

## France Hosts International Conference on Support for Lebanon

On January 25, French President Jacques Chirac hosted an international conference in support of the reconstruction of Lebanon. High-level state officials, including Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, U.N Secretary General Ki-moon, and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, were among some of the distinguished members who convened in Paris to discuss rebuilding Lebanon's economy.

"We have been brought here today by a duty of friendship and solidarity to a country whose civilization is ancient and which is the bearer of a message," announced President Chirac. "A country in which the clash of arms has never drowned out dialogue between cultures. A country that is obstinately seeking rebirth and more than ever needs the unanimous support of the international community."

Secretary Rice affirmed American support for this initiative. "We are committed to building on this work [...] to support the Lebanese people's aspirations for peace, stability, and economic development," she said.

The French President also addressed "the imperative necessity for the Lebanese State to assert to the full its authority over the whole of its territory," and emphasized the importance of long-term international solidarity to "reconstruct, reinvigorate economic activity, to control public deficits and to reduce the State's burden of debt."

"The action taken by the international community is resolute and coherent," asserted President Chirac. "The deployment, with the agree-

ment of all parties, of a UNIFIL (the U.N. peace-keeping mission in Lebanon to which France contributes 1,600 military troops) that has been transformed in terms of both manning and resources, gives the full measure of its determination. [...] All the Security Council resolutions concerning Lebanon, without exception, are aimed at helping this country recover to its full sovereignty, [...] but international solidarity must also be expressed in aid for Lebanon to meet its economic and social challenges."

To meet these challenges, President Chirac announced that \$7.6 billion had been raised from donors during the conference. France has committed to provide Lebanon with up to \$675 million (using the exchange rate of \$1.35) beyond the assistance France has previously supplied, as well as France's participation in the UNIFIL. Secretary Rice pledged a strong commitment on behalf of the United States. "President Bush will request from Congress \$770 million for a new comprehensive package to assist Lebanon," she announced.

"The conference," concluded President Chirac, "that has brought us together is intended for all Lebanese citizens and its ambition is focused on the long term. It is for this reason a crucial milestone, a unique opportunity, emphatically to reaffirm our wish to see a united Lebanon, working together as a sovereign nation respectful of all components of its population." 



Participating members of the conference

### INSIDE

- 2 L'événement**  
*France Pays Tribute to Art Buchwald*
- 3 France-Amérique**  
*Jazz Festival Benefits Katrina Victims*
- 4 Profil**  
*Blogs in France*
- 5 Économie / Science**  
*Research Out of This World*
- 6 Société**  
*Baby Boom!!!*
- 7 Culture**  
*Musée D'Orsay Turns 20*
- 8 Chez nous**  
*Evolution of Paris*



## First Lady Laura Bush Joins Bernadette Chirac in the Fight Against Child Abuse



Mrs. Chirac and Mrs. Bush (right) meet in Paris

BERNADETTE Chirac met with Laura Bush and other dignitaries at a one day gathering in Paris to discuss the fight against child-abuse crimes, focusing specifically on missing and sexually-exploited children. Mrs. Chirac and Mrs. Bush, honorary directors of the Washington, D.C. based International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, gathered January 17 at the Elysée Palace to promote awareness of child abuse.

Others who took part in the event included Lyudmila Putin, wife of Russian president Vladimir Putin, Suzanne Mubarak, first lady of Egypt, Queen Silvia of Sweden, Queen Paola of Belgium, and Margarida Sousa Uva-Barroso, the wife of the president of the European

Commission. Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize winner, was also present.

Participants in the event focused on the dangers of the Internet, which can be particularly treacherous for children. According to Mrs. Chirac, over

100,000 Web sites are believed to publish child pornography. In addition, many children are sexually solicited online. "The reality concerns us all because the threat hangs over each of our children," affirmed the first lady of France.

Participants in the conference discussed the need to work together to overcome the anonymity and challenges posed by a global Internet. "The abuses of children on the Internet know no boundaries," declared Mrs. Bush. She identified technological exchange and international cooperation as key goals for law enforcers. "We have seen that when governments cooperate with other nations, they keep children in their own countries safe," she added.

In response to growing concerns about child abuse, the European Federation for Missing and Exploited Children announced in December the creation of an emergency hotline for missing children. By the end of June, 2007, members of the E.U. will be able to call "116 000" directly to report information about missing children.

Laura Bush was in Paris as part of a three-day stay that included a round table discussion on global literacy and visits to the Musée du Quai Branly, the newly opened museum dedicated to the arts and civilizations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas (see NFF 06.05), as well as the Musée de l'Orangerie, which reopened in 2006 after a six year renovation. 

**EUROPEAN COMPANY TO PROVIDE U.S. ARMY WITH HELICOPTERS**



UH-72A Light Utility Helicopter

The European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) delivered the U.S. Army's first UH-72A Light Utility Helicopter on December 11, 2006. Production of the twin-engine helicopter, named "Lakota" after the Native American Indian tribe, will be produced in Columbus, Mississippi and employed by the U.S. Army for domestic logistical and support missions. According to EADS, the U.S. Army has ordered 42 UH-72As from the European company. The contract, which expands EADS North America's 20-year tradition as a supplier to U.S. homeland security and law enforcement agencies, "will strengthen our nation's defense, benefit Mississippi's economy and create high-paying jobs," said Congressman Roger Wicker of Mississippi. To learn more about the UH-72A, please visit: [www.uh-145.com](http://www.uh-145.com).

