

Paris Conference to Build Upon Annapolis's Results

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner attended the Annapolis Conference on November 27 at the U.S. Naval Academy. The conference was organized by Secretary Rice under the auspices of President Bush, and brought together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in his capacity as Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee and President of Palestinian Authority, to lay the foundation for a process of negotiation in furtherance of the goal of two States, Israel and Palestine. Having made two trips to the region earlier this year, Minister Kouchner's presence at the conference marked his personal commitment, and that of France, to peace in the Middle East. Distinguished guests included U.N. Secretary Ban Ki-moon, former prime minister Tony Blair, as well as representatives from more than 40 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Syria, Russia, and China, among others.

The Conference culminated in a joint statement signed by Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas, declaring that both parties "express [their] determination to bring an end to bloodshed, suffering and decades of conflict between our peoples; to usher in a new era of peace, based on freedom, security, justice, dignity, respect and mutual recognition; to propagate a culture of peace and nonviolence; to confront terrorism and incitement, whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis. In furtherance of the goal of two states living side by side in peace and security, [they] agree to immediately launch good faith, bilateral negotiations in order to conclude core issues, without exception," and that, "the final peace settlement will establish Palestine as a homeland for the Palestinian people just as Israel is the homeland for the Jewish people."

The agreement commits both parties to immediately implement their respective obligations under the performance-based road map to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, issued by the Quartet on April 30, 2003. In addition, the joint agreement calls for the establishment of a steering committee, led jointly by the head of each delegation of each party, who will meet on a biweekly basis. The steering committee will develop a joint work plan, as well as establish and oversee the work of negotiations teams to address all issues. The first session took place on December 12.

France supports the establishment of an independent, sovereign, viable, democratic and peaceful state of Palestine and Israel's right to live within defined borders. "We can finally launch a process that will resolve the oldest conflict in the region," Minister Kouchner announced at the conference, characterizing the conflict as one that "fuels all other crises in the Middle East and crystallizes so much hatred, antagonism and so many rifts."

The French minister lauded ministers Olmert and Abbas for maintaining and deepening the dialogue and the negotiations that made the agreement possible, and called upon the international community to play a role in the process. Underscoring France and the European Union's determination to contribute to the peace efforts, Minister Kouchner announced that French President France Nicolas Sarkozy, at the request of the Palestinian authorities, would hold an



Mr. Bernard Kouchner held a joint press briefing with Mr. Tony Blair, Quartet's special envoy for the Middle East, and Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs in preparation of the conference of donors for the Palestinian State.

international donors conference for the Palestinian State on December 17 in Paris.

The donors conference is the largest since the one held in 1996, and is being organized in close cooperation with: the Palestinian Authority; Quartet Representative Tony Blair; Norway, which is chairing the donors' Ad Hoc Liaison Committee; and the European Commission.

Mr. Kouchner stressed that the first concrete decisions to be taken, among which include: providing budgetary support enabling the Palestinian Authority to meet the most pressing needs, a list of economic projects that can be implemented immediately, and a follow-up mechanism for using the aid. "Everything must be transparent for the donors, and thus, for global public opinion. [...] Generally speaking,"

Minister Kouchner asserted, "Paris must assist the determination of the Palestinians in laying down the concrete foundations of their State," adding that the Palestine State, "in order to be viable, must be able to rely on territorial continuity, an open economy, strong and independent institutions and efficient infrastructures. Our backing must provide assistance for the Palestinian Authority's efforts in this area, notably by providing it with the means to enforce respect for law and order within its territory."

To this end, Minister Kouchner cited two challenges that face Palestine and Israel, settlements and terrorism. "That is the aim of the Paris Conference," Kouchner emphasized. "Let us ensure that concrete results nurture hope and change daily lives of Palestinians. We can provide you with guarantees, including the dispatch of international troops, to ensure respect for any agreement you finally conclude. We can help you legitimize the compromises and painful renunciations that are necessary to finding any solution."

"We want participation to be as extensive as possible," Mr. Kouchner declared. "The concrete — and financial — involvement of the entire international community will indeed be decisive. It will be [decisive], of course, in reaching a target amount. But the ambition of the Paris Conference is broader: The daily life of the Palestinians, comprising frustration and misery, must change — as quickly as possible."

For more information, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.

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LE WEB3 CONFERENCE MAKES PARIS THE BUZZ OF THE INTERNET



Loïc Le Meur hosts 4th edition of the Web3 Conference.

