

## Any Dream Will Do

*"I closed my eyes, drew back the curtains, to see for certain, what I thought I knew"*

Do you know the sound track to 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat'? I close my eyes and I remember the journey to Southern France, my husband and I sharing the driving over 3 days with our two young sons in the rear, their bikes on racks. Joseph, aged 5, continually asking for the same cassette, those songs became the theme track for that holiday ... my perfect holiday.

We had taken the boys to Disneyland Florida the year before, it was a disaster, a story for another time! Things were a bit tough financially. A colleague of Charlie's offered us his house in the Pyrenees, at 'no cost, just give it a clean and an air!' we jumped at the chance. He told us the house was very basic, we needed to take bedding and towels.

We went prepared, the French Michelin map, a phrase book and the Branston Pickle! No Google maps or Translate in 1992. After the ferry crossing to Calais, we stopped with friends who were camping near La Rochelle. Fortunately Ted had taken his Cheddar on holiday, the perfect accompaniment to my pickle along with batons and all washed down with 30p bottles of wine, I vaguely remember.

The house was at the base of the Pyrenees near the Spanish and Andorra boundaries. We crossed the bridge over the river Aude, then a sharp left hand bend, where we nearly lost the wing mirror. Calling Joucou a village would be an exaggeration. No shops, no bars and no restaurants! The hand-drawn map showed us where the house and the stopcock were located, opposite the river.

On three floors, the house was musty, dark and cool, a lingering smell of log fires greeted us. The boys explored and we unpacked. There was no water, so armed with our 'Robinson Crusoe' map we searched for the stopcock. A lady from across the road played a game of charades with us, through broken English and schoolgirl French, we established 'Le Maire' was needed. I was sent to locate him with the phrase,

'Ou est le robinet dehors?'

Surprisingly Monsieur Le Mayor understood, picking up his tool bag, he rolled up his sleeves, pulled out a long pole and lifted a flap further up the road. He then came in the house and turned on the tap. 'Voila! L'eau!', We thanked him profusely and much hand-shaking ensued.

Later that evening we sat out the front, the boys were whizzing round the roads on their bikes and already playing with a few local children. Then, one by one, the locals turned up with gifts; green beans, ripe tomatoes, onions, cheese and the Mayor with wine. It turned into a street party!

The holiday continued like this, carefree for the children, no worries about the roads. Fishing in the river, bbqs and boules with the locals.

I close my eyes and I am back on that perfect holiday and wish I could go back to that time and place!

500 Words excl Title and Sub-Title

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