



# LETTER FROM FRANCE / COURRIER DE FRANCE

September 2016

Hello Everyone / *Bonjour à tous* !



Alpine apples

Autumn is just beginning to make itself felt here in our part of France. Some of the deciduous trees on the hillside I can see from my desk are changing colour, and the Pic du Midi not far from our house has a dusting of snow on the summit. This is a time of the year to which we

look forward, for two main reasons. One is that there is a very definite feeling of a new year just starting after the long French summer holidays. Our choral group, village association, and our lessons in French and singing are all up and running again. Another reason for our pleasure about the arrival of autumn is that it is the time for the annual weekend get together of the



five European Rotary clubs with which we are associated. This year the weekend took place in *Torino* (Turin) in northern Italy, and was splendidly organised by the Torino Dora Rotary Club.

We decided that we would drive to *Torino*, and would go by way of the southern Alps, instead of along the coastal route which we have previously travelled. A consultation of the ViaMichelin website (which we use a lot) yielded the map above, and showed that the total distance from our village of *Gerde* to *Torino* would be 882 kilometres (548 miles) with a projected time of nearly 11 hours. As I have mentioned previously, we limit ourselves to about six hours of driving per day, and an interim stop would therefore be required. As usual Douglas consulted the *Logis de France* website ([www.logishotels.com/en/](http://www.logishotels.com/en/)), and found two likely places: *Sigoyer* for the outward journey and *Savines le Lac* for the return.



Sisteron

We followed familiar autoroutes until *Aix-en-Provence* when we headed northeast up the valley of the *Durance* river toward the Alps. It is lovely countryside, becoming more and more mountainous as we proceeded. The road passed the town of *Sisteron* in spectacular surroundings on the *Durance* which we hope to explore another time. We were



orchard near Segoyer

struck by the number of apple orchards, and it turns out that those of this high alpine valley are particularly prized for their quality. We wondered about the netting over the apple trees, and learned that they offer protection against hail which until recently had frequently caused devastation of apple crops.

After an agreeable stay in the perched village of *Sigoyer*, we continued the following morning toward the *Col de Montgenèvre*. This is a mountain pass near the Italian border, but still in France. You can see from



Col de Montgenèvre

the photo that the drive up was 'interesting'. Fortunately the road is very well engineered and wide enough for two vehicles to pass each other.

We arrived in *Torino* mid-afternoon in good time to settle into our comfortable hotel in the centre of the city before the welcome drinks and dinner. We divided into separate groups for dinner, each hosted at home or in a restaurant by members of the Torino Dora club. It is always a real pleasure to meet our many friends in the five



Piazza San Carlo

contact clubs. This year there were a total of 60 visitors from Lyon, Stuttgart, Lausanne, Barcelona and Edinburgh. We were wonderfully looked after by 26 members of the Torino Dora club and their spouses.

The following morning we divided into two groups, one to visit the Maserati factory and the other to explore a remarkable and extensive exhibition scattered through various parks in *Torino* devoted to taste: the *Salon del Gusto*. Both were interesting and enjoyable in different ways. Here we see Luigi Boschetti (president RC Torino Dora) and Philippe de Villeneuve (president RC Lyon) finding the outing to Maserati very much to their taste! We then all gathered for a buffet lunch at the National Cinema Museum. Philippe and I found a moment for me to give him a copy of our Centenary History as



Luigi

Philippe

a token of the long-standing special relationship between RC Edinburgh and RC Lyon.



The afternoon brought a choice of visits to either the Cinema Museum or the prestigious Egypt Museum or indeed to the Baroque city centre. As usual the Saturday

evening was the occasion for a Gala Dinner, this time in the splendid surroundings of the *Palazzo della Luce*. This exquisite palace has recently been restored for use as a venue for special events, and provided a marvellous setting for a memorable dinner. Sunday morning brought a tour of the Royal Palace Museum, followed by brunch on the rooftop terrace of a central hotel with a fantastic view. We are already looking forward to the Contact Clubs weekend in 2017 to be hosted by RC Lausanne.

Palazzo della Luce

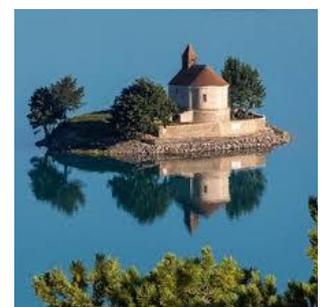


During Sunday afternoon we retraced our journey over the *Col de Montgenèvre* to the village of *Savines* on the shore of the *Lac de Serre-Ponçon* which was created as a reservoir (fed by the *Durance* River) in 1957-1961. It provides a water supply for much of Provence. It is also important for agricultural irrigation, prevention of flooding and hydroelectric power. And in addition, it is a lovely site in the mountains for water sports and holidays. One consequence of the flooding of the *Durance* valley was the creation of a small island for the 12<sup>th</sup> century chapel of Saint Michael. It is so beautiful, and very much photographed! And then home again, well satisfied with our expedition to *Torino*.

Greetings to all / *Amitiés à tous!*

Linda

Together with Douglas, Maddy and Magnus ...



La Chapelle Saint-Michel