The fourth edition of Paris's popular LeWeb3 conference took place on December 11 and 12, hosting over 1,400 attendees from around the world. Organized by the weblog software company SixApart and animated by French entrepreneur and blogger Loïc Le Meur, the conference made Paris the capital of the Web for two tightly-packed days, in which entrepreneurs, bloggers, social-media developers and internet enthusiasts all gathered together.

Originally known as *LesBlogs*, the conference has changed its name over the years, continually evolving to highlight the latest technological developments and address the influence of blogs on communications and society. This year, the conference was divided into 20 to 30 minute segments covering a wide variety of topics, including technology's impact on corporate culture, the effects of social media, evolving entrepreneurship, internet pollution, and the possibilities of a virtual world economy. Meanwhile, a series of accompanying workshops addressing topics such as: digital media, virtual worlds, and mobile and web convergence will take place. Highlights included presentations by guest speakers Nelson Mattos of Google and Dan Rose of Facebook, in addition to Le Meur's own presentation for Seismic, a video-based social medium launched by the entrepreneur earlier this year (www.seismic.com).

The event took place at Les Docks, a three-room conference center wedged between television and film production studios in La Plaine-St. Denis. Throughout the two days, the complex was buzzing with participants who had come from around the world to network and learn more about the ethical issues, innovations, and future developments of web technology.

France's New Combat Helicopter Becomes Operational

The new French Army helicopter, *Le Tigre*, became operational at the end of November after two years of flight tests. The first pilots who will operate it are currently undergoing training at the French-German flight school in Luc-en-Provence (France).



New combat helicopter, *Le Tigre*, became operational in late November.

Manufactured by Eurocopter, *Le Tigre* is the product of a joint French-German development effort. The helicopter in itself represents a small revolution since its technology is worthy of a fighter aircraft and its flight capabilities are very similar to those of an aerobatic plane. The air-to-air combat and fire support helicopter features low detectability (by visual radar and infrared), which

provides for excellent survivability on the battlefield, maximum efficiency of the weapons and the associated fire-control systems without heavier workload for the crew, and an optimized logistics concept offering minimum possession costs.

So far, the countries awaiting delivery of the new helicopter include France, Germany, Spain and Australia. By the end of 2008, an entire French Army Aviation Regiment will be equipped with the new machine.

The highly sophisticated man-machine interface in the cockpit provides an impressive amount of information for pilots. The helicopter boasts a firing sight with 3 sensors: infrared, TV camera and direct optical channel. The 30mm gun fire, for instance, is determined by the movement of the pilot's helmet. On the technical level, *Le Tigre* is extremely reactive thanks to its engine power — it can even perform a 360 degree turn on the spot.

This helicopter will engender a new generation of formidable fight capabilities for militaries, including the French Armed Force. For more information, please visit: www.eurocopter.com.

Embassy of France Hosts Debate on Road Safety

A dinner-debate on the theme of road safety was held at the Residence of France in Washington, D.C., on December 11, to raise awareness about road safety issues within the E.U. and the U.S. and to identify possible solutions. The event was organized by the Embassy of France with the support of the European Commission, in cooperation with the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT).

Guest speakers at the dinner included: the Ambassadors of France and Portugal, Pierre Vimont and João De Vallera; Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the U.S., Angelos Pangratis; US Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Vice Admiral Thomas J. Barrett; US Rep. James Oberstar, Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; and the President of ASIRT, Rochelle Sobel and her husband. Other distinguished guests included representatives from most EU embassies in Washington, road safety experts from the DOT, the World Bank, and members of ASIRT.

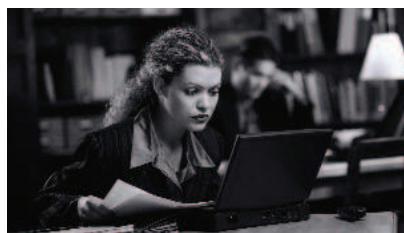
The speakers, each addressing the initiatives undertaken in their regions and areas of expertise, were unanimous in their views that road safety demands ongoing efforts despite significant progress made in many areas. The Embassy of France's Transportation Counselor, Daniel Galibert, presented statistics for the period 2001-2006, the principal mobility safety issues and some ambitious proposals for addressing them.

For example, France, although still with 4,709 road deaths in 2006, has been able to show a 42.3% reduction in fatalities since 2001, thereby approaching the EC target of a 50% reduction by 2010. These results have been achieved by campaigns for seatbelt use and against drunk driving, and severe clampdowns on speeding with increased radar checks and automatic fining.

