



***BONNES FETES A TOUTES ET A  
TOUS***

**BUMPER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR EDITION - NEXT ISSUE**

**FEBRUARY 2021**

**News from The French Connection and VLB**

- The AGM took place by Zoom on 11<sup>th</sup> November. A quorum was present and the rather unusual event passed off satisfactorily. The Association is in good financial health and several projects are being developed for when activity can start again.
- It is hoped to restart the French conversation group by Zoom early in the New Year.
- There are still vacancies on the committee and offers of interest would be welcomed.

**News from France**

- France has been under a strict lockdown for several weeks but President Macron had announced that this will be eased from early December. Non-essential shops will be allowed to reopen, but bars and restaurants will remain shut. During the strict lockdown you were not allowed to leave your home without a legitimate reason. If you did go out you had to carry with you a form of the type illustrated below below justifying the reason. There were other forms for other situations. Failure to comply carried a fine of 135 €. Schools however remained open. In the Hérault (the *département* where VLB is situated) it was forbidden to leave home between 2100 hours and 0600 hours .

**ATTESTATION DE DÉPLACEMENT DÉROGATOIRE**

En application des mesures générales nécessaires pour faire face à l'épidémie de covid-19 dans le cadre de l'état d'urgence sanitaire. Je soussigné(e), Mme/M. : Né(e) le : à

: Demeurant :

certifie que mon déplacement est lié au motif suivant (cocher la case) autorisé en application des mesures

générales nécessaires pour faire face à l'épidémie de Covid19 dans le cadre de l'état d'urgence sanitaire

1 : Déplacements entre le domicile et le lieu d'exercice de l'activité professionnelle ou un établissement d'enseignement ou de formation, déplacements professionnels ne pouvant être différés, déplacements pour un concours ou un examen.

2: Déplacements pour effectuer des achats de fournitures nécessaires à l'activité professionnelle, des achats de première nécessité

3: dans des établissements dont les activités demeurent autorisées, le retrait de commande et les livraisons à domicile.

4: Consultations, examens et soins ne pouvant être ni assurés à distance ni différés et l'achat de médicaments.

5: Déplacements pour motif familial impérieux, pour l'assistance aux personnes vulnérables et précaires ou la garde d'enfants.

6: Déplacement des personnes en situation de handicap et leur accompagnant.

7: Déplacements brefs, dans la limite d'une heure quotidienne et dans un rayon maximal d'un kilomètre autour du domicile, liés soit à l'activité physique individuelle des personnes, à l'exclusion de toute pratique sportive collective et de toute proximité avec d'autres personnes, soit à la promenade avec les seules personnes regroupées dans un même domicile, soit aux besoins des animaux de compagnie.

8: Convocation judiciaire ou administrative et pour se rendre dans un service public Participation à des missions d'intérêt général sur demande de l'autorité administrative Déplacement pour chercher les enfants à l'école et à l'occasion de leurs activités périscolaires

Fait à :            Le :            à :            (Date et heure de début de sortie à

mentionner obligatoirement) Signature :

1 Les personnes souhaitant bénéficier de l'une de ces exceptions doivent se munir s'il y a lieu, lors de leurs déplacements hors de leur domicile, d'un document leur permettant de justifier que le déplacement considéré entre dans le champ de l'une de ces exceptions.

2 A utiliser par les travailleurs non-salariés, lorsqu'ils ne peuvent disposer d'un justificatif de déplacement établi par leur employeur.

3 Y compris les acquisitions à titre gratuit (distribution de denrées alimentaires...) et les déplacements liés à la perception des prestations sociales et au retrait d'espèces.

- At least until early in the New Year French ski resorts will remain closed, since last year they played a major role in the spread of the virus. Germany is trying to get the EU to set a standard plan for the opening of ski resorts. Switzerland is not in the EU and ski resorts there are open.
- Ex-President Sarkozy is about to be put on trial for corruption. Sarkozy was French President from 2007-2012. Enquiries into a number of alleged cases of corruption have been going on against him for some time, although of course he denies everything. One of the allegations is that he received an illegal donation of 50 million euros from Colonel Gaddafi as a contribution towards his presidential election expenses. The trial is likely to take place in 2021.

### Christmas in France

Christmas in France is traditionally celebrated on the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> December. It is generally a more traditional and a less commercialised event than in this country, although this is changing. The Christmas frenzy starts later and the presents are less copious and opulent.

The French share some of the Christmas traditions that are part of a British Christmas. Christmas trees are to be found everywhere and in recent years it has become customary for people to light up the outsides of their homes, often very extravagantly and interestingly.

