

World Leaders Convene to Tackle Global Poverty

"Ten years ago, the world decided to reduce extreme poverty by half; to guarantee education for all children; to cut infant mortality by two-thirds; to improve maternal health; to combat AIDS and malaria; and to promote gender equality," French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared to world leaders at a U.N. summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). "Considerable progress has been made, but we still have a long road ahead of us."

Heads of state and government convened in New York City on September 20 and 21 to review advancements and accelerate progress on achieving the MDGs by 2015, which include reducing by half the number of people without access to clean water and basic sanitation.

The world's second-largest donor of public aid, France contributes 10 billion euros annually to development initiatives. President Sarkozy announced that, despite the state of the global economy, his country will increase its donations to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria by 20 percent over the next three years. "While the crisis is severe in the wealthy countries, where it has created deficits, its consequences are much harsher in the poor countries," President Sarkozy underscored, imploring other nations to maintain commitments to the MDGs. "So we do not have the right to do less. And with regard to our decision, we hope that all the developed countries will decide to do more and, naturally, to help Africa on a priority basis . . . and to give Africa its rightful place [in] new global governance."



President Sarkozy addresses world leaders at the MDGs summit on September 20.

The French head of state reiterated the importance of mobilizing other members and mechanisms of the global community to find innovative solutions. "I also want to share my conviction that we will not succeed with public funds alone; the private sector must join in our effort. Indeed, as the future president of the G20 and the G8, I will attend the African Union summit at the end of January in Addis Ababa, and during the year of my G20 and G8 presidency, I will strive to promote the idea of innovative financing championed by Bernard Kouchner."

"After the [financial] crisis, let us not fall back into our bad habits and our daily routines. The coming year must be one of great change. [...] France intends to participate in it: not, of course, to make speeches; not, of course, to preach; but to lead the entire world toward new global governance, toward greater solidarity and toward the emergence of innovative financing. If we fulfill this condition, we will be believed and respected by all the peoples of the world."

To read President Sarkozy's full speech, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.

European Countries Host Festival for Kids in Washington, D.C., Area

The month-long Kids Euro Festival will run from October 15 through November 10 in Washington, D.C. A celebration of European arts and culture for American children and their families, the Kids Euro Festival is presented by all 27 E.U. member states and more than 20 major U.S. arts and cultural institutions, including the Kennedy Center, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the Library of Congress, and the Shakespeare Theatre Company, among others.

Launched in 2008, Kids Euro Festival quickly grew from the concept stage to the largest — in terms of number of performances, participating nations, and duration — children's performing arts

festival of its kind in the country.

In an unprecedented collaboration among the embassy community, each European Union member state participates, sending to Washington, D.C., some of their most accomplished performing artists for children. Almost 200 activities take place during Kids Euro Festival, including in-school and public performances, reading workshops at every branch of the DC Public Library, performances for hospitalized children at Children's National Medical Center, a special day for children with disabilities, teacher workshops, and a family cinema series.

Through events at public venues and schools throughout the Washington metropolitan area, young people and their families can enjoy per-



Austria presented a cast of misfit puppets in "Twice Upon a Time" last year.

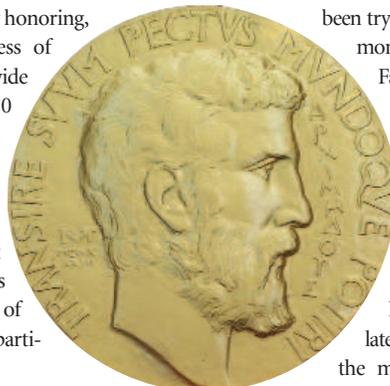
formances in practically every creative genre, including music, performance art, theater, puppetry, storytelling, acrobatics, magic, and cinema. In 2009, nearly 25,000 people enjoyed more than 200 Kids Euro Festival events.

Two French Scientists Awarded the Fields Medal

Since its creation in 1932, the Fields Medal has fostered communication and understanding in the international math community by honoring, every four years at the International Congress of Mathematicians, young mathematicians worldwide for outstanding research. At the August 2010 Congress in Hyderabad, India, two Frenchmen, Cedric Villani, and Ngo Bao Chau, were among the four laureates.

Villani, a professor at the Ecole normale supérieure of Lyon and director of the Institut Henri Poincaré in Paris, received the medal for his proofs relating to Boltzmann's kinetic theory of gases, which studies evolution and probability in particle theory.

Ngo Bao Chau, a native of Vietnam who received French citizenship while pursuing his studies in Paris, was honored for his proof of Fundamental



Lemma, a theory that mathematicians had been trying to verify for over thirty years. This month, the former professor from the Faculté des Sciences at Orsay will begin a new appointment at the University of Chicago.

French mathematicians account for 12 of the 52 total Fields Medal laureates, making France the prize's second-most decorated country. In a statement issued on August 19, President Sarkozy formally congratulated the two mathematicians and lauded the mathematics community in France, which, as of 2009, boasted the largest concentration of mathematicians in the world.