**NATIONAL PARKS OFFICE ESTABLISHED IN MONTPELLIER**

The National Parks of France (*Parcs Nationaux de France*) set up offices in Montpellier in January. The national establishment was created by a new legislation intended to strengthen and coordinate the actions of the national parks in France (see NFF 06.05.) Jean-Marie Petit, the director of the establishment, stressed that the organization would

benefit the parks with "a mission of communication" by "making environmental data on the nature and landscape [of the parks] available to the public." Petit also pointed out that the establishment would streamline the parks' representation both domestically and internationally. France's nine national parks include: *La Vanoise, Les Ecrins, le Mercantour, Port-Cros, Les Cévennes, Les Pyrénées, and La Guadeloupe*. Deputies in the French National Assembly passed legislation March 30, 2006 allowing for the creation of two marine national parks: one in French Guyana and the other at the Island of Réunion. Animated visits of the parks are available in English at the establishment's Web site: [www.parcnationaux-fr.com](http://www.parcnationaux-fr.com).

NEWS FROM FRANCE / January 31, 2007

**France and U.S. Pay Tribute to Art Buchwald**

**F**RANCE mourned this month the death of the internationally acclaimed newspaper columnist Art Buchwald, who died January 17 at the age of 81 from a kidney failure. Buchwald earned recognition as one of the most favorite Americans in Paris through his humorous renderings of the cultural and political events in Europe, which were popular among readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Buchwald began his love affair with France in 1948 when he moved to Paris at the age of 22 to pursue his education at the *Alliance Française*. "My dream was to follow in the steps of Hemingway, Elliot Paul and Gertrude Stein," Buchwald wrote. "I wanted to stuff myself with baguettes and snails, fill my pillow with rejection slips and find a French girl named Mimi who believed that I was the greatest writer in the world." Soon after his arrival, Buchwald began his literary career as a columnist for *The New York Herald Tribune's* European edition.

Since the creation of his first column, "Paris After Dark," Buchwald has held a special place in the heart of France and its people. France demonstrated its esteem for Buchwald in 2006 by awarding him the prestigious *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*. The literary equivalent of the *Légion d'Honneur*, the *Ordre* is given to individuals in recognition of significant contributions to the arts and literature. Past non-French recipients include Ella Fitzgerald, Jackson Pollock and Diana Ross.

"To me, Art, you are sort of a colleague," said Jean-David Levitte, French Ambassador to the United States, at a gathering celebrating Buchwald's 80th birthday held at the French Embassy in Washington. "Through your columns and your books, you have served time and time again as an Ambassador of France to the United States, explaining my country to your fellow citizens with accuracy, humor, and affection."

A satirical column in the European edition of *The New York Herald Tribune* earned Buchwald an international reputation. Buchwald's column about the cultural and political events in Europe and around the world brought humor and insight to his readers. In the 1960s, Buchwald made the transition from *The New York Herald Tribune* to *The Washington Post* where his column became even more popular, appearing at its peak in at least 500 newspapers. Buchwald was also the author of more than thirty books, including "Paris After Dark" (1950.), "I'll Always Have Paris" (1995) and "Too Soon to Say Goodbye" (2006).



Buchwald (center) honored by Amb. Levitte (right) in 2006

**French National Police Train with Los Angeles Police Dept.**

**T**HE Golden Globes, known for its dazzling celebrities and their stroll down the red-carpet, featured a new visitor this year. A delegation comprising 30 motorcycle police officers from National French Police, or *Police Nationale*, was in Los Angeles on a 10-day training and cultural exchange program (see NFF 06.13.) The program included training techniques, strategic alliances and the opportunity to assist the Beverly Hills Police Department at the star-studded awards ceremony.



LAPD and the French National Police

The French police officers spent ten days training and building alliances with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), the

Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD), the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and the Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD.) The

French motorcycle brigade appeared at the awards show in their own unique formation and assisted the LAPD with crowd control.

France and the United States have a historic alliance in sharing intelligence and law enforcement strategies. Patrick Hamon, Chief of Communication at the *Police Nationale*, felt that this operation was unprecedented and a crucial way to reinforce French-American rela-

tions and cooperation—all which would benefit the safety and protection of civilians.

**A Taste of France in Palm Beach, Florida**

**E**VEN though Versailles is thousands of miles away from Louisiana and Florida, visitors to the Palm Beach International Fine Art and Antique Fair can enjoy a taste of the renowned city from February 3 to 11.

It is the most important fair in the country, attracting over 100 leading dealers representing all disciplines of art from classical antiquity to the present, and features 30 speakers from around the world. The festivities' proceeds will benefit the restoration of the Bestoff Sculpture Gardens at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

One of the finest 18th century royal portraits, "*Marie-Antoinette à la Rose*" by Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, from the New Orleans Museum of Art will be displayed. In addition, the Director of the Musée de Versailles, Dr. Pierre Arizzoli-Clémentel, will present a lecture on February 3. On the 4, HRH Princess Michael of Kent will give a "Glimpse of the French Queen's Life," with profits serving the French Heritage Society's Katrina Rescue Fund. Auction of the "Pillows that Dazzle" will further benefit the museum. For more information, please visit: [www.palmbeachfair.com](http://www.palmbeachfair.com).

