

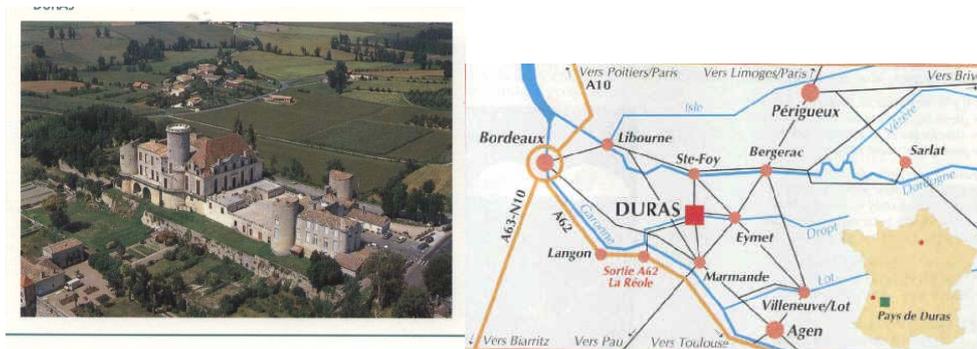
'Please pass this leaflet on'

## Holidays in FRANCE - The Dordogne



self-catering cottage

In the South West of France between Bordeaux and Bergerac for a 'get away from it all' relaxing holiday can we propose a cottage within the historical market town of DURAS. The cottage (a gem) is called 'Puitsnoir' and is near to the majestic chateau.



Situated alongside the Dordogne area of France where the countryside is glorious, you will find the hilltop chateau town of DURAS amongst rolling green hills dotted with vineyards producing 'renowned' world-class wines, and fields of bright yellow sunflowers ('tournesols'), whose faces keep turning during the day to follow the sun. There are quaint little villages bathed in the sunshine with farmer's traditional markets selling locally grown produce; hand-made cheeses, morning dew-fresh vegetables, saucissons and cured hams. You will find sparkling streams cascading into the three rivers; the Lot, Garonne and the Dordogne which flow peacefully in the lush fertile valleys of the region.

There are fairytale chateaux with turrets, and villages with half-timbered houses, dovecotes, ancient churches, medieval walled towns - a region bursting with history just waiting to be explored. To find Duras on a map – from Bordeaux you will see the road leading eastward to Bergerac - along this road is Ste Foy La Grande, south of which is Marmande, between the two towns is DURAS with its majestic chateau. The cottage is in Rue Jauffret in the town.

All around Duras are many villages and farms and 'domaines' producing some of the best produce and wines in the whole of France !

For holiday rental, in the town of Duras in a semi-pedestrianised street is the cottage 'Puitsnoir' – it is a short stroll to all shops and the village 'square' with pavement cafes and parasols under the sun. - you are not situated on a remote 'farm' where you have to get in the car to shop, go to the local 'bar,' etc (don't drink and drive in France – the limits are lower than the UK).... just relax on the roof terrace or in one of the town pavement cafes knowing you are just a short stroll from 'home'!

In Duras there are traditional Boulangeries for your 'daily bread', Boucheries, small Supermarkets, Post Office, Newsagents, Hairdressers, Florists, Estate Agents, Craft shops and Wine outlets and Banks with cashpoints (use the same number just as if at home). There are three 'pavement cafes' in the main square, and two Hotels- one with a very reasonable menu and the other, well.... a real 'gastronomical experience ! (our opinion: the best meal we have ever, ever had ! - Hostellerie des Ducs ....will you agree ? ) Each Monday local farmers bring their produce very early and set up market stalls, when you awake the streets are full of a vast variety of produce...an absolute delight!

The people and shopkeepers of Duras are very friendly and enjoy having visitors. Many local fetes are organised throughout the year for locals and visitors alike to enjoy.

For the regular Wine Fetes in the chateau you buy a 'wine glass' at the entrance (with the Duras emblem for you to keep) then take this same glass with you as you pass from stall to stall, sampling as you go and buying if you come across something special....ahh!

