above the stove.

FIREPLACE (la cheminée): the fireplace is the classic "cantou," with a Godin wood-burning stove installed. Firewood (le bois) is also under the front steps, but please be careful, especially if there are children, and be certain before you leave or go to sleep, that the fire is out, really out. When you leave the house for an extended time and have been using the wood stove, shut it, including the damper on the pipe, to conserve the heat in the house. See more information about energy conservation below, page 21. Upon departure please clean the wood stove out if you have lit a fire even once, including cleaning the glass door with the "alcoöl à brûler" wood alcohol under the sink and a scouring pad. Other cleaning instructions are below, page 22.

**GARBAGE (les ordures):** please read information below, on page 20 regarding recycling. It is easiest to deposit your trash in one of the big brown *poubelles* (dumpsters) at the bottom of the hill, where the road forks for Laval de Cère, or on to the left of the road from Gagnac back out to the main highway. All glass including bottles and jars, but without tops, goes in one of the big round *poubelles* such as you see in the parking lots at Leclerc or LIDL and at the bridge in Bretenoux, or with the *poubelles* outside Gagnac. To throw away large items you must go to the *déchetterie* (dump) below Glanes, on the road between Bretenoux and Cornac. The *déchetterie* is a fine example of how rural recycling can be done right, with separate big dumpsters for each type of refuse. I am assessed about \$400 a year in taxes for the operation of the dump, so don't be shy.

**GAS (le gaz):** the stove works on bottled *butane* (not propane) gas, in an orange (not gray or blue) tank. Open the valve on the top of the big orange gas bottle below the sink. When you leave, close the valve. If the gas runs out, remove the fitting from the top of the bottle with the long-handled pliers in the tool kit (see TOOLS) and take the fresh bottle in the basement. **ATTENTION:** contrary to practically everything else you've encountered, the thread on the fitting screws off clockwise! To help guests after you, please take the empty to Jardi-Leclerc in Biars or Catena in Bretenoux to exchange for a full one, so they will have uninterrupted gas when they need it. Save the receipt (for my tax records), which should be for about €30, and I'll reimburse you for the cost. Unless instructed to the contrary, turn off the gas tap when you vacate the house. (see also STOVE).

**HEAT (le chauffage):** is produced by the same boiler as the hot water. If you need it, after starting the boiler for hot water, it is a simple matter to heat the house. You have merely to turn the yellow switch (marked "pompe") on, to start the little blue circulating pump on the back. You must open the brown-handled valve below the pump to let hot water flow into the system and thence into the radiators. When the heat gets too strong, turn off the *pompe* switch and it will continue to circulate by gravity at a lower level. When you vacate the house: (1) close the brown-handled valve below the blue pump; and (2) turn both switches (red and yellow) on the front of the boiler off.

The radiators are individually thermostatically controlled, so you can have warmth in some places and cool in others; the "2" setting gives about 65° F / 18° C and "3" gives about 70° F / 21° C. The occasional squeaking sound coming from it is not harmful or dangerous. See also "OIL" on page 6.

**HOT WATER (l'eau chaude):** is heated with oil by the big yellow boiler in the front basement. When you arrive, all you have to do is turn the red switch on (*marche*), and the system does everything else. When you vacate the house, turn the boiler off (*arrêt*). **ATTENTION:** the water heater (*le chauffe-eau*) produces high temperatures (more than 140° F.) at the lowest setting, so for your own safety and comfort, do not raise the thermostat (the round black dial), and be careful in any case. The washing machine heats its own water, so it can be even hotter than that in the tank (see WASHING MACHINE).

**INSURANCE (l'assurance):** I am insured in France for casualty and liability with Écureuil Assurances IARD through the Caisse d'Épargne, tel. 05 65 39 76 82; and the contact is Patricia Dell'Oste, the branch manager in Biars, across from the LIDL store. If there is a possible claim, please call me, at +1 212 866 4558. I would certainly not expect you to make any change in your plans to accommodate a claims adjuster, but since by French law I must make a claim within 5 days or I forfeit that right, please help me out.

INTERNET: (l'internet): high-speed (haut débit) service will be available in Cantou in the spring of 2012. You can dial into a variety of ISPs ("fournisseurs") if you have set up an account before. The easiest thing is to sign up at **www.free.fr**, which has no monthly fee, and you simply pay for time on line, currently €0.109/minute (15¢/minute); but there are access points for other ISPs including AOL. Because of past abuse, I must charge for use of the internet that costs more than \$10 a week. You can buy 1 hour of high-speed WiFi time at the CyberBase of the Centre Culturel in Biars (44.92037N/1.84103E) for €1.50 or for €0.50 at the Cyberbase in St. Céré, on the Place Bourseul (44.85978N/1.88854E), named for the French inventor of the telephone (no kidding).

KEYS and LOCKS (les clés et les serrures): the door has two locks but only the lower one by the door handle is in service. It is most convenient to hang the key on the panel above the table in the kitchen. In that cabinet are keys labeled basement, for the two basements. There is also a tiny key to the mailbox. Charlotte Ashburner (05 65 38 39 18) has the key but will never enter without alerting you. (see NEIGHBORS)

LADDERS (les escabeaux): there are several ladders in the basement, hanging on the rear wall. Please be careful if you use one. You need one to get in the attic.

LAUNDRY (le linge): you can have it done in Biars, or see also WASHING MACHINE and DRYER.

LAWN MOWER (la tondeuse): there's an electric one in the basement that works just like an American one (finally!), if you feel so inclined. The orange cord is hanging by the door. I have engaged someone to maintain the garden and cut the grass as needed.

LIGHT BULBS (les ampoules): we have converted everything but unconvertible ones to compact fluorescents. There are replacements on the bottom shelf of the kitchen cabinet. They have different bases, some bayonet and some screws. Please use the same wattage as is in the lamp. The light tube in the fixture above the basin in the bathroom sometimes stops working because the contacts become corroded; if it doesn't work try twisting it before you assume it's burnt out. The outside light is a 300-watt halogen you can't reach. Please remember to turn off the outside light at night, out of consideration both for the neighbors and for the environment; you can tell it's on by the orange indicator light by the switch at the front door.

LINENS (les draps de lit et les serviettes): are in the closet and in the wicker cabinet in the small bedroom. You are responsible for cleaning while you are there; the manager picks up the linens when you leave. Leave only one set of sheets per bed and one bath set for each person to be cleaned when you vacate; excess laundry left upon departure will result in an additional charge of €10/set.

MAIL and POST OFFICE (le courrier et la poste): the closest post office is in Gagnac, a full-service one in Biars. You can receive mail addressed to you c/o Johnston, Cantou, La Teulière, 46130 Gagnac-sur-Cère, Bretenoux, France. The key to the mailbox is in the cabinet above the kitchen counter. Please leave any mail that comes for me on the top shelf of the big bookcase in the back bedroom.

MEDICAL/DOCTOR (le médecin): there is a recommended English-speaking doctor in Saint Céré. His name is Dr. Ducoq and he's in the Cabinet Médical Calary, on the main street, next to the Coq Arlequin Hotel. The numbers are 05 65 38 17 59 and 05 65 38 19 89.

There is a fine dentist, Clifford Nguyen The Khiem, in Biars by the railroad track. His rates are very reasonable and the number is 05 65 38 69 69. The *Centre Médical* in St. Céré has an emergency entrance (“urgences”) and a friendly staff. French medical costs, including most prescription medications, are much lower than those in the US. Be sure to save receipts to present to your health insurer.