After Versailles, Palm Beachers will have the opportunity to attend a lecture at the Society of the Four Arts, organized by Marie-Thérèse Belmont. The French Admiral François Joseph Paul de Grasse, portrayed by former Navy Officer Bill Rose, will address the Society on February 17.

The role of world navies in the shaping of European and colonial policy from 1775 to 1783 will be discussed in his lecture titled "Why Don't We Speak French? Salt Water and The American Revolution." Rose has been involved in reenacting for many years and was present last October to celebrate the Victory of Yorktown, where 2,500 men volunteered their time and expertise to living history.

Admiral de Grasse distinguished himself early on in the French Navy, contributing to the capture of Grenada and playing an important role in the Battle of Martinique. However, it was his assistance to Washington, Rochambeau and LaFayette that would define his career. Defeating the British Royal Navy at the Battle of the Chesapeake Bay and landing 3,000 French reinforcements in Virginia was a major factor in winning the War of Independence. More information at: [www.fourarts.org](http://www.fourarts.org).

# French Jazz Festival Benefits Katrina Victims

**T**HE 2007 "French Quarter" Jazz Festival proved to be an impressive musical exchange, offering jazz performances from French and francophone musicians throughout Washington D.C., New Orleans, and New York City. These musicians came to the U.S. to share their distinct, yet parallel style with the heartland of jazz.

The "French Quarter" was co-organized and presented by the French Embassy's Cultural Services in conjunction with the 34th Annual International Association for Jazz Education Conference. The visiting French delegation comprising approximately 170 musicians, performed in over 20 venues throughout the three cities as a tribute to the French-American cultural exchange, with a special salute to all of the artists of Louisiana working to preserve their unique heritage. Professionals who comprise the French-American network joined together in celebration of their common interests. In New York alone, approximately 8,000 music educators, journalists, musicians and jazz enthusiasts from across both the Atlantic and state lines visited the festival.

Emmanuel Morlet, Director of the Music Office at the Cultural Services of The French Embassy, explained, "Jazz

is a highly respected genre in France, attracting large audiences as well as the professional support of an ever-growing network of venues, festivals, schools and conservatories, labels, publishers and other related organizations."

Building on over a century of musical exchanges between the United States and France, the current generation is proud to call France the second home of jazz.

For a complete list of venues and artists who participated in the festival, please visit: [www.frenchculture.org](http://www.frenchculture.org).

This festival can be appreciated within the context of France's commitment to providing assistance to the citizens of Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Recognizing the importance of culture and education, France has undertaken several initiatives to help maintain the cultural and

educational traditions of New Orleans through various grant and artistic exchange programs, of which this festival is only one example. While the French government helped to ease Katrina's immediate impact by contributing emergency relief supplies, rescue teams, and sending mine-sweeping divers to clear obstructed waterways, efforts to provide aid are much more extensive and far-reaching. The "French Quarter" is one example of an initiative with the vision of providing long-term assistance. ■ ■



French Jazz Musicians perform in U.S.

## Message in a Bottle



Special guests sample the exceptional wines during tasting

**A**N exceptional wine tasting of "Grands Crus" (highest level of AOC classification) was organized at the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C. by the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in cooperation with the embassy's Office of Science and Technology on December 7, 2006. A leading oenologist and winemaker from Bordeaux, Dr. Denis Dubourdieu, presented several prestigious wines: Château Margaux 1995, Château Cheval Blanc 1998,

Château Petrus 2001, Château d'Yquem 2001, Château Haut-Bailly 2001, and Louis-Roederer 1999 "Cristal," Champagne. In addition to the renown of these vintages, the event was extraordinary in that these types of wines are rarely sampled outside their respective vineyards, and are almost never tasted with wines from other vineyards.

The evening brought together journalists, food and wine experts, and political and scientific figures on a journey through taste and olfaction. Prominent guests included the Director and Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation, the Under Secretary for Science of the U.S. Department of Energy, agriculture representatives from the European Commission and the newly-appointed Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology of the U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Dubourdieu is Vice-President of the Institute of Wine and Vine Sciences, Professor at the University of Victor-Segalen, Bordeaux II, and a member of the French Academy of Agriculture. A scientist with a strong background in agricultural engineering, he specializes in the biosynthesis and chemistry of organoleptic compounds. ■ ■

## Alliance Française Organizes National Writing Contest

**E**ACH year, the *Délégation Générale de l'Alliance Française* organizes a contest for students of French called "Concours National de Français." The written competition, which takes place from February 11 to 17, is open to students from universities, high schools and the Alliance Française chapters



throughout the United States. Prizes range from pre-paid trips to Paris to study with the *Alliance Française*, to books, CDs, newspapers, and DVDs in French. This contest aims to provide students with the opportunity to test their knowledge of French, while acquiring a better understanding of the French language and culture. It is co-organized by: Air France, TV5 Monde, le FIAF, and the *Alliance Française de Paris*. For more information, please visit: [www.alliance-us.org/en/Page.Learning.Concours.aspx](http://www.alliance-us.org/en/Page.Learning.Concours.aspx). Please contact your local chapter to register. ■ ■

## SMITHSONIAN PRESENTS: "CLASH OF EMPIRES: THE BRITISH, FRENCH, AND INDIAN WAR, 1754-1763,"

A new exhibition explores the three-sided struggle between the British, French and American Indians for the possession of North America. "Clash of Empires: The British, French, and Indian War, 1754-1763," opened last month at the Smithsonian's International Gallery in Washington and will continue to run through March 15, 2007.