The debate's conclusions outlined the challenges for rapid implementation of road safety solutions, such as the harmonization of all driving licenses in E.U. and U.S. with regard to both training and medical requirements, speed radars linked to automated penalty systems at average intervals of approximately 30 miles, and the enforcement of existing regulations for wearing seatbelts and helmets, as well as the prohibition of mobile phones while driving. On the technological side, the mandating of ABS (antilock braking systems) as an industry standard was proposed as being easy to do and relatively affordable. For more information, please visit: www.ambafrance-us.org.

France Joins U.S. and Germany in Virtual Research

La Bibliothèque Nationale de France (French National Library), the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library) and the Library of Congress recently signed a memorandum of understanding to expand and enhance the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF), building upon a previous research project developed by the Online Computer Library Research Center based in Dublin, Ohio. The VIAF project digitally combines multi-sourced authority files into a single service. The long-term goal of the project is to create a free worldwide service that will enable users to look up bibliographic information without having to worry about how to format the search terms. VIAF repre-



VIAF will enable citizens throughout France, the United States and Germany to access bibliographic information from each of the national libraries.

sents a significant step toward interoperability among library cataloguing agencies. The new partnership will enable both users and libraries to research a single name or keyword and receive results from all three libraries.

The addition of content from the Bibliothèque Nationale is the initial step in expanding the global scope of the VIAF. The database works by linking German, English and French names for the same word, which provides broader results from all three databases. VIAF is expected to offer the same advantages to an even wider assortment of language communities in the future. For more information, please visit: www.bnf.fr or www.ocl.org.

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French Warship Delivers 10,000 Books to Disadvantaged US Children

This Christmas, Santa Claus is leaving his reindeer behind and hitching a ride on ... a French warship! The *Jeanne d'Arc*, a helicopter carrier which serves as a training ship for French navy midshipmen, will dock into New York Harbor on Friday, December 28, carrying over 10,000 books destined for disadvantaged American students, giving new meaning to the expression "turning swords into ploughshares." The French books, including dictionaries and textbooks, but also novels and comic books, will be offered to the children participating in New York's newly launched French-English dual-language programs, as well as to New Orleans schools devastated by hurricane Katrina.

A delegation of students from the Jordan L. Mott Middle School (CIS 22) in the Bronx, one of the three schools that have launched a French-English dual-language program this year (the other two are PS 125 in Harlem and PS 58 in Brooklyn), will be welcomed on-board the ship at 2:00 p.m. on December 28. Following a performance by their school band and a tour of the two French ships (the *Jeanne d'Arc* will be accompanied by the antisubmarine destroyer *Georges Leygues*), they will take delivery of the books on behalf of all the schools involved. Sixty

of the 80 crates will remain in New York, while the rest will be shipped overland to New Orleans.

This unusual delivery was initiated, coordinated and financed by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, but the books themselves have been donated by two French associations, Adiflor and Biblionef. Both specialize in providing French-language books that are either new or in excellent condition to needy children throughout the world. The French Embassy's contribution comes in addition to the \$100,000 the French government has recently earmarked to support dual-language programs in New York City public schools.

Students participating in these dual-language programs are partially immersed in a French-language environment, with half of their classes taking place in French, and half in English. They are expected to become completely bilingual after five years of such bilingual education.

The *Jeanne d'Arc* will remain moored in New York until January 2 at Pier 92 (West 52th Street). It will be open for visits by New York area children learning French and their parents from December 29-31 (schools with French-language programs will receive the necessary registration information).

American Classic, *West Side Story*, Takes Center Stage in Paris



Courtesy: MARIE-NOELLE ROBERT

The Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of *West Side Story* through January 1.

Story established new standards for Broadway musicals and is considered one of the most influential shows in Broadway history. The musical took to the stage in Paris in its original English but with French subtitles on November 20.

French Represented at World Language Convention in Texas

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) held its 41st Convention and World Language in San Antonio, Texas, from November 16 to November 18. The annual convention offers more than 700 program sessions and workshops where members and experts in the field share their research, classroom experience and best practices. This year's topic was "the use of video in language classes" and boasted over 250 exhibiting companies and nearly 9,000 members.

ACTFL aims to provide teachers and administrators with a wide variety of professional development opportunities, including training and certification programs in addition to materials and technology for classroom use.

This year the French language was represented by the French Pavilion, whose exhibitors included the Embassy of France, Bayard Presse, Hachette Edition, the French Alliance, the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), TV5 Monde, Prométour, the House of France, the Office of Tourism of Belgium, CLE International and eLycee, among others within the European Pavilion.

This year's ACTFL convention also served as a forum for the Embassy of France to present its new campaign; "The World Speaks French," an initiative to promote the study of French language and French-speaking cultures, and to increase the number of students enrolling in French programs nationwide. The latter initiative is a partnership between the Embassy of France in the U.S. and the AATF.