MICROWAVE: (le micro-ondes): you can set the clock to 12- or 24-hour formats using the ⌚ button on the front. Please be careful to clean the inside if anything splatters, and remember that the food is hotter than boiling when the cycle ends, so let it cool down before touching or eating it.

MOPS and BROOMS (les balais): there are several in the kitchen. Cleaning procedures are below, p. 22.

MOVIES (le cinéma): the Centre Culturel next to the *gendarmerie* in Biars shows films almost every night, most of them first-run, for €5.50 admission, €4.50 on Wednesdays. If you want to see one in English, be sure the listing is for “VO,” original version, or you will get it dubbed into French. Subtitles are in French, so seeing an Italian film if you don’t speak Italian or French is a waste of time.

NEIGHBORS and EMERGENCIES (les voisins et les urgences): the neighbors are French, Belgian, English, Australian and German. If all else fails in an emergency, call me in New York at +1 212 866 4558. Any of the neighbors is welcome to borrow the lawnmower or tools, but try to recover them for me.

OIL (le fioul domestique): if for some reason you need more heating oil, you can call the oil supplier named Alvéa, at 05 65 38 18 96 in St. Céré and ask them to fill it (faire le plein) and send me the bill (la facture); my account number is 502477. I do not expect you to need to do this, since the tank (la cuve) holds 2000 liters (528 gallons) and began the season full.

PLUMBER (le plombier): for any problems with the heat or plumbing, talk to Charlotte, or you can reach Daniel Leymat, at 05 65 38 58 23. He does not speak English, but is totally cooperative; and you can just show him what’s wrong and he will go to it.

REFRIGERATOR (le réfrigérateur, le frigo): turn it on by the dial inside when you arrive, and turn it off to 0 when you leave; also leave the door ajar when it is turned off. That turns on and off the light, too, so you don’t have to worry about unplugging. When the room temperature is less than 65° F. (18° C.) leave the little switch next to the dial in “on” position (orange tab); and higher than that temperature, switch it off so that you can’t see the orange side of the switch; it has to do with energy efficiency, in such a way that only German engineers can understand. When it’s on you see the light glowing through the gasket in the dark, and it’s pretty creepy.

RESTAURANT (le restaurant): the Chant des Oiseaux in Gagnac serves quite fine fare for a “petit prix.” The Friday lunch special is “moules frites.” Its operation is seasonal.

SEWAGE (le système sanitaire): the house is served by a septic tank (la fosse septique) in the rear basement. It should cause you no trouble, provided you do not put anything into the drain other than conventional waste. On Wednesday of each week please put an envelope of Éparcyl or other *activateur biologique* (from the shelf in the bathroom) into the toilet and flush it immediately. This nourishes the septic tank and keeps it happy. You don’t want the septic tank to be unhappy. DO NOT, I implore you, DO NOT put anything other than

harmless liquid waste and toilet paper down the drain. Also do not put in the toilet any chemicals that might kill the bacteria the septic tank relies on to function. Violating these instructions will invariably necessitate calling the plumber, causing you a lot of trouble, losing you a lot of time, and making me charge you for the service.

SHORT-WAVE RADIO (la radio ondes-courtes): is to help you keep in touch with the outside world the old-fashioned way. Please keep it in the house and protect it from heat and moisture. Replace the batteries if they run down, so other guests will be able to use it.

SHOWER (la douche): it is expanded to be big enough to share with a friend in the interest of environmental considerations. Note that you should leave the door closed after showering; otherwise water drains from it onto the floor.

SMOKE DETECTOR (le détecteur de fumée): it is on the wall above the door in the master bedroom. Test it by pressing on the button on the front and if it is not working please replace the 9 v. battery, which I will reimburse you for if there is not one with the other batteries on the bottom shelf of the kitchen cupboard.

SHUTTERS (les volets): close them at night when the heat is running (see below, concerning energy conservation, page 21) and when you leave for good. Note that the shutters of the big bedroom fold over themselves and into the space beside the window, to expose the entire window. You must fold them entirely back, so they do not swing loose and risk getting damaged. Be especially careful, as they can blow in a sudden wind and cause damage.

STEREOS (les stéréos): the cassettes in the cabinet are for your enjoyment in the house. You can clean the tape heads with a clean shirttail and the *alcoöl à brûler* stored under the kitchen sink. There are complete instruction manuals for the one in the living room; you're on your own with the one in the bedroom. If there are children in your party, be particularly mindful of them with the stereo. There is additional information below, page 20, about using the stereo with the satellite hookup. The instruction book for the stereo in the twin bedroom is with the unit, which plays compact disks but no longer cassette tapes.

STOVE (la cuisinière): you must light the burners and oven with the handy starter device or a match, which you can find in the little brown box on the countertop. The butane flame is very hot and hard to adjust to a low level. You have to press and hold the oven control, to allow gas to flow. (See also GAS on page 4.)

SUPERMARKETS (les supermarchés): The most convenient large stores are in Biars: Leclerc, on the main drag, and LIDL, toward Bretenoux. Both the LIDL store and the Leader Price and Aldi stores at St. Laurent-les-Tours just north of St. Céré have very good prices. Leader Price is open till noon on Sundays. Some neighbors particularly like the Intermarché in Altiliac, south of Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne.

Supermarkets in France take VISA and MC cards, which is always the best exchange rate you can get without a French bank account. For a modern shopping experience go to the Carrefour on the A20 west of Brive, or the Géant in Malemort, east of Brive, big *hypermarchés*, with everything under the sun, under one roof, and some good specials. The French call it a *grande surface*.

TELEPHONE (le téléphone): the number is 05 65 38 66 10 (zéro-cinq, soixante-cinq, trente-huit, soixante-six, dix). You can receive any call from anywhere. France's

international dialing code is 33, and when calling from outside the country omit the 0. I have restricted service that allows you to call locally. You cannot call outside the region or out of the country. See “INTERNET” on page 5 for details of dialup arrangements and costs.

You can make any call, including international, from any public telephone; buy a télécarte in a post office or other locations where it's indicated. There are public telephones in Biars and Bretenoux in front of the post office. Coin telephones have no longer exist in France. All North American long-distance companies are accessible from the house by a 0800 number. AT&T is 0800 99 0011; Verizon is 0800 99 0019; and Sprint is 0800 99 0087.

TELEVISION (la té-vé): please see the separate section (page 20) about the functioning of the TV, the stereo and the satellite system that operates them.

TOOLS (les outils): there is a handy tool box in the tall cabinet in the large bedroom. Please keep them together if you use them, and put them back where you find them.

UTILITIES (les services d'électricité, de téléphone et des eaux): É.D.F. (Électricité de France) is the electric company. You can reach them in Saint Céré for information during regular hours at 05 65 38 03 21, or for emergencies (les urgences) if you need a repair, (un dépannage) at 05 65 38 32 22. Water comes from the town of Gagnac-sur-Cère to a holding tank farther along the road, and the town hall (la mairie) is just off the town square (open according to the schedule posted on the door). France Télécom is the telephone company and you can reach them in Figeac for help by dialing 13 from any telephone, public or private. Look on page 21 for information about energy conservation.

VACUUM CLEANER (l'aspirateur): there is one with extra bags on the floor of the closet in the small bedroom. The head has a lever to set for carpet or floor.

WASHING MACHINE (le lave-linge): located in the back basement. As you customize the cycle you want, it shows roughly how long it will take, but since it adjusts the water level and spin time automatically it usually takes less time than the original estimate. Then you press Start to put it in motion.