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NEW INVENTION GENERATES A BUZZ

The Embassy of France and six French Consulates in the United States organized the *Allons en France* program, which offered seven trips to Paris from July 7 to July 17. Candidates for the Washington, D.C., prize submitted invention proposals that could change everyday life in the future. First place was awarded to Julia Peck from Woodrow Wilson High School, the creator of the "iChapeaugénérateur" — an energy-producing hat that powers an iPhone. A modified beanie-propeller hat, the contraption works by using a generator to capture the energy of the propeller and convert it to power. The electricity is channeled to the iPhone via a cord attached to the generator. For more information on the program, please visit: www.allonsenfrance.com.

WWII PILOT RECEIVES HIGHEST HONOR

France bestowed the Legion of Honor upon retired USAF Lieutenant Colonel Roy D. Simmons, Jr. at an annual ceremony in La Pézade on August 22. For 66 years, France has commemorated the tragic deaths of 23 Paul Claie resistance fighters and Lieutenant Richard Hoy, all of whom died attacking a German column on the Larzac plateau on August 22, 1944. In 2006, retired USAF Colonel Donald Bohler, a Vietnam War veteran, visited La Pézade and saw a placard for Hoy among the French names. Bohler, who lives in Montpellier, France, and Florida, began searching for Hoy's surviving mission leader — Simmons — upon returning to the United States in 2009. More than a year later, Bohler located Simmons and coordinated with French authorities to have the retired Colonel participate in the ceremony at La Pézade. Simmons, now 88 years old, left his home in Nashville to return to Larzac for the first time since World War II. The two American pilots had been sent on a tactical reconnaissance mission and attacked a German convoy, which shot down Hoy's P-51 Mustang and later killed all 23 *maquisards*, French resistance fighters. The Legion of Honor recognizes Simmons' wartime contributions and the support he provided to Paul Claie resistance fighters at La Pézade.

Minorities in France — a Transatlantic Dialogue

At the invitation of the U.S. Helsinki Commission (www.osce.gov), French minority leaders traveled to the U.S. Capitol on September 15 to discuss issues impacting their communities in France. Their observations included their own personal and political beliefs, as well as academic and business perspectives. The roundtable discussion was part of a Helsinki Commission event on minority political participation in France and the U.S., convened during the Annual Legislative Conference of the Congressional Black Caucus. French Ambassador to the U.S. Pierre Vimont delivered closing remarks at the roundtable.

Helsinki Commission Co-Chairman Representative Alcee L. Hastings' opening remarks set the tone for a focus on the added value that diversity brings to society, stating, "both of our countries are host to vibrant racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse minority communities that have made great contributions to our societies. Despite discrimination and continuing inequities, we have seen members of these communities rise to leadership roles in our society."

The lively conversation explored both private and public anti-discrimination and diversity initiatives, with many of the French speakers discussing their struggles with discrimination in education, politics, media, business, and the workplace. The conversation also touched upon broader contemporary issues, such as the political discussion across Europe relating to the Roma people.

Speakers underscored some recent achievements and initiatives, as well as some positive signals. France, for example, is a country with high intermarriage rates (weddings of persons of foreign origin, whether immigrants or children of immigrants, with persons who are not of foreign origin), a figure considered to be one of the most intimate signs of integration in process. A representative from a French cosmetics company also described its commitment under the Diversity Charter not only to fight discrimination, but also to work towards actual diversity within its workforces.



Representative Diane Watson, who lived in France, and French Ambassador Vimont participated in the discussion.

Representative Diane Watson from California shared her perspective on France that she acquired while living there. Characterizing the country as nationalistic but with an open society, she stressed that both France and the U.S. could learn lessons from a better understanding of each other's experiences.

In his closing remarks, Ambassador Vimont echoed the necessity for such dialogue, both in France and with other countries. The core issues, he stated, have a strong cultural dimension, and though both government and civil society are moving to promote diversity, change is obviously slow, too slow for those suffering from discrimination. An interesting deduction from the conversation, the French ambassador stressed, could be that less should be expected from public authorities, and more from each and every citizen. But, overall, Ambassador Vimont insisted, France has already contradicted pessimistic views, such as those heard after the 2005 unrest in the suburbs, and as most participants underscored, there are signs of hope and change.

Frenchman Floors the Competition at World Judo Championships

Frenchman Teddy Riner won the gold medal in the heavyweight final of the World Judo Championships (WJC) held on September 9 at Yoyogi National Gymnasium in Tokyo, Japan. The 6' 8" *judoka* (judo practitioner), born in Guadeloupe, defeated 30-year-



old Andreas Toelzer of Germany after the final round went into overtime. Leading up to the final of the over-100kg division, Riner grappled with Kim Soo-Whan of South Korea, Lin Yu-heng of Taiwan, Dmitriy Sterkhov of Russia, Rafael Silva of Brazil and Kazuhiko Takahashi of Japan. The 21-year-old Riner now boasts his third consecutive gold medal from the WJC, counting his wins in 2007 and 2009. Additionally, the impressive *judoka* had a banner

year in 2008, winning the WJC open division gold and earning a bronze medal at the Beijing Olympics. On the day of his victory, Riner said, "I have never thought of losing at any moment," a philosophy that attests to his tenacious success.

