

Simple Pleasures



LuxeEURO



Le Pique-Nique in the Forest

Imagine a cool retreat in an ancient forest about an hour's drive from Paris. It's a challenge to define **ancient** in Europe where 'reproductions' of fine art are 750 years old. Not surprising, then, that the Chateau de Rambouillet near our picnic site was built in 1375. With a lush, forest floor of ferns and moss and views to the valley below, our private Eden included, perhaps, minstrels from yore?

Not far from the truth! Actors and performers – 'comediennes' in French-- in colorful costumes with just the right mix of 'cheek' and charm inspire a relaxed,

convivial atmosphere. They are among the 100-plus friends of our gracious hostess. Balloon 'art', festive music, and a communal canvas for the self-expression of guests to paint created a troubadour camp in the forest kind of feeling. The experience? Pure magique.

This retreat has been in the host's family for generations. All of her guests contributed to the forest banquet with assorted wines, exotic cheeses, salads, pastries, fruit, pates and other delicacies. We enjoyed simple and gourmet fare from the delightful heritage recipes and larders of the French.





Warm summer days and 'tradition' call for an exodus from city to country over the weekend. With homes, cottages and, yes, chateaus that have been in the family for generations, these sojourns offer a natural escape to roots, friends and family.

For us, fresh from the American fried chicken-baked beans-picnic on the beach, it was a sensual feast. Simply different, simply wonderful and in a setting that encouraged relaxation, friendship and a quiet appreciation of all things good.

From leisurely walks and cycling tours to challenging hikes, options for active vacations are plentiful. Discover France offers up a dynamic of menu of touring options that may be themed to wines, cooking or 'special order' itineraries to fit the rarest of requests.

Visit their web site today for an inside look at robust to royal tours.

<http://www.discoverfrance.com/>



The Great Storm of 1999

Everywhere in France, people speak of the great storm that devastated the forests of France in December 1999. Soon, we notice what, otherwise, might have gone unnoticed – great swaths of flattened trees – over 360 million trees were lost from Versailles to Poitiers and beyond.

The French Embassy in the U.S. offers details of the storm as well as current news, events, cultural affairs – a diverse 'mental trip' to take!.

<http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/2000/trees.asp>