The chateau is open to the public and has wine museum, turrets with fantastic views, a ghost room and dungeons.

The Duras Tourist office is in the next street and has a large selection of leaflets on the region and ideas of what to do and see. Tell them your interests from wine sampling, walking, local fairs and village markets, prehistory, museums, boat trips on the rivers, antique fairs in the town, farm visits etc etc they will be happy to help - also there are lots of leaflets in the cottage. There is so much to see in this historical area of France.

### **The Duras Tourist Office has this to say**

*"situated right in the heart of the south-west, between Bergerac and Agen, on the borders of the Perigord, the Quercy and the Gironde this pocket of land concentrates all the riches , beauty and diversity of one of the most mythical regions of France. History, archaeology, gastronomy, vineyards, landscapes, hospitality, a taste of living....it's all here.*

*And, in addition the irreplaceable serenity of those who can still enjoy watching time go by...there are places that have something that others don't an indefinable, irresistible appeal that stops the traveller in his tracks. Something in the light, in the curves of the hills, maybe the ancient buildings, or the local way of life. Or, maybe rather it's that magical, mysterious harmony that's born from the blending of nature and history. That could be the miracle that's made one traditional region amongst France's many into a uniquely recognisable entity...the DURAS COUNTRY "*

Well we couldn't have put it better ourselves! We're sure you'll love the whole area.

The cottage which can sleep up to four has two double bedrooms. You can see it's a cosy, comfy place



There is a large living room with three piece suite, and pine farmhouse dining table with six chairs. The floor is tiled in terra cotta tiles and a curved wrought-iron stairway leads to the second floor. There is a TV to video system with a large selection of video tapes (we've done a mixture of films, comedy shows and 'an evening's viewing' so hope you like them) We didn't think you'd want Satellite TV on holiday in France, so there is NO TV.

There is a music centre with CD player and record deck with a choice over 200 old L.P.'s so lots of romantic nostalgic evenings with old classic love songs. Also a chess set, jigsaws and around 300 books.

At the rear of the ground floor is a separate long, narrow room with washbasin and WC. The second floor has kitchen, well equipped with gas cooking rings, electric grill/oven, fridge etc all to a good standard with breakfast bar. There is a large walk-in shower room on this floor. Two double bedrooms - each has a double bed - one is a traditional 'Dordogne honeymoon bed' and more like a three-quarters than a double ! Additionally however, so that this second bedroom can be used as two singles there is, if required, a 'Z' bed.

A ladder type stairway leads from the kitchen to the large roof terrace which has surrounding wall area and pots of flowers . It is in the sun most of the day and has table and chairs and parasol. Try an afternoon or two sitting on the terrace under the vivid blue skies with a good book and a glass of quality local wine - which can be purchased from local producer's outlets in Duras town at local prices - around 3 euros a bottle.....aah bliss.



There is a farmer's market in the streets of Duras every Monday morning- a delight !



We have an excellent cleaner, Emma, who will get all ready for you – sheets and pillow cases are provided but please take you own towels. We are aware that sometimes 'holiday cottages' can be a little 'uncared for' – ours isn't.

Here's what other recent visitors have said when returning the keys.

*Mowatt* "I'll certainly recommend the cottage to all my friends"

*Fraser* "Duras is a pretty and friendly village and the house was lovely"

*Abel* "We had a really restful week in Duras and the accommodation was 'spot on' we'll tell all our friends about this delightful spot"

*Freeman* "Weather and food excellent, not to mention the super wine festival. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and I'm sure we'll go back"

*Coleman* "Everything about it more than met our expectations"

*Ritchie by email* "We loved it! It was even more central than we had imagined....so, it was easy to pop out for fresh croissants each morning and enjoy the delights of Monsieur Moliere's lovely white wine at night...and leave the car behind !...especially useful on Bastille night when the village was thronging with happy people and entertainers! We loved the roof terrace and tended to use it for fresh orange juice and croissants in the morning, the odd lunch and a nightcap before retiring! EXCELLENT! Having the cottage was wonderful for us & to have one of the laziest breaks we have ever had! Much needed and much enjoyed! We will be back!