The five-day tournament hosted over 700 competitors, both male and female, from around the world. France was second only to Japan in overall medals from all divisions.

The Japanese sport traces its origins back to 1882, when Professor Jigoro Kano developed the martial art of *judo*, meaning "gentle way," in Tokyo. The first WJC were held 72 years after its inception, and the martial art became an official Olympic sport shortly afterward. Teddy Riner's success this year marks yet another important date in the history of the sport purely by coincidence: the 150th anniversary of Kano's birth.

Head of the Financial Markets Authority Speaks at "Kalorama Lectures"

The Residence of France hosted the chairman of France's Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF) Jean-Pierre Jouyet on September 9 as part of the "Kalorama Lectures" series. Former head of the French Treasury, Mr. Jouyet addressed the importance of financial regulation in both Europe and the United States before a group of U.S. government officials, members of the press, and distinguished guests.



Chairman of France's Autorité des marchés financiers discusses financial regulation.

Mr. Jouyet prefaced his lecture by comparing the American and French financial markets: both are currently overhauling their prudential supervision systems, both want to expand supervision to all financial markets, and both are developing and implementing stricter standards. With these similarities in mind, Mr. Jouyet emphasized the importance of working together towards solutions for addressing reckless speculative practices, which he believes are an important contributor to market volatility, noting, "We still have not found the right responses to the most blatant cases of 'excessive' speculation. I am not talking about 'normal' speculation, which is intrinsic to markets, I am

avoiding over-regulation. "Piling one layer of new rules and standards on top of another is not necessarily the right response. Too much regulation will kill regulation ... and the economic recovery along with it."

"Let's try to use these tools wisely in order to prevent rather than to repair," the French official stressed, encouraging transnational cooperation in deterring future shadow markets, "Fortunately, we now have frameworks for discussion and cooperation that should enable us to anticipate the emergence of new risks," he continued. "If we manage that, then we will have successfully modernized the financial regulation system."

talking about speculation that carries a systemic risk or that could undermine market integrity."

Chairman Jouyet cautioned that without close communication and cooperation between the U.S., Europe, and emerging countries, gaps in regulation standards could create a haven for unsupervised speculative investment. Conversely, he emphasized the importance of

Crossing the Wire with Philippe Petit

On August 7, 1974, New Yorkers rushing to work in the morning paused to marvel at an unbelievable sight: a man fearlessly crossing a tightrope between the towers of the World Trade Center 1,300 feet overhead. The relationship of this daring French high-wire artist, Philippe Petit, to the city of New York is both romantic and thrilling. Enamored by the towers when he first saw a model in 1968, Petit spent six years preparing for what Time Magazine termed the "artistic crime of the century."

This summer, Petit returned to the city he discovered 36 years ago. As part of an initiative with the Streb Lab for Action Mechanics (SLAM) in Brooklyn, he taught three master classes of six students each in early August. The students were handpicked by Petit himself for the chance to put the first foot out on the wire. "I want people who are curious about venturing in places they haven't been and those who want to get a glimpse at an art that is totally unknown," he stated. His apprentices learned patience and humility over the course of two days, struggling with a 22-pound balancing pole as they moved from a line on the floor and finally to a wire suspended seven feet in the air.

Ambassador Vimont Honors Fellow "Ambassadors"



Ambassador Vimont bestowed the Academic Palms on three DC-area teachers.

July 5 marked the annual convention of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) in Philadelphia. One of the largest associations of French teachers in the world, AATF is a network for French language educators across the United States and publishes a scholarly journal of French studies, the *French Review*. The convention featured symposia about education and culture, centered on the theme of "Francophone Diversity."

Special guest Pierre Vimont, Ambassador of France to the United States, inducted three exceptional teachers into the *Ordre des Palmes Académiques* (Order of the Academic Palms). The recipients, Dr. Rebecca Fox, Dr. Patricia Cummins and Dr. Gladys Lipton, distinguished themselves as ambassadors of francophone culture in the District of Columbia metropolitan area. In his speech, Ambassador Vimont lauded the contributions of the recipients, underlining the added value each brings to the realm of education.

The Order of the Academic Palms — established by Napoléon more than 200 years ago — honors those in the field of academia who have contributed to the promotion of French culture. The nomination process is overseen by the Minister of Education.

For more information on the AATF, please visit: www.frenchteachers.org.



Arianespace Chairman & CEO Jean-Yves Le Gall presents the guitar to former Doobie Brothers member and Steely Dan guitarist Jeff "Skunk" Baxter.

Satellite Telecommunications company Arianespace celebrated its 30th anniversary on July 30 with an appropriately themed "California groove" beach reception. The highlight of the Santa Monica event — which was attended by Arianespace's U.S. customers — was the tendering of a one-of-a-kind guitar to a unique recipient.

The guitar was fabricated out of parts from an Ariane 5 rocket by Frenchman James Trussart, a long-time California resident who has produced other musical instruments for legends such as Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton and Keith Richards.