The exhibit explores worldwide effects of the tense struggle between Britain, France and American Indian nations for control of North America, consequently leading to the eruption of the French and Indian War more than 250 years ago. The war also marked George Washington's first military experience and would eventually lead American colonists on the road to independence.



General Johnson Saving a Wounded French Officer from the Tomahawk of an Indian, Benjamin West

More than 300 rare artifacts on loan from 63 lenders worldwide are included in the exhibition. Nine lifelike models allow visitors the chance to come face to face with figures from history, including the Seneca leader Tanaghrisson, as well as a young George Washington after he signed the Treaty of Fort Necessity, the surrender document that ended the war on July 3, 1754.

The Smithsonian's International Gallery presents temporary exhibitions in art, history, science and technology that complement the Institution's existing educational programs and collections. For more information, please visit: [www.si.edu](http://www.si.edu).

# "I think, therefore I Blog"

**F**RENCH culture has long been known for its love of conversation, reflection, and debate. So when the "blog phenomenon" hit the country of existential philosophers, its citizens were quick to adapt to the new medium of expression. The result? With nearly 7,300,000 French citizens reading blogs each month, France has become the leading voice of the *blogosphere*, with a higher percentage of citizens reading and writing blogs than any country in the world. A simple sharing of a video, comment on a current event, or humorous reflection on daily life through France's most influential sites easily elicits tens to hundreds of comments from France's *internautes*, or internet browsers. Free of constraints faced by traditional journalists, bloggers are increasingly addressing topics formerly left to *les grands médias*. Their candid and engaging critiques of society are rapidly earning them a revered and respected position in society, changing the way ideas are spread and setting them at the head of a veritable information revolution.

A Blog is an online forum whereby readers can engage in dialogue with the author and members of the online community. The word "blog", a term stemming from the term "web log", was an Anglicism unknown to the majority of people a mere two years ago. The word sounded like something destined to internet-savvy technophile more than to France's general population. Indeed, those who first caught onto the trend were a minority. Yet as blogger Cyrille de Lasteyrie explains in his blog, [www.20sur20.net](http://www.20sur20.net), the minority was an active one "for whom getting attention is a vocation, and shining is a second nature." The appeal of the internet's "early adopters" helped the French *blogue* become "a tool of expression and worldly accessory for free thought, socially interesting to defend before one's friends and colleagues; the proof of a true avant garde." It would not take long for society as a whole to adapt to the trend. Bloggers became the object of media attention themselves, called upon by TV sta-



**Les Barons Blogueurs: Cyrille, Laurent, Loïc, Thomas, Christophe, Pierre and Harcourt**

tions and media conferences to participate in everything from spotlight appearances to political campaigns, with the goal of creating higher transparency and opening their doors to a younger technologically savvy audience.

With all the recent limelight focused on the latest source of information and an increasingly larger number of citizens contributing to the uncensored dialogue, it may seem like it would be hard to distinguish genuine talent from the charlatans, or that due to their rising popularity, France's most well-known bloggers may become the object of commercialized and filtered media themselves. The conclusion of Monsieur de Lasteyrie? "Perhaps we will watch all of this with a slight smile, finding them amusing, these little appearances outside the web, useless but pleasant," he writes. "Yet I believe that the solution is found on the web itself, not elsewhere. The treasure is there. I am convinced that the web is, for some time still, an extraordinary creative terrain."

## "Traditional Media Send Messages..."

**B**LOGS start conversations." Loïc Le Meur, Executive Vice President and European Managing Director of blog platform company Six Apart, has long adhered to the succinct catch phrase. For those who ever challenged him, fearing the information



**Loïc Le Meur ([www.loiclemeur.com](http://www.loiclemeur.com))**

age would drive people apart and replace face-to-face conversation with virtual ties, a simple glance around Paris suffices to prove them wrong. From small corner cafés to official conference rooms, the faint echoes of France's latest trend are only growing louder.

Le Meur, often referred to as France's "king of bloggers," drew an audience of over 1,000 people from 37 countries to Paris this past December for his conference *LeWeb3*. Of those in atten-

dance, not one had received an official invitation. The two-day event, organized and advertised over the internet, succeeded in attracting its audience strictly by word-of-mouth, a phenomenon that Le Meur emphasized as proof of the internet's growing importance in society. The conference centered largely on the growing importance of conversation in the spread of information, a process in which blogs play a central role. The conference featured a variety of workshops and presentations by some of the internet's most influential bloggers and entrepreneurs. Their presence did not go unnoticed. Guest speakers Shimon Peres, Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, in addition to French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy and UDF President François Bayrou all showed up to join in on the discussion.