Unlike North American machines it heats its own water, to as much as 195° F. (90° C.), so you don't need to adjust the hot-water temperature at the boiler. I don't recommend anything higher than 50°, since it's hard on elastic and some fabrics. I recommend the cycle I have marked Quick at 30° C. (86° F.) or 40° C. (104° F.), which takes about an hour. There are also settings for extra water and extra-long washing that can total more than 2 hours per wash. Limit loads to 11 pounds (5 kg.) and never, EVER use bleach, which damages the tub, the gasket and the pipes. Note there is a timer for delayed start, so you can run the wash in the night when the electricity is cheaper on “red” days.

There is a small drying rack in the twin bedroom and a folding umbrella-style clothesline in the front basement, which you can mount in the side yard; the hole for the clothesline is covered by a blue plastic cap, so please replace it when you remove the pole. Clothespins are in a bag hanging by the bathroom door. The DRYER in the basement is for your convenience, although I air dry whenever I can. Be sure to clean the dryer filter after each use.

WATER (l'eau): the tap water is entirely healthy but has a fairly high level of minerals, so I attached the filter to the kitchen spigot to make filtered water for cooking and making coffee

and tea.

The water cutoff is in the front basement, immediately to the right as you enter. All you have to do is open the little valve (le carter) to the right of the little black meter. The larger spigot above is for draining the system, and you shouldn't have to worry about it. There are infrequent brief outages, until someone realizes the pump at Gagnac has broken down and goes to fix it. Turn it off when you leave. PLEASE NOTE: in dry summers there are occasionally water restrictions, including the usual not washing cars. There is a spigot on the north side of the house.

### **The Immediate Area**

*If you intend to tour, I strongly recommend getting up and out early, because everything but restaurants is closed from noon till 2 p.m. Then you can do as the French do, having a pique-nique or picking a nice restaurant for a leisurely lunch with the locals; and you'll have three or four hours in the afternoon to visit some more. France is on a summer time that displaces the daylight an hour later in the day than even American daylight saving time, so that in late June the sky is still light until 11 p.m., but winter's sunrise doesn't come until well after 8 a.m., and the days always seem long.*

AUTOIRE (pop. 272): a lovely little village with several small *hôtels* nestled in a cirque just west of Saint Céré. If you can do some hiking, see the 100-foot-high cascade on the south side of town, taking a path from the base of the mountainside you reach by driving south from the town. You can also hike along the crest of the cliffs above, from a parking area south of town, and get a view of the waterfall from above (but not as good as the view from below). As you enter town, small Chapelle St-Roch, with remains of 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century murals. Just east of Autoire is the Grotte de Presque, a smaller but attractive cavern, closed October through March.

BEAULIEU-SUR-DORDOGNE (pop. 1333): three miles north of Biars, in the Corrèze *département*, site of the Foire de la Fraise (strawberry festival) on the second Sunday in May. Founded in 855 as the site of a Benedictine monastery, named Bellus Locus by Raoul de Turenne, archbishop of Bourges; passed to the monks of Cluny in 1095, who undertook the large program of improvements reflected in the present beautiful medieval church, the Église St-Pierre-St-Paul. See especially the tympanum sculpture over the south portal, dating from 1125 and illustrating Christ at the second coming. The town was victim of the conflict between the counts of Turenne and Castelnau, and the decline of the abbey began when the Cluny monks ceased supervising it in the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The religious wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century also took their toll, and it was only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the Benedictines once again took over. The church was named a national landmark in 1843. The Chapelle des Pénitents, former parish church, on the banks of the Dordogne, has been damaged and restored a number of times but still retains its simple romanesque character. Beaulieu has many recreational facilities, and the back streets are ancient and appealing. Visit the chamber of commerce on the Place Marbot, town square, next to the post office. One good hotel with an excellent restaurant: Le Turenne (tel. 05 55 91 10 16).

BIARS-SUR-CÈRE (pop. 2031): another settlement, a railroad junction, where you turn off the main road to go toward Gagnac. Its major attractions, aside from the largest preserves

factory in Europe (Bonne Maman, Andros and Boin brands), are the big Leclerc supermarket and LIDL discount store, where you can get everything. Across the street from Leclerc is the Prim'Frais store that has regional specialties and good produce. ATMs at the banks allow withdrawals through the Cirrus<sup>7</sup> network. Remember, everything closes for lunch, and all day Sunday; bakeries are open Sunday morning.

**BRETENOUX** (pop. 1381): the town just above the confluence of the Cère and Dordogne Rivers. First mentioned in documents in 855 as the Villa Bretenoro ultra Fluviam Seram (Bretenoux town on the Cère River). Baron Guérin de Castelnau founded the present town in 1277 as Villafranca de Orlanda, whence the old town name Orlinde. The bastide plan still easily recognizable was made up of small islands of buildings separated by streets, all surrounded by a wall, the remains of which are visible here and there. The original town square, the Place des Consuls, with bolets (covered porches) is mostly intact, near the river just off the main street. The town flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, then by the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries commercial activity had moved to Biars. Market days are Tuesday and Saturday. The Hôtel du Quercy on the square has a huge lunch for about €13, dining with the locals. The bookstore (Maison de la Presse) has a fine selection of specialized maps and guidebooks to the area. There are ATMs at the banks and at the Bretenoux post office.

**CARENAC** (pop. 397): one of the Plus Beaux Villages de France, just down river from Bretenoux, across the river from Vayrac. A captivating medieval river town, with appealing brownish tile roofs and a famous Abbaye, where the writer and philosopher Fénelon was the prior from 1681 to 1695. Do not miss the impressive Église St. Pierre with its tympanum dating from 1150, and the adjoining cloister. The town is mentioned as early as the tenth century as Carendenacus and saw its formal founding in 1047 by the bishop of Cahors and the Seigneur of Gramat. Home of eau de prunes (plum brandy) from reine-claude plums given to François I in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and particularly happy growing here (as would be almost anyone). David Hockney, the English painter and designer, has summered here often. The treasures of the city of Paris were hidden from the Germans in Carennac during the War. Dine in the Hostellerie Fénelon or the Hôtel des Touristes dining rooms, beautifully situated over the Dordogne.

**CASTELNAU-BRETENOUX**: the big red castle you see from the valley and from Loubressac. Iron oxide in the sandstone gives it its color. The first records of a castle here date from the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and most of the present work is from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, carried out under Hugues III de Castelnau. The big round tower on the northeast side dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Well worth the visit. They give one major performance of the Saint Céré music festival in the courtyard here in August. It housed priceless manuscripts from the Bibliothèque Nationale during World War II. Your neighbor Christine Ducoux is an authority on the castle.

**CUREMONTE** (pop. 217): just off the road to Vayrac, with a most impressive complex that includes the Château de Plas dating from 1525, built by the Bishop of Périgueux Jean de Plas and other buildings dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The best views of the ensemble are from the north, the road from Branceilles. Just south of the castle complex is the romanesque Église Saint-Barthélémy, and there are a number of other appealing buildings of ancient origin in this undiscovered little town.

**GAGNAC-SUR-CÈRE** (pop. 771): the town at the bottom of the hill. It's the first town on what's called the Ségala, an outcropping of stone on which the house also rests. The pretty

romanesque Église Saint-Martin bears signs of the wars of religion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, having been pillaged by the Protestants in 1549 and attacked by Catholic troops and their artillery in 1586. It lost its tower in the 1789 revolution. The town cemetery has the remains of the Bessonie chapel, built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and ruined in the wars of religion.