At the reception, Arianespace Chairman & CEO Jean-Yves Le Gall presented the guitar to Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, a member of the Doobie Brothers band and a guitarist for Steely Dan — who today has become a recognized expert in matters of missile defense, anti-terrorism and intelligence.

"The decade that saw the rise of Jeff Baxter also saw the rise of the Ariane program," Le Gall said. "In 1979, the same year that the Doobie Brothers' *Minute by Minute* reached the top of the charts, we counted down the minutes, consulted our charts and launched the first Ariane rocket out of French Guiana ... Today we are the most successful launch services company in existence. And today we salute our customers who, with good reason, believe in our product and our services."

"I am very touched because, to me, [the guitar] is ... art, technology, craftsmanship, music — all rolled into one," Baxter stated, thanking Le Gall for the instrument. "And that's what makes the human race special. As we explore the stars, as we explore the universe, we bring the art with us wherever we go."

After the handover of the guitar, Baxter joined other professional and amateur musicians — including those from Boeing and the Society of Satellite Professionals International — in a special performance, playing some of the Doobie Brothers' signature songs: *Long Train Running* and *China Grove*, as well as Wilson Pickett's *In the Midnight Hour*.

La Rentrée: A Time for New Beginnings

The end of summer in France signals the arrival of *la rentrée*, a period of time in late August and early September that marks a new chapter in education, politics and culture. A noun derived from the French verb *rentrer*, meaning "to return" or "go back," *la rentrée* represents not only a national return to ordinary routine, but a time to mentally prepare for new beginnings after the rhythm of the summer months.

La rentrée scolaire: Back to School

Refreshed after a two-month vacation, French students returned to school on September 2 this year, but not without the requisite period of preparation. Bargain hunters across the country took advantage of *les affaires de la rentrée* (back-to-school sales) to stock up on supplies and clothing for the upcoming year. In anticipation of the sales, the Ministry of National Education publishes a list of essentials for back-to-school success. During the frenzied shopping period, on average, sixth graders in France spend approximately 175 euros (about 225 dollars) on supplies, according to the National Federation of French families, Familles en France, while a student of the same age in the United States spends about 600 dollars on clothing, school supplies, and electronics, according to the National Retail Federation.

To alleviate the financial burden on low-income families, the Ministry of Education offers a stipend called the *allocation de rentrée scolaire* to over five million school-aged children from families in need. The figure is annually adjusted to accommodate expected costs, and this year eligible families can receive between 280 and 306 euros (about 350-390 dollars) — depending on their child's age — to provide for school supplies, clothing and other back-to-school necessities.



French children went back to school on September 2.

experienced *la rentrée à la française*. "It's an ideal setup," states Catherine Petillon, French Attaché for Educational Affairs in Washington, in charge of the Jules Verne program in the U.S., "With a minimal investment, schools shape teachers better than any language training, and gain a foreign instructor as well." This new international twist to *la rentrée* promises to improve cross-cultural education for the school year, both in France and abroad.

La rentrée politique: Back to Business

The major political parties in France hold summer conferences to align their agendas and goals for Parliament over the course of the year, but *la rentrée politique* commences with the first assembly of the Council of Ministers.

The Council, comprising President Sarkozy, Prime Minister François Fillon and each of the ministers, convened on August 25 to discuss key issues of social and economic strategy to be addressed by Parliament. The Council is the structure that organizes the work of the executive branch.

Members of the Assemblée Nationale went back to session on September 7 to debate new legislation, which, this year, revolved around issues of retirement, immigration, and security. Minister of Labor Eric



President Nicolas Sarkozy outlined France's foreign policy initiatives during the 18th Annual Conference of Ambassadors.

Woerth headed the project for retirement reform, as Minister of Immigration Eric Besson presented a proposal "concerning immigration, integration, and nationality." Consideration of the state budget for the next calendar year, one of the most arduous tasks, will occur in October.

La rentrée also took on an international dimension, as President Sarkozy addressed the 18th Annual Conference of Ambassadors on August 25. The president articulated France's foreign policy goals, security and defense objectives, and ambitions to pursue regulation in financial markets and commodity prices. The French president also voiced his country's continued dedication to reducing global warming and its enduring commitment to combating terrorism, stressing in particular support for efforts in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and the Maghreb. Additionally, President Sarkozy underscored France's priorities for the G8 and G20 as it assumes the presidency of these organizations next November and January, respectively. To read his entire address, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.

La rentrée culturelle: Back to Programming

The attention to the latest autumn fashion and food trends in magazines and newspapers proves that no area of French life can escape the sweeping spirit of *la rentrée*, especially in the media and the arts. In addition to coverage of *la rentrée* in print media, television and radio stations change lineups, appoint new show hosts and unveil new programming. One particular anticipated contribution this season is the period drama, *Maison Close*, set in Paris circa 1870. It is the first period series for its producer Canal +, a well known network for coverage of film and sports.

Many theaters also offer reduced ticket prices to encourage attendance among students and adults alike. Already in theaters is Xavier Beauvois's drama *Des hommes et des dieux* (*Of Gods and Men*) which won the Jury Prize at Cannes. Children's films are also an important fixture of this time, including the new film, *Arthur et la guerre des deux mondes* (*Arthur and the War of Two Worlds*) from director Luc Besson, famous for the *Transporter* series, which will begin showing October 13.