While *LeWeb3* drew international attention to the influence of the internet in France, the buzz it created represented only a fraction of the conversations French bloggers initiate on a regular basis. At the end of January, the political bloggers of Paris will gather in a local café district for La République des Blogs. The soirée, organized by political blogger Versac (<http://vanb.typepad.com/versac>) and held on the last Wednesday of every month, brings blog writers and political enthusiasts together during election seasons. The objective is to meet fellow bloggers face-to-face, share thoughts on the political campaign, and identify trends in

## BLOGGING AS A FORM OF DIPLOMACY?

Aside from facilitating creative expression and the spread of ideas, one of France's most well-loved bloggers has taken on a larger project: the art of diplomacy. Cyrille de Lasteyrie, a.k.a. "VinVin," has taken on the task of explaining baffling French myths to the American public. His English-language blog *Bonjour America* presents a series of comical short films created to help Americans understand the importance of a good smelly cheese and the difference between Bordeaux and Bourgogne, all while tackling questions about France's political system, military, and sports on the way. "I have always held an admiration for American culture, as a kid, I thrived on it" Lasteyrie told *News from France*. "When I was young, I heard a lot of people talk about French-American relations. The problem was, the media only talked about it in the context of conflict." Once he gained popularity with his blog in 2005, earning the honor of France's "blogger of the year", Lasteyrie came to the realization that he could use his growing influence to turn that trend around. Through his blog, Lasteyrie becomes a diplomat in his own right, using his charming French accent to dispel stereotypes and "set the record straight." Lasteyrie's next project? Hollywood. The blogger will travel to California during the month of February on a mission to meet the stars that inspired him as a child, or at least have fun trying. To catch archived episodes or to keep up with his future adventures, please visit: [www.bonjour-america.com](http://www.bonjour-america.com).



**Cyrille, a.k.a. "Vinvin" explains France to Americans in English and in a funny way**

The French are not the only ones catching on to the blogging trend. Francophiles in the U.S. are also doing their part to share ideas and promote cross-cultural understanding. *The French Journal*, a new blog developed by an American in Boston, Massachusetts, seeks to share news and thoughts on the culture, history, geography, food, wine, and travel in France. Check it out at: <http://frenchjournal.typepad.com>.

political sentiment expressed through comments on the blogs they author.

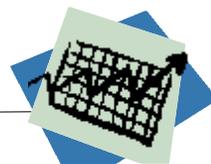
The *chic* gatherings that have become the latest *mode* in Paris and are only a small peak at the "blogging phenomenon's" ripple effects of which France is taking the lead. In between meetings, interviews with aspiring politicians or reflections on daily interactions will fill the space on their site. The conversations they expose will continue to create a stir, not only in France, but are also sure to echo around the world.



**Bloggers' soirée with Loïc Le Meur in Montréal**

© Mathieu Thouvenin: [www.mathieuthouvenin.com](http://www.mathieuthouvenin.com)

# Research Out of This World



**EUROPE PREPARES TO SEND PROVISIONS TO INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION**



European Space Agency

**C**NES, the French Space Agency, celebrated the successful launch of the COROT space telescope on December 27, 2006 in conjunction with its European and international partners, as well as the Paris Observatory, Arianespace/Starsem and prime contractor Alcatel Alenia Space. The French-led COROT



Rendition of COROT Satellite

mission (CONvection, ROTation of stars and Transits of extra-solar planets) is the first of its kind, being the first spacecraft dedicated to the search for Earth-like exoplanets, while at the same time carrying out a very high precision, stellar photometry mission which will

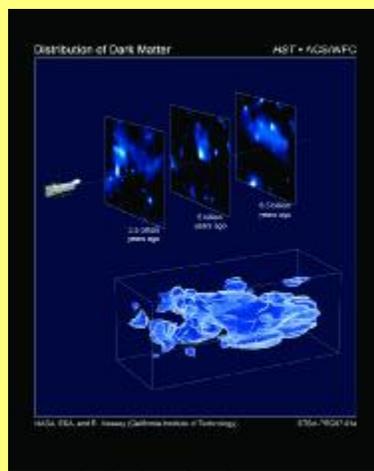
allow scientists and astronomers to take a glimpse inside stars. The spacecraft is currently being positioned by the CNES control center in Toulouse, France. Once COROT reaches its 900 km polar orbit, it will have a line of sight in the same direction for 150 days at a time, allowing for uninterrupted observation of as many as 120,000 stars during its 2.5-year lifespan. Mission planners are expecting to observe at least 40 rocky bodies and hundreds, if not thousands, of gaseous ones. The spacecraft should be fully operational by the beginning of February and has already sent back its first images. COROT is paving the way for future extra-solar missions, especially ESA's Darwin mission, which is designed to analyze extra-solar planetary atmospheres for signs of life and expected to launch sometime after 2020. For more information, please visit: [www.france-science.org/france-in-space](http://www.france-science.org/france-in-space).

**A**GROUP of international scientists, including French astronomer Jean-Paul Kneib of the *Laboratoire Astrophysique* in Marseille, released on January 7, a three-dimensional map of the universe that offers an unprecedented look at the distribution of dark matter in space.

Scientists used data from the Cosmic Evolution Survey (COSMOS), a large scale survey of the Universe produced by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, to create the first comprehensive map of this mysterious substance which makes up 5/6 of mass in space. Unlike ordinary matter, which is visible from the night sky and includes the planets, stars, and galaxies, dark matter neither reflects nor emits light and has long remained a mystery to scientists.

The map will help shed light on the formation of galaxies over billions of years. "Mapping the distribution of dark matter in space and time is fundamental for understanding how the galaxies developed and grouped themselves over time," explains Kneib.