The quaint mairie (mayor's office) is across from the front door of the church in the former Maison Lafaur, dating from 1619. You can use it as a point of departure for the Circuit du Ségala, (137 km.) which takes you through some lovely hills as far south as Figeac, and also through Glanes ('glahn') (3 km., pop. 216), where you should stock up on the local wine for about €4 a bottle. The Route du Ségala is marked by special signs. Try the Glanes wine, a light red or a rosé even if you don't do the Circuit. The Terroirs de France shop in Gagnac is perfect for your groceries and regional products; the proprietor M. Beltito is helpful and speaks English well. Across the street is the Chant de l'Oiseau restaurant with tasty fare in season at attractive prices. At Port de Gagnac, out on the road, are the Auberge du Vieux Port and La Vieille Auberge, with good food, fairly priced.

LAVAL DE CÈRE (pop. 358): up the river from Gagnac, with a lake for fishing and sailing, also has an attractive little privately owned Château La Borie, dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is the beginning of the wild Gorges de la Cère, a beautiful, rugged area well suited for hiking. Also on the Circuit du Ségala.

LOUBRESSAC (pop. 513): another of the Plus Beaux Villages, on a sensational site over the valley of the Bave River, with a view of Castelnau-Bretenoux, Saint Céré and St-Laurent-les-Tours. A totally restored medieval town. The original Roman town was Luperciacum, whose remains are visible lower on the hillside. Six centuries later the medieval town began higher on the rocky promontory where you can now have a sensational view of the valley. Walk around but please respect the residents, who get to live here but get looked at a lot. Rumor has it Peter Mayle has bought a house near here and is working up the Lot-ish version of A Year in Provence.

PUYBRUN (pop. 904): just north of Bretenoux. Another bastide town but without a wall, founded in 1282 by grant from French King Philip the Bold, periodically devastated during the Hundred Years War, then during the religious wars of the 16th century. (Remember, Bretenoux was built by the English.) Just south of Puybrun is Tauriac (pop. 293), with a pretty Église Saint Martial, rebuilt in the gothic style in the 16th century; note the lovely mural paintings on the ceiling depicting scenes of Genesis and the prefiguration of Christ.

SAINT-CÉRÉ (pop. 3731): the main town of the area, on the lovely Bave River, received its charter from Raymond VII of Turenne in 1292, having allied itself with the county of Turenne in 1178. A wall wasn't built until 1464, and not a moment too soon, for the town had already been pillaged in 1369 by the followers of Bernard de la Salle. Following the plague that killed half the town's inhabitants in 1522-24, it was held for ransom by the Protestants in 1562, then pillaged by the Catholics in 1584. Saint-Céré flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but declined after it chose not to allow the railroad to pass through, in 1850.

The back streets are worth visiting for their modern 17<sup>th</sup>-century architecture. Go to the Office de Tourisme on the place de la République and get all the tourist literature you need. From mid-July to mid-August, there is a fine small music festival, which they can tell you about at the Office, or you can call 05 65 38 29 08 for information. See the famous

tapestries of Jean Lurçat and others at Le Casino, 42 rue de la République. Also a museum of his work at Saint-Laurent-les-Tours (tel. 05 65 38 28 21), which you see up on the hill north of the town. South of town is a small, well-maintained automobile museum (about 35 cars), tel. 05 65 38 15 72, and west the Renaissance Château de Montal, begun in 1523, which has some attractive furnishings (tel. 05 65 38 13 72); treasures of the Louvre were hidden here, as well as in people's houses in Bétaille and Vayrac, during World War II.

The used-furniture store (brocante) in a garage on the left just before you get to the main part of town has some interesting, unique pieces. Eat in the Restaurant Victor Hugo, just over the bridge off the main square; under new management who are doing a very good job. Also recommended: Restaurant Ric on the Route de Leyme, via D48 (tel. 05 65 38 04 08), with more elegant nouvelle cuisine; Le Coq Arlequin, in the hotel (tel. 05 65 38 02 13), was also headquarters for the Resistance during the War; La France, in rustic-modern setting (tel. 05 65 38 02 16). Market day is Wednesday, under the big “halle” near the town square.

SOUSCEYRAC (pop. 1063): a town dating from the 100 Years' War, 16 km. east of St. Céré, in the heart of the Ségala; first mentioned in records in 1146 as site of a priory. There are a number of medieval buildings remaining in the town, as well as the pretty 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>-century Château de Grugnac on the road to Comiac (privately owned but visible). The restaurant Au Déjeuner, on the plain town square, is sensational, the best in the area (tel. 05 65 33 00 56); it's worth the visit in itself.

TEYSSIEU (pop. 222): a sleepy little town in the middle of nowhere on the Ségala; 8 km. northeast of St. Céré, with a wonderful, dominating feudal tower of granite 25' square and 100' tall, from 1223, and beautiful scenery on the way.

### **The Lot (46)**

*The Lot is the official name of what used to be called the province of Quercy. We are in Haut (upper) Quercy [pr. 'kair-see']. It is roughly the area between the Lot and Dordogne rivers from the Auvergne westward to the flatter lands of the Lot-et-Garonne. Between them is a series of limestone plateaus (causses) of limestone which are mainly pretty flat and desolate (British paratroopers dropped in here during the War unnoticed) except for the places rivers have cut through (like the Alzou at Rocamadour). The chemical action and infiltration of water formed many caverns. Hence, it's quicker to drive to Cahors across the Causse de Gramat, but it's much prettier to drive down to the Lot or Célé rivers and follow their course toward Cahors.*

*Most of the town names ending in -ac come from the Latin ending -acum or -iacum, which meant property of..., hence Aurillac comes from Aureliacum, property of Aurelius, Juillac comes from Juliacum, property of Julius, and so forth. It's also related to a Celtic ending -ak, as in Carnac. In northern French, all these endings became -ay or -aye, as in Vibraye or Valençay. You can now reconstruct the name of the Roman lord who owned the property at the bottom of the hill, Gagnac.*

ASSIER (pop. 720): 18 km. northwest of Figeac. An interesting Renaissance château is open to the public from June through September.

BOUZIÈS (pop. 79): a fascinating part of the Lot River, with fabulous cliffs overhanging a series of tunnels, and the so-called Château des Anglais, a curious dwelling cut into the cliff

side.

CABRERETS (pop. 233): essential to visit if you like caverns and want to see prehistoric cave paintings, since it combines them, at the Grotte du Pech-Merle. There is also an extensive museum of pre-history. There is a print of one of the cave paintings on the wall in the twin bedroom.

CAHORS: a substantial town of 21,157, on a beautiful meander of the Lot River, 90 minutes southwest from the house across the Causse de Gramat; prettier but longer travel time via the valley of the Célé or Lot. Famous especially for its Pont Valentré, the finest fortified medieval bridge in existence, from 1308. Big market on Saturdays. Birthplace of the French Pope John XXII. Another strange Byzantine-style cathedral, built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Other interesting medieval sites. Good shopping, and there's a series of big modern retail establishments on the Route de Toulouse. Seven km. north is the Château de Mercuès, former seat of the archbishops of Cahors.