This period marks the new release of books, and between September and October, more than 700 novels will have been published; about 40 more than arrived on the literary scene in 2009. This year's *rentrée littéraire* features a number of high-profile returning novelists, including Michel Houellebecq and Philippe Claudel. Amélie Nothomb, who usually releases one book each year, also made her much-discussed contribution to *la rentrée* with *Une forme de vie*, which describes her correspondence with a soldier in Iraq. Another author, Goncourt-prize winner Laurent Gaudé, tackled American issues in his new novel, *Ouragan*, about post-Katrina New Orleans. New releases will vie for selection as this year's winner of the Prix Goncourt. A prestigious literary honor, the Prix is given in November by the Académie Goncourt to the author of that year's "best work of imagination in prose." The Académie has met at the Drouant restaurant in Paris since 1914 for the final deliberation, where it is decided which author receives the prize, and the accompanying celebrity status.

The Glass is Greener in Champagne

The *Comité interprofessionnel du vin de Champagne* (CIVC) announced earlier this year a new endeavor to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of the Champagne industry. By adopting a thinner Champagne bottle, the CIVC predicts a reduction of 8,000 metric tons in carbon emissions, the equivalent of taking 4,000 small cars off of the road. The move is part of a greater initiative of the CIVC to reduce its carbon footprint 75 percent by 2050. According to Bruno Delhorbe, director of the St. Gobain plant, the small reduction in glass use has cut manufacturing emissions by seven percent, not including the reduction in necessary delivery trucks, as 2,400 more of the lighter bottles can now fit into each truck. The *New York Times* noted that the changes to the classic Champagne bottle are almost impossible to notice: only the shoulder and the indented base



have been shaved of excess glass, reducing the weight of the bottle. However, such small modifications could yield tremendous ecological benefits by reducing the amount of delivery vehicles needed to distribute the product. Last year, 290 million bottles of Champagne were shipped worldwide.

Since the 1600s, Champagne has required a bottle thicker than any other carbonated wine because of the extremely high pressure of its contents — three times greater than that of the average car tire. Many wineries have already adopted the carefully engineered new bottle, 65 grams lighter than the standard 900-gram bottle that has become a hallmark of the beverage. A few producers adopted the new bottle as early as 2003, and consumers can expect the "green" packaging from producers like Moët & Chandon and Veuve Clicquot starting in 2013.

Google Maps Out Investment Plans in France

French President Nicolas Sarkozy met with Google Chairman and CEO Eric Schmidt in early September to discuss the company's plans for increased investment and cultural engagement within France.

Schmidt announced the creation of a Google research and development center in France, which will attract the world's best engineers to the country and should contribute to the momentum of innovation in France's digital economy. He also expressed Google's wish to invest in French universities and fund computer science research programs in political science, law, journalism, and other areas related to the issues the Internet raises for society. These plans bring international recognition that testifies to the high caliber of French engineering and technological education.

Additionally, Google plans to create a European Institute for Culture in Paris, where all Google's projects to do with the world of culture in Europe will be centralized.

President Sarkozy welcomed Google's initiatives, which promise to complement France's leadership in technological achievements. For more information on Google's investments in France, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.

Ciao Paris: The Rush of a Parisian Experience



A new scooter rental service makes the sky the limit for discovering Paris.

Ever since the introduction of the popular bicycle rental program Vélib in 2007, interest in touring France's capital city on two wheels has been on the rise. Responding to that interest, Parisian company Ciao Paris recently launched a new service that seeks to provide tourists and locals alike with a novel, exciting, and convenient way to tour the City of Light.

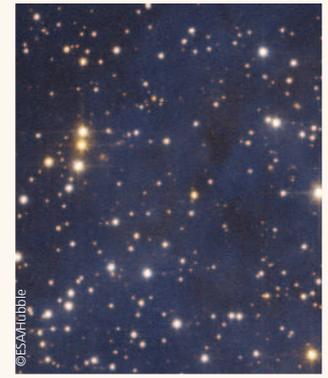
Endeavoring to provide a comfortable, adventurous means of discovering Paris, the new service offers two models of Vespa scooters for rental, getting up to 200 km per tank and equipped to accommodate one or two people. For convenience, online booking is available and Ciao Paris will deliver the scooters to an address or intersection

of a person's choice at a designated time that suits their schedule. For security measures, staff members will provide a tutorial on scooter operation and safety considerations upon delivery. In accordance with French law, helmets are also provided for riders.

For those who are new to town or are worried about navigating their way through the City of Romance, each Vespa is equipped with a guide of popular local sites as well as an optional GPS.

Scooters are normally reserved for a period of 12 hours during the day and can be delivered and picked up between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. For more information on Ciao Paris, please visit: www.ciaoparis.fr.

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT



Once a year, French stargazers indulge their inner astronomer during *La Nuit des étoiles*.

Stargazers across France came out in droves to participate in the 20th annual *Nuit des étoiles*, held in early August.