The completion of this project marks the close cooperation of a team of international scientists led by researchers at the California Institute of Technology in the United States, the European Space Agency (ESA), NASA, the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS,) and the *Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique* (CEA) in France.



Distribution of Dark Matter

The European Space Agency is preparing the "Jules Verne" Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) for its journey aboard an Ariane 5 launch vehicle to the International Space Station (ISS) sometime around July 25. The ATV will supply the ISS with experimental equipment and spare parts as well as food, air and water for the permanent crew of the ISS. Jules Verne will also perform an equally important function by serving as a down-mass container in which the space station crew can jettison waste and debris. This state of the art pan-European project has recently undergone—and passed with flying colors—a punishing battery of preflight tests designed to gauge the readiness and durability of the ATV. Jules Verne will be the most significant European contribution to date to the ISS, supplementing previous missions flown by the Russian Soyuz and NASA's Space Shuttle. 30 companies from 10 European countries, as well as eight other companies from Russia and the United States share the work with EADS Launch Vehicles, based in France, as the prime contractor.

## STATE OF THE ART TOURS

Visitors to Paris's *Musée des Arts et Métiers* (CNAM) from January 16 to March 5 will be able to take advantage of one of France Télécom's latest developments in information technology. In collaboration with the museum, which focuses on the history of technological innovation, the technology-savvy company has introduced one of the latest technologies to museum tourism. The service permits Orange (a subsidiary of France Télécom) subscribers visiting the museum to obtain more information on selected works in the museum's seven domains (scientific instruments, materials, construction, communication, energy, mechanics, and transportation) by simply taking a picture of the "semacode" (a sort of bar-code that a mobile telephone can read) displayed next to the exhibit of interest and sending the picture text to a designated server number. The text is immediately interpreted and processed by the network, which then responds by providing the sender with a multitude of multimedia information (images, animation, video, and audio.) For more information, please visit: [www.francetelecom.com](http://www.francetelecom.com).

## Initiative to Launch an Environmental Organization at U.N.

**A**N international conference in Paris with the focus on the environment, will bring together representatives from over 50 nations on February 2-3 upon the invitation of French President Jacques Chirac. Its objective is simple but ambitious: to launch a solemn appeal for the creation of a United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO) with the vision of promoting environmental responsibility and global governance—like the other global organizations for education, science and culture (UNESCO), health (WHO) and trade (WTO). The Conference for Global Ecological Governance, or "Citizens of the Earth," will take place before an audience of government officials, scientists, industry leaders, NGOs, and public figures.

Participants in the event will focus on three principal goals: heightening awareness of global environmental threats, developing measures to combat those threats, and engaging the community at an international level through the creation of the UNEO. Six in-depth workshops surrounding the themes essential to environmental preservation will address these objectives. Topics will include combating climate disruption, modifying production and consumption patterns, fighting pollution and protecting health.

On the second day, the findings of the workshop will be presented to President Jacques Chirac, architect behind the event. "We all know that uncontrolled human activity is bringing about a sort of slow collective suicide," said President Chirac in an address to the U.N. General Assembly last September, "Disaster can only be averted if nations can come together to support jointly agreed commitments"

"Global warming is undoubtedly the major challenge," wrote Alain Juppé, former French Prime Minister in an editorial published January 17 on this subject in the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*. "(...) Deforestation, which, despite the most alarming warnings, is continuing at a frightening pace in all the main primary forests and aggravating the situation by reducing the world's CO<sub>2</sub> absorption capacity. Overexploitation of natural resources bodes ill for the future."

"Who can deny there is an emergency?" continued Juppé. "After a period of widespread doubt and indifference, the public at large, alerted by the warnings of several leading figures whose utterances attract wide media attention, are currently undergoing a veritable intellectual and moral revolution: they are realizing that, for the first time in its history, mankind can destroy itself and its planet."

**PARIS RANKED "MOST POPULAR CITY IN EUROPE"**



Montmartre, Paris, by night

Paris is one of the most frequently visited cities in Europe, suggests a new report released January 5 by the European Cities Tourism commission. Among the ten most frequently visited cities in Europe, in 2005, Paris saw the most significant increase in number of overnight stays with a registered increase of 2.1 million, a number significantly larger than the 771,000 average increase of the top ten most visited cities in Europe which include Rome, Madrid, and London. Of the cities surveyed, Paris in 2005 also recorded the largest increase in American overnight visitors with an annual hotel occupancy rate of 71.3 percent, second only to Barcelona.

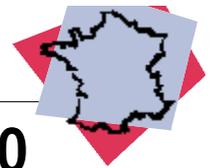
**SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS IN FRANCE WORK LONGEST HOURS IN WORLD**

A survey of 4,000 small businesses worldwide suggests that French small business owners work some of the longest hours in the world. The new study released by *U.S. News and World Report* on January 9 compared the number of hours small-business

owners worked in the United States with data from small business owners all over the world, including France. Whereas owners of small businesses in the United States worked an average of 52 hours a week, their French counterparts logged in an average of 59, leading the pack in a survey that included data from the United Kingdom, Mexico, Brazil, China, and Hong Kong. In particularly busy seasons, 6 % of those surveyed in France admitted to working as many as 100 hours a week. Lengthy working days are the norm for many small business owners in France who have no employees and are involved in farming or tourist operations that do not operate on fixed time schedules.