Cahors is the center of a justly renowned dark red *appellation contrôlée* wine of the same name. You can visit vineyards at Côtes d'Olt, 15 km. west at Parnac, just east of Luzech; and at Château de Haute-Serre, 7 km. south at Cieurac. Restaurants: Marco, 7 km. east on D653, at Lamagdeleine (tel. 05 65 35 30 64), expensive but well reputed; Les Deux Saisons, on the same road (tel. 05 65 22 16 28); Les Templiers, south on RN20, at Le Montat (tel. 05 65 21 01 23); La Garenne, north on RN20, at St.-Henri (tel. 05 65 35 40 67), lovely site; Rôtisserie de L'Abbaye, 33, rue Bergougnoux, tel. 05 65 22 94 52, prepares a medieval feast in style.

CARDAILLAC (pop. 589): 11 km. north of Figeac. The fort is worth visiting as an entire village unto itself, with chapel, spiral staircase and other attractions. It was begun in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. There is a hearty, picturesque restaurant Le Marcel (tel. 05 65 40 11 16).

CUZALS: in the valley of the Célé River. Near here is the Musée de Plein Air, an authentic 19<sup>th</sup>-century farm they've restored. If you like history it's worth the visit, but costs about 60F per adult.

ESPAGNAC-S<sup>TE</sup>-EULALIE (pop. 86): a gorgeous little hamlet on the Célé River, with its turreted buildings dating mainly from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, including the old priory Notre Dame du Val Paradis, founded by an Augustinian monk in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Careful: blink and you'll miss it, off the road. There's a lovely café serving homemade ice cream and with local products.

FIGEAC (pop. 10,727): on the border of the Auvergne and Quercy, but with a southern feel. Site of the Champollion Museum of Egyptology (admission €3 for adults, €1.80 for young people, €1.50 for students). There is a charming "old town of medieval vintage, undergoing extensive restoration. Restaurants: Les Carmes, in a hotel of the same name (tel. 05 65 34 20 78); Le Champollion (tel. 05 65 34 10 16); La Puce à l'Oreille (tel. 05 65 34 33 08).

GOURDON (pop. 4790): the center of an area called the Bouriane, 42 km. northwest of Cahors, on D20, and belonging geographically more to Périgord than Quercy. See the church of St. Pierre. Restaurants: La Bonne Auberge, boulevard des Martyrs, in the heart of the old town, with serious cuisine and moderate prices (tel. 05 65 41 02 48); La Bouriane, place Foirail, the best restaurant in the area, with some dishes on request (tel.

05 65 41 16 37).

GRAMAT (pop. 3635): a regional center. If you like animals and appreciate their conservation and protection, don't miss the Parc Animalier. There are 100 acres of land with all the animals that live or lived on the Causse de Gramat, and lots of others from all over the world. It's a combination zoo and nature park; €8 adult admission, €4.50 for kids, and well worth it. Thursday afternoons: demonstration of German-shepherd dogs from the French army training school on the town square in Gramat. Le Lion d'Or, on the town square, in a hotel of the same name (tel. 05 65 38 73 18); Le Relais des Gourmands (tel. 05 65 38 83 92). There's a funky junk dealer Le Parchemin just off the road to the right, as you go north toward Rocamadour; you can occasionally find some curiosities there.

LABASTIDE-MURAT (pop. 660): birthplace of Murat, the Napoleonic King of Naples, who built his brother André a classic Empire château on the western side of town, at the end of a classic row of plane-trees.

LA TREYNE: a wonderfully typical castle hanging over the Dordogne, with gardens you can visit on the other side; housed the Louvre's Egyptian antiquities, tapestries and objets d'art during the Second World War; 6 km. south of Souillac. It is now an expensive hotel and restaurant, quite elegant (just about the only place in the area where you should wear a coat and tie for dinner) You can visit and imagine what it would be like to live here, or you can eat if you want to pay the stiff tab, upwards of \$60 (tel. 05 65 32 66 66). Also nearby: Le Pont de l'Ouyse, a modern hotel/restaurant in an interesting site below the château of Belcastel, at Lacave (tel. 05 65 37 87 04). The caverns at Lacave and Presque are worth visiting, if you like caverns.

LIMOGNE (pop. 806): the seat of its canton, 40 km. east of Cahors, the town is the center of an area of hardy peasants which is rapidly losing population because of the harsh conditions. Mainly sheep and ruined buildings around it, but the area is beautiful in its desolation and abandonment.

MARCILHAC-SUR-CÉLÉ (pop. 207): lovely little town on the Célé River, nestled below cliffs. Ruins of a large Benedictine abbey. Nearby Grotte de Bellevue caves.

MARTEL (pop. 1623): an old town 15 km. northeast of Souillac, on N703. Truffle and walnut markets in season. See especially the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Église Saint-Maur, with its fortified tower/belfry 48 meters (157 ft.) high, 12<sup>th</sup>-century tympanum over the door, 16<sup>th</sup>-century stained glass in the choir, pulpit, and 4 paintings attributed to the important 18<sup>th</sup>-century artist Carl Van Loo. Restaurant: Le Quercy, home cooking at low prices (tel. 05 65 37 30 30). Summer music events.

PADIRAC (pop. 200): the site of the best caverns in France, with an underground river 325 feet below the surface you ride on in a boat. South of Carennac, west of Loubressac, north of Gramat, east of Rocamadour. Worth the trip. In the high season, get there by 10 a.m. Closed for lunch except in August. Closed October through March (tel. 05 65 33 64 56).

ROCAMADOUR (pop. 698): a stunning medieval town built in the gorge of the Alzou River. Along with Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostella, one of the principal pilgrimages of the Middle Ages, visited by (Saint) Louis IX, Richard Lion-Heart, Henry II (Plantagenêt) and others. If it's any consolation, Rocamadour was a tourist trap in the Middle Ages, too, with people conning pilgrims. Walk up the steps to the chapel of the

Black Virgin. Visit the château at the top of the gorge. For something entirely different, try the Forêt des Singes, a park with 150 Barbary apes running free in 25 acres, just east of town (tel. 05 65 33 62 72). Or, go to the Rocher des Aigles, where you can watch the aerobatics of birds of prey, near the Forêt des Singes. There are hiking trails from Rocamadour, in the valley of the Alzou River. Restaurants: Le Beau Site, the best table in town, with lovely panorama from the terrace; hearty local fare (tel. 05 65 33 63 08); Les Vieilles Tours, attached to a small inn, in a lovely site (tel. 05 65 33 63 07), evenings only or by request for lunch; be sure to have the soupe de fruits dessert.

SAINT-CIRQ-LAPOPIE (pop. 224): picturesque medieval town, another Plus Beau Village de France, perched 250 feet above the Lot River, inhabited by 179 people. Richard Lion-Heart couldn't take the town in 1198. André Breton, the founder of surrealism, summered here. From here downstream to Bouziès are wonderful high cliffs overhanging the river. Many artisans' shops, busy in tourist season.

SARRAZAC (pop. 581): see the restaurant recommendation under TURENNE, p. 17.

SOUILLAC (pop. 4264): at the confluence of the Dordogne and Corrèze rivers; home of the QuercyLand amusement park; large abbey church in the pseudo-byzantine style of the cathedrals of Cahors and Périgueux. Restaurants: Les Ambassadeurs (tel. 05 65 32 78 36), attractive prices; Le Redouillé (tel. 05 65 37 87 25), seafood specialties; La Vieille Auberge (tel. 05 65 32 79 43), in a lovely house in a park setting.

THÉGRA (pop. 509): a pretty little town 8 km. north of Gramat, on the way to Cahors. Lovely church cemetery and a château with classic pepperpot towers. Watch out for the bends in the road on each side of town, and be sure to make the right turn coming from Toulouse.