La Nuit des étoiles (The Night of Stars) is an event organized by the Association française d'astronomie (AFA) that gives the public the opportunity to attend free presentations and guided celestial observations at over 400 different sites throughout France. The observations are led by both members of the AFA, and experienced stargazers from some of France's many regional astronomy clubs.

La Nuit des étoiles aims to familiarize individuals with the wonders of astronomical observation, and allow them to better know their local astronomy clubs and associations. Discussion at the event sites varied widely, presenters taking questions on a range of topics from astrophysics to the possibility of extraterrestrial life. The guided celestial observations were the highlight of the event, which was held on three consecutive evenings. When darkness fell, participants were able to observe many celestial bodies and phenomena including the planets Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn, as well as several nebulae and the well known Andromeda Galaxy. Finally, the regular passage of the Perseids meteor shower — observable as "shooting stars" through the night sky — offered the perfect accent on an evening already filled with celestial wonder.

Although weather across the country was mostly clear for the event, presentations included videos, multimedia, and other exhibitions in the event of temporary cloud cover.



Tourism throughout France is steadily increasing, with visits from Paris to Marseille (above).

French Secretary of State for Trade, Crafts, Small and Medium Enterprises, Tourism, Services and Consumer Affairs Hervé Novelli reported the end of the recession in the French tourism sector this August, announcing that visits to touristic sites in France over the summer were up five percent from last year's official government figures. The figures concerning tourism in France were positive across the board. While domestic tourism rose three percent, a significant increase in Chinese and Russian tourists helped account for a 10 percent overall rise in the number of foreign tourists to France. In June and July, guest stays in French hotels also rose 3.6 percent compared with last year's figures. Secretary Novelli noted that for continued growth in the tourism sector, France will need to upgrade its current hospitality infrastructure. In the spirit of improvement, he announced that changes in France's hotel ratings system will take effect in October. France will expand its current four-star rating system, conforming to the globally recognized five-star rating system.

QUICK OPENS NEW HALAL FRANCHISE LOCATIONS

Following the success of eight franchise locations that began offering Halal-certified meals in November 2009, French hamburger giant Quick introduced Halal menus in 14 more locations across France starting September 1. Halal, or those actions deemed permissible under Islamic law, includes a stipulation that all meat for consumption be slaughtered in accordance with religious regulations, and also explicitly forbids consumption of pork products. The new restaurants will substitute smoked turkey for bacon on their hamburgers, and provide certification that all shipments of meat observe Halal standards. Quick's introduction of new restaurants responds to what appears to be a growing domestic demand for Halal products. Solis, a French marketing firm, recently estimated the value of France's Halal foods market at 5.5 billion dollars for 2010. After the new openings, Halal locations will constitute approximately six percent of all Quick franchises in France.

Organic Market in France is Chic and Biologique

A stroll through the aisles of one of France's supermarkets might turn up more "green" than expected, as special sections of leafy greens and plump apples invite shoppers to go *bio*. The French term for organic, *bio* has become the catchword for one of the most dynamic markets in Europe.

Fueled by the increased environmental, health, and safety concerns of French citizens since the turn of the century, the organic trend has blossomed into a 3.3 billion-dollar industry that proved a strong resilience in the face of the worldwide recession. From 1999 to 2005, the organic market grew annually at around 10 percent, with a 25 percent increase from 2007 to 2008, according to *Agence Bio*, the public interest group charged with the organization and promotion of organic products in France. Sales of organic cheese, eggs, and milk, products emblematic of French culture, have doubled since 2005. As Elisabeth Mercier, head of *Agence Bio*, stated this year, "The movement is taking off."

Mercier describes the trend as a "virtuous cycle," fed by the participation of shoppers, farmers, and businesses. One in four French people now regularly buys organic products, and 86 percent hope to see the development of the organic market. Consumer demand has encouraged organic products in supermarkets, now responsible for 82 percent of organic sales. Distributors such as Carrefour are endeavoring to finance more organic farms on top of the nearly 6,000 producers already established.



The organic market in France grew 25 percent between 2007 and 2008.

A Backstage Pass to the Divas' Dressing Room



The elaborate dress worn by soprano Kiri Te Kawana is one of many costumes on display this fall at the Centre National du Costume de scène.

The word "diva" takes its root from the Latin word for goddess, a suitable description of the sublime stage presence of the women who have merited this title. French actress Sarah Bernhardt was one of the first international divas, captivat-

ing millions at the turn of the century with her "golden voice" and expressive acting. Yet an integral part of the magic of "Divine Sarah," as she was known, also lay in the sumptuous garments that adorned her on stage. *Vestiaire des Divas* (Divas' Dressing Room), a new exhibit at the Centre National du costume de scène, pays homage to immortal stars and modern performers such as Bernhardt by showcasing their elaborate wardrobes.