*Hide by email* "Hi Ken & Barbara, we've just returned from Duras, and in your words, what a gem of a cottage! Loved the stairs, loved the furniture, comfy bed and once we'd mastered the stairs, loved the roof terrace, personally I thought the stairs were easier after a glass or two of wine....! What a lovely place Duras is, very friendly and very clean. Loved the gourmet experience in the hotel and the Pizzeria on the doorstep and the Cafe De Le Paix was a favourite as well.

Did a bit of exploring of the area although the weather was so lovely we made maximum use of the terrace, plenty of sun and it reached 27 degrees at times. Please feel free to use this e-mail as a recommendation if you want. Contact us on [gavinhide@btinternet.com](mailto:gavinhide@btinternet.com).

Thanks again to both of you from both of us.  
Kindest regards, Gavin & Fiona

### **Places to visit**

In the region you will find chateaux, including the Duras chateau itself certainly one of the best, allow the whole morning to visit....it includes a fascinating wine museum, a dungeon and a ghost room !

There are many medieval towns, we would recommend you visit these at least – Beaumont, Issigeac, Domme, Belves, Moliere, Monpazier and Sarlat and Eymet - when you get back home please do e-mail us to suggest others you have found that we should add to this list as 'must sees'.

Prehistory - Caves, including those at Domme, Les Eysies and the unmissable caveman cliff dwellings of Roque St Christophe.

Meander through the quiet lanes of the unspoilt countryside on every side of DURAS...green valleys with sparkling streams, rivers, beautiful gardens, scruffy farmyards and quaint untouched villages - several classed as 'most beautiful villages in France'.

Traditional Rural architecture abounds - ancient houses, barns, pigeoniers and churches – for photographers and artists there's a subject around every corner.

For Chateaux we'd suggest Beynac, Biron, Bonaquil, Castelnaud and Les Milandes and.... not forgetting this one Montbasillac see photo- now beat that for fairytale - worth a visit and the vineyards produce an excellent white wine to accompany your puddings.



Nearby are the small towns of Eymet with its pretty square, ramparts and ruined castle: the historic village of Allemans-du-Dropt and medieval village of Monteton. The bastide towns of Miramont-de-Guyenne, Monsegur, Castellones, Issigeac and Monpazier are all only a short drive.

About 2 hours drive, on the Atlantic coast is the lovely town of Arcachon with its magnificent sand dunes and very French chic shops. Also of course the city of Bordeaux and old Bergerac.

### **Throughout the year there are colourful local fetes and markets**

In particular the Fete du Vin in Duras (main one usually 2nd weekend in August but there are others- ask at the Tourist Office) – lots of samples and a display of Hot Air Balloons.

Also Music festivals - the 'Monsegur Swing' (usually the 1st weekend in July) this is a 24hr Festival of Jazz held in the square of the Bastide town of Monsegur, and of course everywhere Bastille Day celebrations on 14th July. There are Antique markets and French 'car boot sales' (look out for posters - 'Vide Grenier'- 'empty your attic'- and that means old farmer's attics !) grab a bargain and take it to Antiques Roadshow !

### **Markets**

You are in rural France and the markets are a part of life and most villages and towns have their own within a few miles of the cottage you can easily visit on different days of the week to buy fresh local produce, they also provide the ideal opportunity to relax outside the local cafe with a glass of something and watch the world go by.