For more information, please visit: www.actfl.org.

FROM VERSAILLES TO WASHINGTON: GEORGETOWN RECEIVES ITS OWN ECLAT

The court of Versailles has awed and inspired generations of architects and artists since it became a center of culture in the early 1600s. In 1791, French



An élat framer uses 18th-century framing techniques.

architect Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the city of Washington according to the layout of the palace of Versailles, and this November, a new artistic influence from the home of the French kings came to Washington. *L'Eclat de verre*, founded in Versailles in 1975, is a specialty art and framing atelier which employs 18th-century French framing techniques and is now a store in Washington, D.C. *L'Eclat de verre* offers numerous educational and cultural opportunities to educate guests and spread knowledge of French framing techniques used over a century ago. The store hosts various hands-on workshops as well as three-hour private lessons with a French master framer. Noteworthy events include an antique frame exhibition by Bill Adair, a gilder, conservator, and frame historian of international repute who got his start at the Smithsonian Institution at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, and a presentation by Etienne Van den Driessche, a painter from Versailles. For more information, please visit: www.eclatdeverre.com/us.

FRENCH MATH GENIUS BREAKS WORLD RECORD IN NYC

Alexis Lemaire, the French math prodigy who already holds several world records, beat his own record this November in New York when he calculated the 13th root of a randomly generated 200 digit number in just 72 seconds. The answer, 2,397,207,667,966,701, when multiplied by itself 13 times equals the randomly generated number given to Lemaire, which required a full 17 lines of a computer screen to display. The Frenchman, a 27-year-old graduate student studying artificial intelligence in Reims, claims that he uses his own "artificial intelligence" system in his mind to come up with answers to such complex questions in a matter of seconds. The genius has difficulty explaining the methods he uses to perform such feats, stating that he transforms the numbers he sees into other forms for memorization and processing. Though he admits he is gifted, Lemaire cites years of rigorous practice as having also factored in to his performance.



Christmas in France



Santons can be representations of the Holy family as well as members of the village.

'Tis the season to be jolly, and all around the world people are feeling the holiday spirit. Christmas in France, or *Noël*, dates back to the Romans, who introduced Christmas customs to the country. The first Christmas celebration took place in 496 when Clovis, King of the Franks, and his 3,000 troops were baptized on Christmas Day in Reims. Bishop Rémi had purposely chosen the day of the Nativity for this ceremony. In the centuries that followed, Christmas has transformed into both a secular and religious holiday that is celebrated throughout France, though with regional variations, during a season of giving, joy, and merriment.

Christmas is the most widely celebrated religious holiday in France during the winter season. Typically, churches in France have a small nativity scene displayed inside on Christmas Eve, and once it was custom in some regions to place a live infant in the *crèche* (manger scene) during *la Messe de Minuit* (Midnight Mass) to symbolize the baby Jesus. In addition to church nativities, many families in Provence, southwestern France, create smaller versions of the nativity scene at home, complete with petit terra-cotta figurines — depicting saints, shepherds, and the Magi — called *santons*, or "little saints." *Santons*, a Provençal craft dating back to the 17th century, are typically representations of the holy family as well as people of the village: the mayor, the priest, the baker, the farmer, the butcher, policeman and the miller. Since 1803, a special *santon* fair has been held in Marseille during the month of December, but the true *santon* capital of the world is the nearby town of Aubagne.

Following *la Messe de Minuit* for those who are practicing, families sometimes prepare one of largest and most important meals of the season, *le réveillon*. This late-night supper varies according to the region. In Alsace, a goose is served as the main course, while in Brittany, buckwheat cakes with sour cream are dished up to hungry guests. Turkey and chestnuts are the traditional fare of holiday-goers in Burgundy, but in Paris and the surrounding region the menu often consists of oysters, *foie gras* and the traditional *Bûche de Noël*, or Yule log cake. The sweet sponge cake is filled with *crème* and *chocolat* in the shape of a log and symbolizes the Yule log that once burned in the hearth from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day. In addition, the holiday feast can also include ham, *boudin blanc* (white pudding), cake, fruits and wine.

For more information on Christmas in France, including French carols, please visit: www.diplomatic.gouv.fr.

Saint Nicolas and Père Noël

Santa Claus, Father Christmas, St. Nick — the figure who brings children gifts for Christmas is known throughout the world, but when and how he comes varies as much as his name.

On Christmas Day, French children, like their counterparts across the Atlantic, wake up with excitement to discover the gifts that *le Père Noël* (literally, "Father Christmas") brought them. However, for some of these children, this is the second time in the month of December that they have awoken to find gifts left overnight: in some parts of France, Saint Nicolas stops by weeks before Santa Claus passes.