January 31, 2007

NEWS FROM FRANCE



# Fertility Rate in France Reaches 2.0

It is the highest rate since 1981 and has almost reached replacement level (2.07). France recorded over 830,900 births in 2006, 2.9% higher than in 2005. This impressive fertility rate, combined with longer life expectancy and migratory movements, is contributing to increasing the French population, estimated at 63.4 million on January 1, 2007.

France, with Ireland, now has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe, far ahead of the EU average (1.52 in 2005,) which has itself also risen (1.48 in 2000). It is far higher not only than those of its Mediterranean neighbors with a Catholic tradition, such as Italy and Spain, whose birthrates averaged 1.35, but also than those of East European countries, including Greece, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, which averaged 1.3 children per woman.

France attributes its success to its family friendly policies, including reduced taxes for large families, paid parental leave, and discounts on public transportation for families with more than three children. "The deciding factor comes from the fact that it is easier to reconcile professional activity and a family life here than in most other European countries," said Jean-Michel Charpin, the director of INSEE, the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies in France.

In France, employment and motherhood are perfectly compatible. According to the BBC, France has one of the highest proportions of working women in the European Union. *Le Monde* links this demographic dynamism to the attractive situation of France's female population: 80% of those aged between 25 and 49 work outside the home.



Children playing in 19th arrondissement, Paris

## New Tourism Campaign Turns Heads

A MAN stands before three white lines on a black canvas, thinking to himself "My four year old could've done that," while teens and 20-somethings dance the night away in Versailles "treated like royalty" à la Marie Antoinette. You may have to see it to believe it, but the new ad campaign launched by the Regional Tourism Committee of Paris Ile-de-France aims to capitalize on tourists' stereotypes of Parisians in order to present the city in a new, trendy light. The objective? According to the committee, the new campaign aims to "show Londoners that Paris isn't a stuffy museum city, but that it is a vibrant destination brimming with exciting events that are worth visiting regularly." The billboard campaign has been launched in London to encourage frequent visits from their European coun-

terparts. Anglo-Saxon tourists everywhere can also enjoy



One of the advertisements used in campaign

the ad campaign at [www.cestsoParis.com](http://www.cestsoParis.com), where visitors can play interactive games, learn how to "cop the Parisian attitude," in addition to discovering the latest getaway ideas, local secrets, and essential information for visiting the region. With the ad campaign well underway, Paris has found a new and trendy way to wish its visitors a *Bon Voyage*.

## New Networking Web sites



France Télécom launches new online service

SEEKING to expand upon services offered by its popular Web site PagesJaunes.fr (the French Yellow Pages), France Télécom launched its latest site: [www.AnnoncesJaunes.fr](http://www.AnnoncesJaunes.fr). The new Web site, currently available in beta version and destined toward a professional audience, offers its users a diverse selection of car and real estate classifieds which are easily sorted by region, price, or other personalized search criteria. The service

captures announcements updated from networks such as Century 21, Guy Hoquet, or Groupe Neubauber, and already counts over 234,000 available ads and hopes to extend its user network beyond a strictly professional audience by the end of the month by allowing private individuals to post classified ads for a membership fee.

### MYSACE FRANCE LAUNCHES

Counting already 650,000 Francophone users since the debut of its beta version in August 2006, "MySpace" officially launched its final French version in January. "MySpace France" represents the first non-Anglophone community launched by the popular social-networking Web site, taking the lead in France's recent blogosphere phenomenon. While the site seeks to widen its community in the coming months, Marc Major, the new general director of MySpace France, believes that the network is already off to a head-start. "For me, to arrive at my desk with a community of over one million people, without having done anything yet, is a luxury. [...] with 80 million visitors each month alone, MySpace is the world leader [of social networks]." For more information, please visit MySpace France's Web site at: <http://fr.myspace.com>.



# Musée d'Orsay Celebrates 20th Anniversary

**P**ARIS'S famous Musée d'Orsay is celebrating its 20th anniversary with mounting enthusiasm over the arrival of its two most recent exhibitions: "*Le Nabi aux belles icônes*," a collection of works by Maurice Denis, and "*La donation Rispal*," a donation of Art Nouveau furniture and objects collected between 1900 and 1910.

Best known as a founder and theoretician of the *Nabi* movement, Maurice Denis's work was originally inspired by painters Puvis de Chavannes and Paul Gauguin. The *Nabis*, a young group of "rebellious" student artists embraced the belief that a piece of art is the final product and the artists' synthesis of nature in personal aesthetic metaphors and symbols. They were the early beginnings of abstract and non-representational art, and peaked in popularity around the turn of the 20th century. The *Nabis*, or "Prophets" as signifies their Hebrew name, sought to revive art in the same way that ancient prophets rejuvenated Israel. While the Maurice Denis exhibition highlights his well-known works of the *Nabi* period, it also seeks to restore his later and less-studied pieces to their rightful prominence. Faithful to his identity as a man who expressed himself through multiple artistic media, an exhibition exposing a vast collection of Denis's

unedited amateur photos runs parallel to his more well-known paintings.

The second exhibition celebrating the museum's 20th anniversary, "*La donation Rispal*," appropriately parallels Denis and the *Nabi* movement with an exceptional display of over 300 pieces of Art Nouveau furniture and objects. Collected by Antonin Rispal between 1900 and 1910, the collection features furniture, vases, ceramics, glassmakings, goldsmithery, and stained glass donated by the widow and daughter of the late Rispal.