The exhibition has assembled costumes from the 19th century to today, donated by the Bibliothèque Nationale de la France, the Comédie-Française, and the Opéra National de Paris, among others. Luxurious silks, delicately detailed satin shoes, and coquettish fans in timeless hues trace the careers of prima donnas Bernhardt, Maria Callas, Edith Piaf, and others. Contemporary American opera singer Renée Fleming is also represented with clothing designed for her by Christian Lacroix for *La Traviata* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

The Centre, located in Moulines in central France, is the first of its kind to showcase "material theatrical heritage," underscoring the historic relationship between the actors and the décor. The exhibit runs through December 31, but the museum, open daily, gives visitors a peek behind the curtains at another 9,000 costumes.



A VIRTUAL TRIP TO L'HEXAGONE

This August, the French government launched a virtual resource, www.France.fr, containing 3,000 pages and over 12,000 links. Spearheaded by the office of Prime Minister François Fillon, the project is administered by the Government Information Service. It is available in French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish.

The website is divided into six main categories, addressing the diverse needs



and interests of those the resource will serve, including students, tourists, and entrepreneurs. The tool provides answers to many of the most common questions

regarding visas, work, and housing. It offers information from the history of *la Marseillaise* to potential partnerships with French investment companies. The site also includes up-to-the-minute news stories and interactive maps that allow users to explore the country by searching for the locations of monuments, schools, and businesses. The new portal is a vast source of knowledge about *la patrie* for both natives and Francophiles around the world.

Reigning World Guitar Champion Puts on "Airs"

Flashing lights and fog machines create a rock and roll ambiance on stage as the amplified voice of the master of ceremonies announces the next act. The enormous crowd goes wild, dancing and screaming, but strains of a legendary rock song drown out their roar. Yet there is no band on stage. A single performer, tearing off his cape, crown, and necklace (which he tosses to his screaming fans), struts onto stage, left clad in nothing but gold spandex pants and square glasses. Moonwalking, hip-thrusting, and wildly gesticulating, he captivates the audience, strumming an imaginary guitar. Welcome to the 15th annual Air Guitar World Championship, where Frenchman Sylvain "Günther Love" Quimene defends his title!



Courtesy: Sylvain Quimene

Reigning World Air Guitar Champion Sylvain "Günther Love" Quimene brought home the gold.

This year's championship took place on August 21 in Oulu, Finland. 23 air guitarists competed in the first round, performing a song of their choice, and the top ten moved on to the second

"compulsory" round, where they rocked to the legendary "Foxy Lady" by Jimi Hendrix. Despite tough competition from many nations, France dominated the contest this year, sweeping first and second place. Reigning champion Quimene brought home the gold for a second year in a row. Fellow French native Soraya "Eva Gina Runner" Garlenq took second place.

The competition brought together air guitarists and fans from around the world. According to tradition, the competition ended with all contestants taking the stage and encouraging everyone, audience members and all those watching from their homes, to strum along to Neil Young's "Rocking in the Free World," an act of unity among the air guitar community.

An Explosive Tale of Travel

Narratives of travel have long been popular in France, from the *carnets de voyage* of 17th-century explorers, to accounts of modern-day travelers. Historically, the genre has sought to represent a foreign culture while conveying the unique perspective of the traveler himself, but has expanded as contemporary globetrotters explore the genre's classic interpretations in diverse forms of media. Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang is at the forefront of a contemporary view on voyages, showcased in the new exhibition through January 2011 at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nice.

Cai Guo-Qiang, renowned for his role as the artistic director of the fireworks extravaganza at the 2008 Olympic Games opening ceremony, manifests his burning interest in pyrotechnics through his method. "Travels in the Mediterranean," the headlining piece, uses his signature gunpowder drawing technique to document the experience of a Chinese student with whom he traveled to the French Riviera. The technique includes the distribution of fuses and powder on canvas before strategically burning them to create the final product. For the artist, process is as important as product; each gunpowder work is accompanied by photos and videos of sparks and smoke as the forms emerge on paper.

Another of the exhibit's pieces, "Reflection — A Gift from Iwaki," is a 50-foot-long wooden boat filled with broken porcelain, reconstructed at each exhibition by the Japanese fishermen who first excavated the boat in 1994. With the mammoth wooden structure and the gunpowder drawings, the artist is not narrating the story of a journey finished, but inviting viewers to come along.



Artist Cai Guo-Qiang uses gunpowder to illustrate his *Travels in the Mediterranean*.

Celebrating French Heritage

French natives and tourists celebrated and learned about France's rich culture and history during the Journées du Patrimoine (Days of Heritage) over the weekend of September 18. The annual celebration encompasses a series of cultural events, including special exhibitions, unveiling ceremonies, and discounted or free admission to most cultural heritage sites throughout France and its overseas territories.

The theme of this year's edition was "Great Personalities: When Men and Women Build History." In addition to honoring significant individuals in the history of France, French Minister of Culture and Communication Frédéric Mitterrand described the importance of "valu[ing] those who give their time and enthusiasm to preserve the traces of history."

In addition to the special openings of

various monasteries, chateaux, and historical residences, every *département*, from Alsace to Guadeloupe, boasted events ranging from concerts and audiovisual exhibits, to city walking tours.

