

Life Long Learning: Salignac 2013

As part of my school's robust provision of CPD, the staff who at present are trained in the delivery of French learning in our school were informed of the opportunities available to travel to France to extend our knowledge of French and to explore methodologies for delivery of learning.

Within my authority, some staff chose to travel to Lyons to work shadow French teachers and they found the experience very beneficial in contrasting the Scottish system with the French one.

In light of the Scottish Government's intention to introduce the 'One plus Two' initiative in the coming years and the fact that my authority, Renfrewshire, has a pilot scheme operating in some of the Primary schools, I chose to enhance my own knowledge of French and the methodologies to enhance my teaching. I had been trained in the delivery of French through Glasgow City Council's 28 day course some years ago and found this a good, solid learning experience which has served me, and hopefully the pupils, well. However, I felt that a refresher was due and approached my Head Teacher about the Le Francais en Europe courses on offer in Salignac during the summer break. She fully supported my application.

And so the process began. Funding is provided by the British Council through the Comenius project and, although initially the process can be quite time consuming, once applied for, there is little to do but await your grant instalments. 70% of the grant is paid before travelling and 30% afterwards when you are required to submit a short report on your experience. Up to 2400 euros are available to fund the week long course. This was more than enough to cover costs as all meals and excursions are included in the cost of the course. Le Francais en Ecosse, based in Edinburgh are most helpful in guiding applicants through the process.

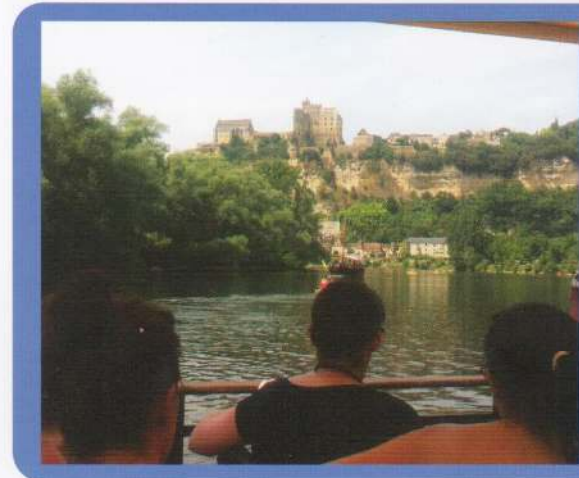
On arrival at Salignac, students are shown to their accommodation which consists of bungalows with each student having their own bedroom and shower room. A welcome dinner was held where I got to meet with 14 participants who were all Scottish Primary school teachers. Throughout the week, all meals are provided and cooked by local residents.

Classes were held each day with ability groups being formed on the second day. The ability levels ranged from those who had only very basic French to those with a degree in the language. The immersion methodology to instruct the students was a bit daunting at first but the tutors, Sophie and Julien were very adept at supporting each student's needs. They are native speakers who also work within the Scottish schools so are very 'au fait' with Curriculum for Excellence and could relate our learning to delivery in the classroom. Classes were a good balance between direct input and active learning. Materials were provided and up-to-date resources to use within the classroom setting were provided. All contexts for learning were covered.

As well as the classroom based learning, cultural activities and visits were also included during the week long stay.

Salignac itself is a lovely little town within the Perigord Noir district of South West France. Centre International de séjour du Perigord Noir where our course was based, is at the centre of this delightful town. We visited the local market and had a guided tour of the town from the owner of the centre, Pierre-Yves. We visited other local towns such as Sarlat and Beynac (where Chocolat was filmed). We went on a river cruise on the River Dordogne and had a visit to the famous Lascaux prehistoric caves.

We also had input about the French education system and the impending changes that teachers and learners face in France.



When we had free evenings, activities were offered at the centre. Of course, due to the wonderful French weather, we were able to participate out of doors. Petanque, outdoor giant scrabble (in French of course), wine tasting and outdoor French cinema were just some of the cultural activities we enjoyed. The centre also has an outdoor swimming pool so we partook of 'la natation' too.

On our final evening we experienced real French life at the Friday night market at the square adjoin the centre. People from all around came for wonderful food, wine and music. This was followed by a traditional regional meal at the centre.

Our group now has a platform for exchange of ideas on Le Francais en Ecosse's website and we intend to meet up a regular intervals to discuss the ways in which we have implemented methodologies.

I have returned enthused and refreshed in my ability to deliver learning in French. I would thoroughly recommend Le Francais en Europe to anyone thinking of extending or refreshing their own learning in order to meet some of the demands we as teachers will have to meet in the coming years.

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