The Musée d'Orsay was inaugurated in the midst of a grand ceremony on

December 1, 1986. What once had been an old train station on the edge of demolition was transformed into one of the most renowned artistic and cultural centers of Paris. The museum is now eminent for its exhibitions detailing intellectual, political, and artistic movements from 1894 to 1914. As visitors to the Musée d'Orsay today will certainly discover, the recent exhibitions in celebration of its 20th anniversary serve as a beautiful addition to that identity.

For more information about the museum or exhibitions taking place, please visit: [www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr). ■



The Musée D'Orsay, Paris

## King's Cake: Bringing in the New Year with Taste

**W**HO says you can't have your cake and eat it too? Throughout the month of January, men and women across France have been enjoying "*galettes des rois*" (King's cake), a flat, round cake made from puff pastry with plain or almond paste filling. Watch out not to eat too fast, however! A small figurine is hidden inside and the lucky person who finds it is crowned king or queen for the day, receiving a paper crown and good fortune.

Traditionally, the youngest person in the room hides under the table and calls out the order in which the pieces of cake are to be distributed so that no one seeing the small favor peaking out from a slice of cake can unfairly claim the toy and its accompanying good fortune as his or her own.

The tradition of the *galette* is a practice that dates back to the Middle Ages in France. Although originally intended to be eaten on January 6 to celebrate *le jour des Rois*, when the three Magi are believed to have brought gifts for the newborn baby Jesus, *galettes* are now enjoyed across France throughout

January. What originally commemorated a Christian holiday has become a cultural tradition.

When the tradition first began, a fava bean or one *fève*, a symbol of fertility, was placed inside the cake. Today, however, the *fèves* inside the cake range from inexpensive plastic toys to intricately decorated porcelain figurines.

Whether an inexpensive plastic trinket or hand painted piece of porcelain, the consumption of *galettes* marks one of France's most beloved traditions. It is a time when friends and neighbors can come together and celebrate both the season and the arrival of the new year "with taste." ■



Traditional King's cake and crown

## "No Promises" Promises to Please

**F**OUR years following the release of her debut album "*Quelqu'un m'a dit*," Carla Bruni, the Italian-born singer and ex-model, has branched out from her well-loved mixes of French *chanson* and Italian *poesia* to try her talents before an English-speaking audience. Her new album, "*No Promises*," released by Naïve Records on January 15, comprises a compilation of well-known Irish, English, and American poems set to the comforting sound of an acoustic guitar and drum,



Carla Bruni's new cd, "No Promises"

accompanied by slight riffs of the harmonica, flute, and of course, the sultry voice of the singer herself. For her inspiration, the singer-songwriter has turned to the poems of William Butler Yeats, Walter de La Mare, Wystan Hugh Auden, Christina Rossetti, Emily Dickinson and Dorothy Parker. For more information, please visit: [www.carlabruni.com](http://www.carlabruni.com). ■

### TRIBUTE TO JOSEPHINE BAKER'S LEGACY

2006 celebrated the centennial of Josephine Baker's birth with a musical production of *À la recherche de Josephine (In Search of Josephine)* at l'Opéra Comique in Paris. Jérôme Savary, director of l'Opéra Comique, chose to pay homage to the Franco-American artist 81 years after her debut in *Revue Nègres* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. French producer Michel Dussarrat, collaborated with Savary to create an engaging piece that highlights the life of Baker and New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. The show boasts a captivating use of style through music and dance. A troop of young, American comedian-singer-dancers relate Josephine's story through afro and salsa dancing while an orchestra from New Orleans entertains the crowd with Cajun, boogie-woogie, gospel, and blues music. An old Louisianan narrator recounts the history of his people with tales of slavery in Cuba and Haiti while traveling on a rowboat through the play's simple scenery of murky Louisiana water. Nicole Rochelle, former actress on the *Cosby Show*, plays the role of Josephine and wears Baker's famous banana belt in the show. L'Opéra Comique was not the only venue to honor the life of Josephine Baker. The Théâtre Princesse Grace in Monaco also co-sponsored the performance *Jo et Josephine*, a Jacques Pessis musical, which portrayed the journey of the singer with her husband Jo Bouillon. Additionally, the National Portrait Gallery of Washington offers an exposition of Freda Josephine McDonald (Josephine Baker) until March 18, featuring photos, posters, and sketches of the artist's vibrant life.

### NEW CHILDREN'S MOVIE

Grégoire Solotareff may not be a famous actor, but if you ask most children, teachers, and librarians, he is indeed a star. He has written over one hundred books, many of which have been translated in more than a dozen countries including: Japan, Spain, Denmark, United States, Italy, and Germany. His stories are known for their humor, sharpness, creativity, and honesty. He is not afraid to take an unusual spin on classic tales. Solotareff has translated his success from paper to the big screen. In 2003, the author adapted his 1988 children's book *Loulou* into a short film with the help of director Serge Elissalde. Three years later, Elissalde and Solotareff decided to take their successful collaboration to a new level with a full length animated picture. The film titled *U*, is a story about a young girl who overcomes misfortune and unhappiness thanks to her guardian angel, a unicorn named "U." Eventually, the child develops into a charming adolescent who no longer needs her angel to guide her through life. *U* was released last year and should soon be distributed internationally.