This year marks the 27th Journées du Patrimoine. What started as an event unique to France in 1984 has since expanded to 48 other European countries that celebrate the participants' respective cultures. The event has been formally institutionalized as the European Heritage Day



Courtesy: Journées du Patrimoine

The event celebrates monumental cultural heritage sites, such as the Abbey of Mont Saint-Michel, among other institutions.

Minister Mitterrand expressed the importance of taking a day to celebrate French heritage, hoping that doing so will unite the past and future of France by allowing citizens to "better inhabit these places of recollection that we bring alive in the present and bestow in turn to future generations."

A VIEW OF PARIS ON TWO WHEELS



Garcetti's photos capture fleeting moments in the lives of Parisiennes and their beloved bicycles.

The familiar sight of Parisian women and their bicycles is the focus of the most recently published anthology of photographs from Gil Garcetti. Inspired by a gorgeous woman who passed by him one day, Garcetti spent almost three years researching and photographing before compiling the photos into a book, titled *Paris, Women and Bicycles*. The book, released in June, has been published in both French and English. The color images are a striking change for photographer Garcetti, who normally shoots in black and white. The work documents a diversity of women and settings, from the quotidian — a trip to the market — to the extraordinary — a view of the Eiffel Tower. The project's cohesion comes not only from its two-wheeled subject, but from an exploration of the organic relationship between citizens and transportation fostered by the demands of urban life. Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë summarizes the sentiment of the project in the book's preface, saying, "These days, bicycles are as much a part of the image of Paris as the Eiffel Tower." For more information, please visit: www.Garcetti.com.

FRENCH FILM GREAT RECEIVES OSCAR

On November 13, the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will present renowned French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard with an honorary award — a classic Oscar statuette — in recognition of his outstanding career in cinema. A key figure in the French New Wave movement, Godard began his career writing about cinema before taking the plunge into making his own short films. His influential first feature, "Breathless" (1960), impressed audiences and filmmakers alike with its jazzy take on the American crime film. For 50 years, Godard has continued to write and direct challenging, sometimes controversial films that have established his reputation as one of the seminal modernists in the history of cinema. His portfolio of over 70 features includes "Contempt," "Alphaville," "Weekend" and "King Lear." Godard is also credited with having influenced numerous contemporary directors, including Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino.

Ooh la L.A.: France Serenades the Golden State

The Second Annual *Ooh la L.A.!* French Music Festival is coming to Los Angeles from September 30 to October 2, with a small encore performance in San Francisco on October 3. *Ooh la L.A.!* Festival provides a forum to present established and upcoming French artists to representatives of the American music industry, a unique opportunity for participants to meet with record label executives and garner visibility. Performing at different venues over the course of four nights, this year's edition will feature a variety of electronic/pop/indie artists and DJs.

"Dance-pop provocateur" Sébastien Tellier and friends will be playing an exclusive acoustic set at the El Rey Theater. Tellier's latest album "flirts outrageously with the new school of contemporary R&B, resulting in a fantastic bacchanalia that marries the phantoms

of airy Californian music with the harshness of minimalist electro," according to the festival's website. Revolver, now signed with the label Astralwerks (among the ranks of Air, Yelle, and Hot Chip), will showcase their "fantastically eclectic and century-skipping" music at Spaceland. Gotan Project, on label XL alongside M.I.A. and The White Stripes, will "bring the traditional and the folkloric into the electronic space" at Club Nokia in L.A. and The Warfield in S.F.

Ooh la L.A.! is sponsored, in part, by the Consulate General of France in Los Angeles and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, with the support of Goldenvoice, KCRW Public Radio, and TV5 Monde. For samples of music, reviews of last year's festival, ticket purchases and more, please visit: www.oohlalafestival.com.

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Violin Strings Together French Past and American Future

After a history of changing ownership spanning four centuries, a French royal treasure has found a new home in the heart of the United States. The National Music Museum of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, recently received a violin personally commissioned circa 1590 by King Henri IV of France. The violin, created by the historically renowned Amati brothers of Cremona, is accompanied by its 18th-century case made during the reign of Louis XVI.

On May 14, the National Music Museum accepted the violin at a presentation ceremony, during which University of South Dakota Professor Eunho Kim performed a sonata by J.S. Bach on the newly acquired instrument. This performance marked the first time since 1997 that the violin had been played. Despite the age and fragility of the instrument, the sound it produced did not disappoint, accord-



The presentation of the violin included a rare live performance on the instrument.

ing to Andrew Dipper, an expert who has worked on the restoration of the Henri IV violin. "I don't usually get teary when I hear something," he said, "But that was quite an extraordinary exhibition of sound of an instrument that's that old."

The early history of the violin, passing from royal ownership to the hands of a Parisian violin virtuoso, is outlined in a Latin inscription found on the interior of the instrument. Not documented in the inscription is the violin's later history: purchased and re-sold by a London violin dealer, in the mid-19th century the instrument traveled to the United States, where it passed between own-

ers in Hartford, Chicago, and Wisconsin.

The violin and its case were placed on permanent display in the Rawlins Gallery and unveiled on September 24, in honor of the 400th anniversary of the requiem mass held for Henry IV on September 16, 1610, after the assassination of the popular king.

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