

Villeneuve-sur-Lot 26-28 April 2024



Eighteen crews in nine cars passed a wonderful weekend meandering around Villeneuve-sur-Lot and the beautiful rolling countryside around it.



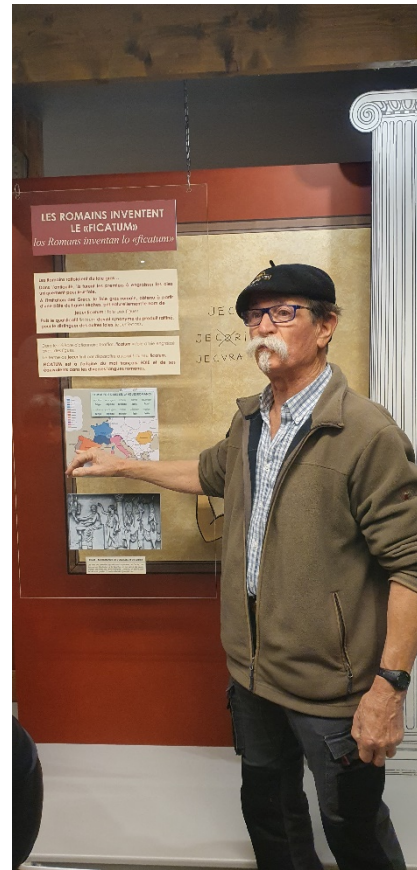
First stop on Friday afternoon was a vineyard (quelle surprise!!) The Domaine Lou Gaillot is a family-run property with buildings dating back to the 15th century. It falls between several different AC regions and so the wines are denominated as IGP, but nonetheless they were very popular with our taste buds – particularly the whites and rosés. In the cellar was a 17 metre beam made from a single piece of poplar tree – amazing.



We arrived at our hotel by the river just before the Friday evening storm, by which time we were safely ensconced in a nice warm bar, with a cool drink. As you can see, the rooms were very comfortable.



Saturday morning saw us setting off in the sunshine to the Ferme de Souleilles which specialises in the production of very high-quality foie gras and where we also had a guided tour of the foie gras museum by the owner. What a great visit! Most of us learned a great deal about this fascinating subject which our guide made come alive with his anecdotes and facts. Apparently foie gras has been produced since it was discovered 2700 years BC, or 4700 years before Macron II.



The foie gras tapas was absolutely delicious and provoked a flurry of purchases before we set off to satisfy our now whetted appetites, with an excellent lunch at La Dame du Lac, in front of a roaring fire. Next stop – the Château de Biron for a guided tour through the history of this imposing and impressive building. But first – another drive through the gently rolling hills, studded with pretty villages and sudden views of rock-top castles.



This particular drive was interrupted by not one, but two fallen trees, so we had to go to Plan-B in order to arrive at Biron in time for our visit, which entailed a line of nine cars doing three-point turns on a narrow forest road – no fun if you don't have power steering!



The ancient château was originally built of wood, but was later replaced with a stone building. It has a history of being attacked and taken, alternately fortified and burnt down, by various groups of English and French origin and housing people of different religions including the Cathars and the Catholics.





The sun shone initially, but as we were leaving Biron, the storm clouds were once again gathering and we watched as the dark clouds passed us by on their way to Villeneuve, where we dreaded the possibility of big hailstones damaging our beautiful Jaguars (and a rather nice Mercedes).



We were greeted back at the hotel by a downpour of biblical proportions, but luckily, no hail. And then this happened...



After dinner on Saturday night we all retired early following an exhausting but very enjoyable day. Then on Sunday morning the sunshine returned and we set off on a short 10-minute drive to the medieval hilltop village of Pujols, where we met Janouille, the reincarnated son of Henry IV for a theatrical guided tour.



Looks as if the E-type doesn't feel inclined to talk to it's fellow Jags so early in the day!

Janouille was a delight and was ably assisted by our newly-ordained monk in the person of Chris Sweby, and a passing Cathar, Oxana Ferret.



They were joined by Monseigneur Philippe Hugot and his Lady Anne Park and the wicked Simon Le Méchant!



What a fascinating tour with such an animated guide, who made everything fun as well as interesting and to top it all, it was market day and the sun kept us company.



Joël Darget even demonstrated his skill with the scrolls (I think you can get some cream for that!)



Then we were off again rolling through the countryside to our final meal at Les Rives du Plantié where we met up with Tim and Laura Sankey just before they leave us to go back to live in Blighty. Chas and Jacky Hamilton also joined us for lunch where we presented Philippe with a bottle of Cognac as a small “thank you” for his 10 years as our Vice-President.



Bonnets up!



A few car pictures to finish with. Our grateful thanks to Philippe Hugot for all his hard work in organising everything and to Joël Darget for providing the driving routes and the itinerary in the first place. What a great weekend!