### **Aveyron, Corrèze, Cantal and Dordogne (12, 19, 15, 24)**

*The Aveyron, Corrèze, Cantal and Dordogne are southeast, northeast, east and northwest, respectively, from the Lot. The Cantal is the former province of Auvergne. The Dordogne and Corrèze were formerly Périgord; the Aveyron was part of Quercy with the Lot. It's easy to get to them, and I've just lumped the attractions here. The Cantal is more an idea than a site, since so much of it is rugged, with fairly serious ancient volcanoes. I haven't visited it as much as the other areas, so perhaps if you do you can leave some observations. The other areas you will find more like the Lot.*

ARGENTAT: a pleasant, largish Corrèzien town on the Dordogne above Beaulieu. From Beaulieu it's a leisurely drive up the river valley. Directly from Gagnac across the hill through Mercoeur it's more rugged and desolate, a beautiful trip either way. Sit at one of the cafés on the wharf. If you have time while in the area visit the Ventadorn Château ruins near Égletons that inspired W.S. Merwin's charming book *The Mays of Ventadorn*.

AURILLAC (pop. 39,397): the prefecture of the Cantal. Forty-five minutes east, through the valley of the Cère (route D18), with a series of dams for hydroelectric generation, or on a higher road (N120). The umbrella capital of France, where more than a third of them are made. Attractive old town and volcano museum. Cantal cheese, akin to cheddar; ask for some *cantal vieux*—pungent, sharper and nuttier. There is an attractive château at Conros, 4 km. south of Arpajon-sur-Cère, nearby. One beautiful trip is the Route des Crêtes (D35) north, then eastward to Le Lioran, for a 3-5 hour (r/t) hike to the Plomb du Cantal, the

highest point in the range (6000 feet); or you can take a cable car from Super-Lioran for an hour's trip. Restaurant: La Reine Margot, 19 rue G.-de-Veyre (tel. 04 71 48 26 46). At Le Lioran: Auberge du Tunnel, regional fare, attractively priced. (tel. 04 71 49 50 02).

BRIVE-LA-GAILLARDE (pop. 51,079): important cultural and economic center of the Corrèze. Musée Labenche, housed in a building of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with interesting collections especially of prehistoric, Gallo-Roman and medieval art; also Aubusson tapestries. If you want a big *hypermarché*, go out to the Géant at Malemort, east of town on the road toward Tulle, or the Carrefour on the west toward Périgueux. There is a big, new shopping complex just west of the Carrefour, and there is good shopping in the town itself. Restaurants recommended: La Crémaillère, 53 avenue de Paris (tel. 05 55 74 32 47), L'Hermitage, 25 boulevard Koenig (tel. 05 55 23 63 11); La Périgourdine, 15 avenue Alsace-Lorraine (tel. 05 55 24 26 55); La Belle Époque, 27 avenue Jean-Jaurès (tel. 05 55 74 08 75); Le Régent, 3 place Winston-Churchill (tel. 05 55 74 09 08).

CADOUIN: a classic Dordogne town with an attractive town square, abbey church (1115) and cloister. This is what French villages are supposed to look like.

COLLONGES-LA-ROUGE (pop. 480): a fascinating medieval town, a Plus Beau Village de France, built of red sandstone, giving it a striking appearance. The first occupation of the site was in the 8<sup>th</sup> century by monks from the Poitevin abbey at Charroux, which then attracted a village around the priory. It was chartered in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Viscount of Turenne. A real wonderland, not to be missed, with artists' shops, appealing back streets, the lovely Église St-Pierre, built 1060-1070, then elaborated expanded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Plan a half-day.

CONQUES (pop. 288): a striking medieval town 2 hours southeast that is a must for devotees of the art of that period, striking scenery or religious sites. You don't have to be religious to appreciate the stupendous trésor of Sainte Foi, with its gilt sculpture, reliquaries from the ninth [sic] century and other devotional items. Above the town is an impressive European Center for Medieval Art and Civilization. It's a shorter drive through Aurillac, even though the on the map it doesn't look that way.

DOMME: a lovely *bastide* town built on a promontory, with a wonderful panoramic view of the Dordogne Valley. Eat lunch at the Hôtel de l'Esplanade (tel. 05 53 28 31 41). Seven km. south is Daglan, a gorgeous little Dordogne town where people obviously take a lot of pride.

HAUTEFORT: a sensational castle in the Corrèze, extensively damaged by fire in 1968 but restored to its glory by the owners. The Cinderella movie "Ever After" of 1996 has many scenes filmed here.

LALBENQUE: the home of the largest truffle fair in the area, at 2 p.m. from the first Tuesday in December through March, which sets the prices for Paris restaurants. This is serious stuff.

LAROQUE-GAGEAC: a classic Dordogne town, a Plus Beau Village de France, climbing the cliffs of the river; across the river from Domme. Also see the famous Cingle de Montfort just east, a wonderful meander of the river, with view of the Château de Montfort.

LASCAUX II: a fairly long trek, in the famous valley of the Vézère River. The original Lascaux caves are closed to the general public now, so the government has made a

remarkable facsimile. For my money, it's the same concept as a reproduction of a painting; but you may want to go for the experience. If you want the real thing, go to Pech-Merle or Font-de-Gaume (see under CABRERETS (Lot) and LES-ÉYZIES-DE-TAYAC).

LES-ÉYZIES-DE-TAYAC: an important site for prehistory. The Font-de-Gaume cave, with much important prehistoric art, is here. Visit the fascinating Musée National de la Préhistoire. Arrive early or even days ahead in season to get one of the limited number of tickets to Font-de-Gaume.

LIMEUIL: a lovely medieval town on a hillside at the confluence of the Dordogne and Vézère Rivers. If the Hôtel Isabeau de Limeuil (1523) is serving lunch, try it. On the Route de Trémolat, Les Terrasses restaurant; fairly expensive, recommended by Gault-Millau (tel. 05 53 22 03 15).

MONPAZIER: the best example of the bastide town, built in 1284 by Edward I of England, also Duke of Aquitaine. Even has 3 of the original 6 gateways. Like a movie set.

MONTAUBAN (pop. 57,765): a must for its Musée Ingres if you like his work: not a lot of it, but the portrait of Madame Gonce is a drop-dead-beautiful masterpiece. Don't miss the lower levels, with Gallo-Roman articles, and the Salle du Prince Noir, with the Abanc d'essai, a real medieval rack, the bequest of the local prosecutor at some undetermined date.

RODEZ (pop. 25,586): quite an impressive prefecture of the Aveyron. Very interesting Cathédrale Notre Dame and a restored old city. Read *A Fool and His Money*, on the bookshelf, before you go, to get a good flavor of the period.

SARLAT-LA-CANÉDA (pop. 9871): a totally restored old town, where you can spend a long visit. Also a good place to pick up some *foie gras*. The town is a regional center, so shopping is good. Heavy orientation to tourism. Gault-Millau's restaurants: Hostellerie Marcel, 8 avenue de Selves, tel. 05 53 59 21 98; La Madeleine, 1 place de La Petite-Rigaudie, tel. 05 53 59 10 41; the St. Albert, 10 place Pasteur, tel. 05 53 59 01 09; the Rossignol, blvd. H.-Arlet, tel. 05 53 59 03 02.

TULLE (pop. 16,565): the prefecture of the Corrèze. Not a particularly pretty town, but it does have an interesting Musée du Cloître (at the place de la Cathédrale), housing a diverse collection of prehistory, Gallo-Roman and other artefacts; and the Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation (2 quai Edmond Perrier), commemorating the deportations and the vengeance massacre of 99 local men in June 1944 by vengeful, demented Nazis. Michelin restaurants: La Toque Blanche, place M.-Brigouleux (tel. 05 55 26 75 41); Le Central, 32 rue Jean-Jaurès, upstairs (tel. 05 55 26 24 46).