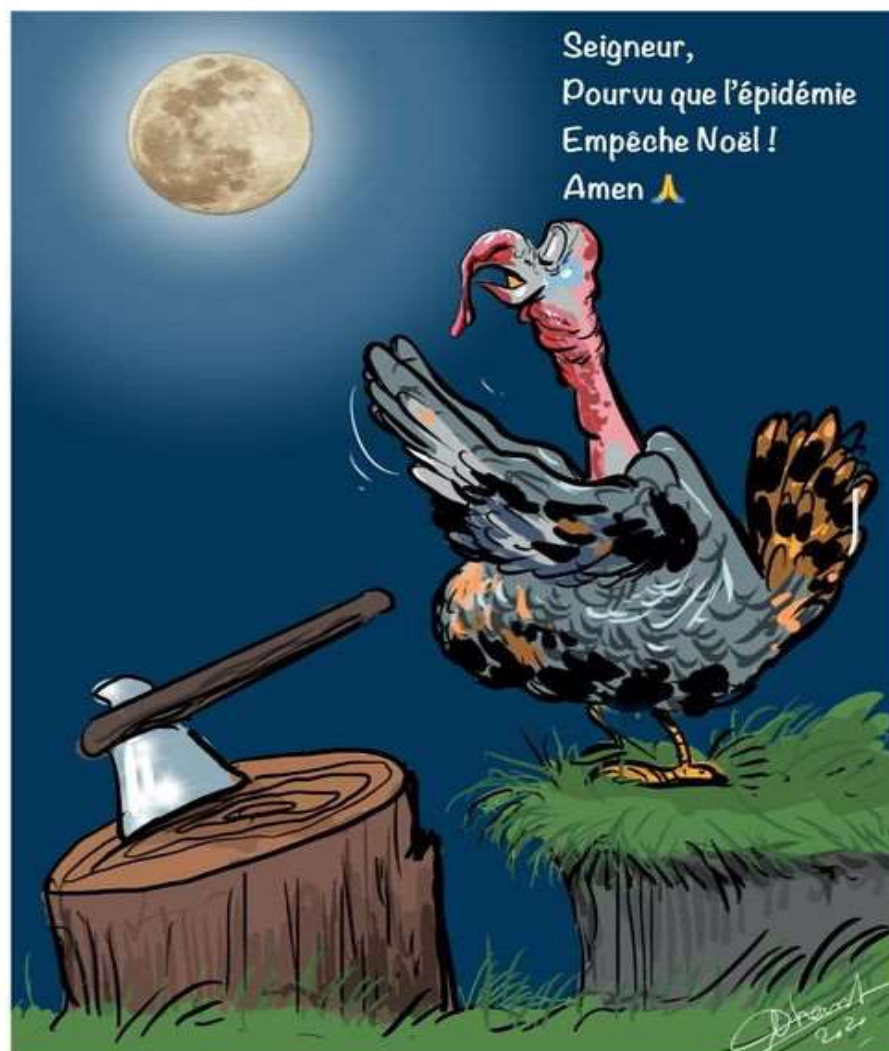


The first sign that Christmas is approaching is frequently the *calendrier d'avent*. The Advent calendar is to be found in many households and a new window is opened each day throughout December.

On 8th December Lyon usually puts on its celebrated *fête de la lumière* which, in normal times, draws huge crowds although, for 2020, it has been cancelled. Traditionally people put lighted candles outside their windows, but the 4 day festival has now grown into a spectacular event in which the main public buildings are lit with projected coloured lights and tableaux. The festival dates back to 1852, when, after a period of floods and social unrest people decided to cheer up the scene by lighting up their windows.

On 24<sup>th</sup> December most people stop work at mid-day and prepare themselves to go to the midnight mass, which these days often takes place at 9.00 pm. Then everybody goes home and, traditionally, tucks into the Christmas banquet, followed by the opening of presents. These days the banqueting and present opening is often postponed until the next day by the less hardy families.

As is to be expected in France the Christmas feast is usually an elaborate and drawn out affair. It starts with seafood or *paté de foie gras* (or both). Then there will usually be turkey or goose, followed by cheese and then the *bûche de Noël* (Yule log). Champagne may be served as an *apéritif* before the meal and appropriate wines with each course, including a sweet dessert wine with the *bûche de Noël*. The whole banqueting operation can easily take 2 or 3 hours or more and activity afterwards is fairly restrained.



The 26<sup>th</sup> December is not a holiday in France and everybody goes back to work in anticipation of the next great festive occasion, which is New Year's Eve. This is an occasion for families and friends to get together at home or in a restaurant for dancing and other festivities. The food is usually served after midnight and you should not be surprised if your last course arrives at around 3.00 am.

The festive season ends with the *tirage du roi* traditional ceremony on the evening of Epiphany (6<sup>th</sup> January). At this function a scrumptious cake (*galette des rois*), the exact nature of which varies from region to region, is served in slices to the assembled company. Each guest wonders whether they will be the lucky ones to discover *la fève*, a tiny charm buried inside. The final festivity of the season is the '*tirage du roi*' on the evening of Epiphany (6th January). This is a 700 year old French tradition. One of the slices. There is a *fève* for the King and one for the Queen and the lucky ones don their crowns and become king and queen for the occasion.



*galette des rois*

Over the whole Christmas period there are to be found in churches and other public places nativity *crèches*, often very elaborately conceived.



It is very usual, on the first occasion you meet your friends in the new year, to wish them *Meilleurs Voeux*. However this may only be done up to the 6<sup>th</sup> January, after which it becomes unlucky. On the other hand, Christmas lights and decorations often can be seen for some weeks.

### La Clusaz

If you are still hoping that Covid-19 might allow you to get away for a winter sports holiday this season and if you are interested in a middle-ranking ski resort, easy to get to and skiable in most seasons up to at least mid-March, you might like to consider La Clusaz in the Haute Savoie. La Clusaz is a pretty mountain village little more than an hour's drive from Geneva or Chambéry airports, with lovely alpine scenery, less glitzy (and less expensive) than the international jet set resorts such as Meribel, Courcheval and Val d'Isère. It attracts fewer British tourists. La Clusaz village is at around 1,100 metres altitude, but it has good ski slopes going up to 2,200 metres as well as excellent and challenging cross country ski pistes and facilities for snow-shoe hiking through the forests. Nearby is the equally attractive small resort of Le Grand Bornand. La Clusaz offers a range of hotel and apartment accommodation and has almost all the facilities of the better known resorts.



If you want somewhere rather special and typically alpine to stay whilst in the area, look at the hotel-restaurant des Sapins at Col de la Croix Fri, Manigod, just over the hill from La Clusaz. This is a lovely chalet hotel, extremely comfortable and with a warm welcome and a first class restaurant. There is plenty of free parking.



Les Sapins

[A Franco-German comment on Armistice Day](#)



ANTHONY HANCOCK

**MEILLEURS VOEUX ET BONNE ANNEE 2021**