### **Local Market Days**

Monday: Duras, Miramont  
Tuesday: Marmande, Sauveterre-de-Guyenne  
Wednesday: Bergerac, Allemans-du-Dropt  
Thursday: Eymet  
Friday: Monsegur, La Sauvetat-du-Dropt  
Saturday: Ste. Foy-la-Grande, Marmande, La Reole, Lauzun, Bergerac  
Sunday: Issigeac

During the summer months June to August there are night-time markets in Eymet (Tuesdays) Monsegur (Wednesdays) and Levignac and Duras (Fridays)

### **Eating Out**

This selection is from our own experience of researching- please let us know if there are any more you find, that we should add.

In nearby Allemans-du-Dropt there is the Restaurant/Bar of 'Hotel L'Etape Gasconne' serving cuisine typical of the region, (excellent starter buffet) full of locals. Also 'Le Vieux Porche' at Seyches (our second favourite in the area) 'Le Camelia' at Auriac-sur-Dropt these both offer traditional Menu du Jour and are mainly frequented by locals the best sign of course, as well as visitors to the area. We usually 'eat-out' lunchtimes as a rural French lunch can while away the best-part of an afternoon - take it slowly.

In La Sauvetat-du-Dropt is 'Ma Maison', a beautiful restaurant with excellent food, ideal for that special occasion, or for a true Gourmet experience and NOT to be missed is, within a short stroll of the cottage and our favourite without a doubt, the 'Hostellerie des Ducs' in Duras.

Nearby in Eymet, its main square has a Pizzeria, also Restaurant 'La Bastide' and a Creperie. On the outskirts of the town is the Hotel and Restaurant 'Les Vieilles Pierres'.

Further information on all these can be found in the cottage

### **Vineyards & Degustation**

The wine growing areas of St. Emilion, Bordeaux, Duras, Marmande, Bergerac and Monbazillac are all interesting to visit. The numerous Domaines offer 'Degustation' which is an invitation to come in and have a look around, sample, and maybe buy a few bottles – but no pressure whatsoever try a number of different Domaines (care of course with the breathalyser! (le ballon) There are recommended wine routes along the little country lanes all around Duras – Try different routes on different days and have a non-drinking driver to let everyone have a sample. There are wine outlet 'shops' in Duras.

Lots of leaflets in the House on these 'Routes'.

### **There are many leisure and sporting facilities available. Here are a few ideas**

#### *Fishing*

In the River Dropt where you could catch Carp, Pike, Bream, Trout, Perch, Cat Fish, and at the same observe all the wildlife around you. (Carte de peche - rod licence - can be purchased at the local tabac or, as we are not 'fishermen' ask for other fishing venues at the Duras Tourist Office- they are a friendly and informative lot)

#### *Golf*

At Chateau des Vigiers ([www.vigiers.com](http://www.vigiers.com)) one of the best courses in the region. They also have a superb restaurant and their own vineyard.

#### *Canoeing*

Locally at the village of Allemans-du-Dropt, or on the River Dordogne or the River Lot. There are plenty of places on these outings to stop off and have that picnic lunch on the riverbank.

#### *Lakes*

Just a few miles from DURAS at St.Sernin is Lac de Castelgaillard offering a sandy beach, water slide, swimming, fishing, pedaloes, windsurfing, horse-riding, cycling, mini-golf, café/bar and restaurant, excellent facilities for children. Also close by on the outskirts of Miramont-de-Guyenne with similar facilities is Lac du Saut du Loup.

### *Barge Trips*

On the River Garonne this is a truly beautiful and slow way to relate to the passing countryside.

### *Ballooning*

Hot Air Ballooning a wonderful experience and another peaceful way to see the countryside- take off on the outskirts of Duras.

### *Quad Biking*

Available to all age groups, at St Sernin de Duras.

Otherwise there is tennis, walking, cycling and horse riding, canal boating at Marmande, French lessons, drawing and painting lessons in the vineyards OR if all this is just too much in the hot sun, then go up on the roof terrace and sunbathe with a glass of local wine and a good book (about 300 books in the cottage)

Well, there you are, we hope you decide to go and enjoy this lovely cottage, town and area. We'd also welcome your 'feedback' when you get home on what we can add to this list – we're sure we've missed plenty.