TURENNE: seen from afar, you wonder what it is. It's a town built on the top of a spire of earth. It was an independent state until Louis XV bought it in 1738 from the Count of Auvergne. A fine restaurant in the Lot just south of Turenne is "La Bonne Famille," at Sarrazac, a charming village a few miles off the main road. Operated by Chantal and Michel Guerby, they specialize in traditional fare, and it's well worth the visit, even if you're not going to Turenne. The number is 05 65 37 70 38.

VENTADORN CASTLE: the ruins under partial restoration of a storied castle that was the residence of no less than troubadours William of Aquitaine and Bernart de Ventadorn (sometimes spelled "Ventadour"), and of Eleanor of Aquitaine, arguably the most influential individual in the Middle Ages. Even though the site is in ruins, it's worth a trip for the

historical insight, and to imagine the goings-on there. The site is fenced, but everyone goes in anyway. You can get there by going to Égletons in the Corrèze and following signs to Mostier-Ventadorn. Park at the chain-link fence below the castle ruins, and the rest is up to you. On the shelf in the house is W. S. Merwin's *Mays of Ventadorn*, telling some of the history and his experience discovering the castle.

### **Recreation\***

**AMUSEMENT PARK** (le parc de loisirs): QuercyLand, at Souillac, with classic attractions, open 10 a.m. till 10 p.m. from June 15 till September 15 (tel. 05 65 32 72 61).

**CANOE-KAYAK** (les canoës et les kayaks): at Beaulieu, Puybrun or Vayrac; for reservations call (tel. 05 55 91 22 11); at Bretenoux (tel. 05 65 37 33 51); at Carennac (tel. 05 65 38 69 00). Costs about €35 a day for a 2-person canoe or kayak, or you can go on guided river trips for less. **ATTENTION:** Be very careful with this activity.

**CYCLING** (le cyclisme): rental from Copeyre in Bretenoux or Carennac (tel. 05 65 37 33 51); off-road bikes from M. Bladier in Bretenoux (tel. 05 65 38 41 56).

**FISHING** (la pêche): inquire with Gemasport, in Bretenoux, place des Consuls (tel. 05 65 38 44 67); half or whole days fishing or boating, with outdoor meals, at Souillac, La Saumonée (tel. 05 65 37 03 55). There is also a new establishment just below the church at Tauriac, on which I have no further information.

**HIKING** (les randonnées): contact Randonnées Pédèstres Loubressac (tel. 05 65 38 19 78 after 7 p.m.) for information about hikes around Loubressac. Pick up a flyer from the Syndicat d'Initiative at Saint Céré for suggested itineraries around there. The bookstore in Bretenoux sells a map of the Grandes Randonnées, or marked trails in the Lot, and there should be a copy of it in the house.

**HORSEBACK RIDING** (l'équitation): Centre équestre Soubrane at Laval de Cère (tel. 05 65 33 84 54); Château de Blanat at Vayrac (tel. 05 65 32 49 17); at Ferme Équestre de Mialaret, M. and Mme Ségol offer short and long rides in the Corrèze, Cantal and Lot (tel. 05 55 28 50 09); the Ranch de Chadennac is closer, south of Collonges at Quatre-Routes (tel. 05 55 25 41 45 or 05 55 25 35 38). There is a new center just opened at Tauriac, nearby, of which I have good reports.

**HUNTING** (la chasse): a very popular local activity, exclusively in season, of course. Inquire with Raymond Fernandes, 63 rue de la République in Biars, next to the Crédit Agricole, or Batut-Pêche-Chasse in Bretenoux.

**MINIATURE GOLF** (le mini-golf): just outside Puybrun, with ALa Guinguette pizza parlor, on the banks of the Dordogne.

**RIVER SWIMMING** (la natation): many sites along the Dordogne. Lifeguard in attendance at Gluges, below Bretenoux.

**SWIMMING POOLS** (les piscines): public pools in Biars, Bretenoux and Saint Céré. There is also a charming little plan d'eau (swimming lake) at Tauriac, south of Puybrun.

**TENNIS** (le tennis): courts at Biars, Bretenoux, Loubressac, Saint Céré and Vayrac.

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\* Some of the attractions are subject to seasonal closures, usually from October to April.

## Other Attractions

**ANTIQUES:** there are *des antiquaires*, selling *des antiquités* in the larger towns: Aurillac, Brive, Tulle, Souillac, Sarlat, Cahors, Figeac and others. They are regular antique shops. In smaller towns and along the road, you will see *brocanteurs* or *brocante*, which technically means bric-a-brac, but is in fact just a home-grown antique business. You should certainly stop in shops if you're interested; but since those establishments are often just people's homes or garages, don't go idly, nor between noon and 2 p.m. The prices are not as low as you'd hope but they're always à débattre/négocier. It's expensive and complicated to ship furniture to the U.S., but it can be done, as you can see from antique shops everywhere in America showing French country furnishings.

**CÈRE RIVER SWIMMING (la baignade):** the yellow signs you see that start out Attention, il est dangereux de s'aventurer... are telling you that the Cère is a hydroelectric river, with a dam just upstream. At any time, when the lake is full, they may release a barrage of water that floods the banks. Don't *ever* swim in it.

**CHEESE (le fromage):** the local specialty is *cabécou*, a fresh, mild goat (*chèvre*) that begins life like a goaty cream cheese and ripens to a strong, runny marvel. On the back roads you will see signs for *cabécou (fermier) à vendre*. Buy the real thing from the real people if you can, and they will advise you on the level of ripeness. Stop and try them, at about €.75 per little round. It goes great with the Glanes wine, its neighbor.

**HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES (les articles de ménage):** the kitchen and bathroom are supplied with the necessities like salt, oil, soap, toilet paper, garbage bags and paper towels. Please replenish anything you use up, so later guests will have the same convenience as you.

**REAL ESTATE (l'immobilier):** if you really fall in love with the area and are interested in knowing about buying property here or anywhere in France, contact me directly. It's surprisingly inexpensive, and the procedures are much like in the U.S.

**WALNUT OIL (l'huile de noix):** one of the specialties of the region is walnuts. If there is none in the house, get some at Leclerc and use it on your *salade*. You will never want to use olive oil again. It is not for cooking, since it burns at relatively low temperatures.

**TRUFFLES:** there is a fine truffle market on Tuesdays at Lalbenque, about 2 hours' drive south of Cahors, in the Lot. You should coordinate your visit to Cahors with the truffle market.

## APPENDIX

### **About satellite TV and radio reception**

*The satellite TV receiver and attached equipment are sensitive, so please read this information before using it, even if you have a similar setup at home. I tuned a lot of TV channels covering the spectrum of what comes free from the satellite, and grouped them as “Cantou TV” on the selector; similarly radio stations under “Cantou Radio.” Those are locked.*

The stereo, TV, DVD player and tape deck are all interconnected, so you can play the satellite TV or radio signal through the stereo if you want; or if you’re really resourceful you can play CDs on the DVD player. You can also operate the stereo without using the other units. There are 3 remote controls: the TV (Phillips remote for Hitachi set), the stereo (Sansui) and the satellite tuner (Nokia) and they are labeled.

The motorized satellite dish is aimed at several satellites in geostationary orbit over the Equator, and you have to give it time to re-aim itself if you move from one channel to another that is on a different satellite. It may pick up a few errant channels from other satellites but the main ones are Astra, Astra 2, Hotbird and Eurobird.

You turn on the TV by pressing any of the numbered buttons, and turn them off by pressing and holding the red button on the remote. You turn on and off the stereo by pressing the POWER button. I find it simplest to turn on the satellite first, then the TV or amplifier. You select the TV channel by pressing **↑** or **↓** on the satellite remote—the TV remote has nothing to do with channel selection. You do not have to have the TV on to listen to the radio through the stereo amplifier, but conversely you can also use the amplifier in the TV to listen to the radio. The DVD player plays disks from anywhere in the world. I have tuned channels and radio stations as “favorites” that should be of interest to a wide range of guests, and you access those by pressing FAV on the satellite remote.

The TV receives stereo and has stereo speakers in the side, but if you want to crank up the stereo receiver you can do that, and the TV is connected to the CD inputs, so you must use that function of the stereo for this purpose. Note that TV, satellite remote and tuner all have VOLUME functions, so you should be careful not to over-amplify, and damage the speakers. It’s probably best to use the TV or stereo remote to control the volume, and leave the satellite-tuner volume alone. The instructions for the satellite tuner and the amplifier are in the entertainment unit. The technician to call to fix the TV or aim the dish is Christian Poulet, in Bétaille (05 65 32 42 13).

### **A word about recycling and how you can help**

*The French are quickly catching up with the rest of the industrialized world in the matter of recycling and it behooves us to do our best to cooperate. I’ve tried to make it as simple as possible, and this document explains the process. Please do your best.*

There are 3 types of recycling bins in the area, each of which is for a different use:

1. Light-brown rectangular *poubelles* (dumpsters) with dark-brown lids that open;
2. Light-green rectangular *poubelles* with dark-green lids that open; and

3. Various-colored, usually green or white (but not always), various-shaped *poubelles* with holes in them about 6" in diameter near the top, solely for glass without any tops attached.

It helps to understand the process: everything recycled has to be sorted by hand, so the more preparation we can do beforehand the less work people will have to do when it passes by them on a conveyor belt. This is why some of the instructions below seem stupid to an American but make more sense upon further examination. I have provided a pair of bins in the kitchen for you to separate your recyclables into GLASS and OTHER.

Clean metal, plastic and flat paper like newspaper, magazines, advertising circulars go into the light-green *poubelles* (2 above), but not in bags: you put the pieces individually in the container, and they have to be clean. Clean glass without tops, rings, corks or other paraphernalia goes into the *poubelles* with the holes in them (3 above), but not in bags: you put them individually through the holes, and they should be clean.

All other what we would call garbage goes into the light-brown *poubelles* (1 above) in bags: you will take these bags directly from the largest (white) trash can in the kitchen, but you should tie the bags with the tie that's usually attached conveniently to the bottom of the sack.

I have found that the 50-liter bags are the most convenient for the big can in the kitchen: having some extra room makes it easier to keep the area clean, and easier to tie up when you want to remove an overloaded bin. The smaller bins will take 30-liter bags just fine.

### **A word about energy conservation**

*Energy is expensive in France. Motor fuel costs about twice what it does in the United States, and electricity and the home heating oil (le fioul) that runs the boiler (hot water and heating) at Cantou about twice as much. There's plenty of oil in the tank and power available, but you can gain the respect of your neighbors and do the world and me a favor by being thoughtful with your use of energy during your visit. I've installed high-efficiency fluorescent lamps wherever it is appropriate, and here are a few other ways you can help. If you are here between November 1 and March 31 especially, please read this.*

The electricity charge is at two rates: for most of the time it is normal, but on 22 days of the winter season (November 1 – March 31) it is 5 times as high, to level the demand on peak days. Please check the basement electrical panel in the morning, where the red-orange indicator light illuminated indicates a peak day; this usually reflects cold weather somewhere in France, not necessarily in this area. Until 1 a.m. the next morning please refrain from any unnecessary use of large amounts of power: if possible, delay using the iron, the washer and especially the dryer until a non-peak day, or use the delay feature on the clothes- or dishwasher to run after 1 a.m. I don't expect you to do without your coffee, or forego the basic pleasures, but please be aware of your energy use.

You will find that heating is a lot more efficient if you close all the shutters at night, as the French invariably do. Open them on sunny days to give some effective solar heating, too. Do not expect the winter house interior to reach the level you are accustomed to in the United States: most French houses are at about 65° F., with bedrooms at about 55° to 60°. Each degree higher than 65° uses 20% more fuel to reach, so an extra 5° doubles the use of

fuel oil. I have put new doors on the basements to make the house tighter and the back bedroom cozier, and a new layer of rock-wool insulation in the attic to keep the house cooler in summer and warmer in winter. Please, please, do not open the windows to regulate the heat: several times in the past people have observed this happening and have wondered to me what makes Americans so wasteful.

After you've had a fire before retiring or going out for a while please close the wood stove and the damper on the stove pipe above it: the vane inside corresponds to the position of the forked handle outside. Leaving all this open is the most effective way to evacuate warm air from the house, leave you cold, and waste energy.

### ***Some cleaning tips***

1. Work from rear to front of the house.
2. It's usually easier to take rugs to the front porch to clean.
3. Sweeping is usually easier on floors, vacuum for carpets.
4. Remember
  - a) bathrooms including toilets and floor
  - b) kitchen sink and floor
  - c) oven interior, if you used it; oven cleaner (*nettoyant four*) is likely called for, located under the sink
  - d) dishes cleaned and replaced in the cabinet
  - e) inside the refrigerator
  - f) inside the microwave oven
  - g) inside the wood stove, including the window; *alcoöl à brûler* under the sink is a good solvent, applied with a green scouring pad. Careful, it is highly flammable
  - h) barbecue set and utensils
  - i) sofa covers
  - j) windows, inside and outside—the squeegee (“*le racloir*”) hanging on the side of the refrigerator makes it a simple and easy job
5. Replace cleaning materials and utensils.
6. Remove your things from the washer and dryer and closet and armoire.

### ***Departure procedures***

1. Begin defrosting the freezer by turning the refrigerator thermostat to “0” and opening the door.
2. Strip the beds, leave all linens just inside the front door, except one load in the washer.
3. Turn off the gas at the valve on the top of the bottle.
4. Prepare to leave any trash in the poubelles at the bottom of the hill, not in the basement.
5. Turn off the boiler by moving the red switch to *arrêt*.

6. If you have used the heat, turn it off at the yellow pompe switch; also close the red valve below the little blue pump.
7. Be sure the fire in the fireplace stove is out.
8. Please take time to share your thoughts and complete the Chronicle, in the Guest Book.
9. Close the shutters and windows; be especially careful with the rear bedroom.
10. Turn off all lights, including the outside security light.
11. Turn off the electricity at the meter by pushing the red button unless otherwise instructed.
12. Turn off the water at the valve in the basement.
13. Be sure you leave the house clean, or have arranged with Charlotte for cleaning after you leave.
14. Lock the front basement.
15. Leave the basement keys on the hook in the kitchen.
16. Close and secure all the shutters.
17. Lock the front door and take the last bag of garbage with you.
18. Return the key as instructed.

As soon as I know that the house is in order, I'll refund your deposit or  
itemize any charges.  
I appreciate your treating my home as you would your own and leaving  
it in the condition in which you found it.  
I hope you enjoyed your stay and want to return.