The tradition of Saint Nicolas is celebrated on December 6, *la Saint-Nicolas* (St. Nicholas's Day), particularly in northern France. Saint Nicolas, born in the 4th century in the small village of Patara in modern-day Turkey, dedicated his life to the poor and the meek as a bishop. Patron and protector of children, Saint Nicolas is most famous in France for saving three children from an evil butcher, a legend popularized by a well-known children's song.

During the night of December 5-6, Saint Nicolas rides around on his donkey leaving small gifts and treats for children in shoes left by the fireplace the night before. Like Santa Claus in the United States, Saint Nicolas only brings gifts for good children. For the naughty, instead of a lump of coal, he leaves those children to *le Père Fouettard* (the Whipping Father), who travels with *le Père Noël* to spank children who misbehave.

Why do Saint Nicolas and *le Père Noël* both bring gifts in December? Originally, only Saint Nicolas existed, and Christmas was an exclusively religious holiday. According to *Lexilogos*, Saint Nicolas crossed the Atlantic with the Dutch — who called him *Sinterklaas* — to America, where he came to be associated with Christmas and has since evolved into the plump jolly red fellow whose hearty laugh and sack of goodies enchant children everywhere. In the first half of the 20th century, the popular chimney-diving Santa Claus sailed a sleigh high over the Atlantic back to Europe, becoming popular in France after World War II.

Markets in France can be found year-round, but are particularly ubiquitous in the winter months, when they transform into small festivals complete with light shows and parades, as well as the smells, tastes and sounds of the holiday season.

Strasbourg, a city on the German border, is often proclaimed the "Capital of Christmas" because of its longstanding tradition of putting on the largest and oldest Christmas market in France (437 years old). History has it that the same area can lay claim to the first recorded appearance of the Christmas tree (*sapin de Noël*) in France (see NFF 06.13).

To the north, the city of Amiens, in the Picardie region, hosts the largest Christmas market in northern France, with more than 100 stalls for over 500 merchants. Here, hundreds of Christmas goods are bought and sold, ranging from spices to ornaments, mulled wine (see page 5), pies, cookies, toys, trees, clothing and more.



Winter Window Wonderland



Department stores in Paris and throughout France put on their Christmas displays. Galeries Lafayette is one of several in Paris.

From small chocolate shops to the *grands magasins* (department stores), *les vitrines de Noël* in France are elaborately decorated each year. This practice takes on extraordinary proportions in Paris, where some of the most famous department stores hire artists and designers to transform their window displays into animated scenes that capture the imaginations of adults and children alike.

This year's theme at the Galeries Lafayette in Paris is *Noël Brillant*, or *Sparkling Christmas*.

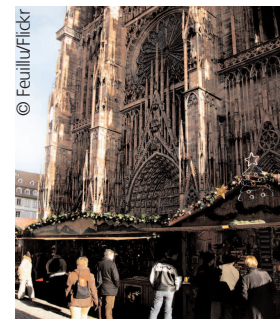
Its *vitrines* (window displays) reveal a series of playful and dreamlike animated scenes — fresh from the imaginations of Tulip Santène and Chloé Fabre — accented with a gleaming white sparkle and a flurry of snowflakes. The building itself is covered by 23,000 square feet of lights in a delicate lacing designed by Valerio Festi.

Other Parisian department stores — Au Printemps, Le Bon Marché and Le Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville (BHV) — also participate in this holiday tradition. BHV is celebrating with the theme *Noël 2007 au Pays de Noël* (*Christmas 2007 in the Land of Christmas*), where each window is a page in the story of Christmas and includes a Santa hidden somewhere in the scene for children to find.

However, *les grands magasins* are not the only ones to illuminate the City of Light: the Avenue des Champs-Élysées features 415 trees covered by more than one million lights. While twice as many Parisian streets are decked out with lights compared with last year, the city reduced energy costs by 70 percent by using technological innovations to conserve energy, a step that allows the city to preserve this annual tradition while reducing its impact on the environment.



Christmas Markets



Shoppers visit the Christmas market in Strasbourg.

The Holiday Season in France

As winter approaches, the French channel the holiday spirit through a number of other social, religious, and cultural festivities and celebrations.

The *Trêve des Confiseurs*, or Christmas Truce, signifies the time between Christmas and New Year's Day where all political and professional work-related activity is encouraged to be *mise en sommeil* or "slowed down" in place of more seasonal activities. Its origins lie notably in the 1915 military cease-fires between French and German troops during World War I, when soldiers put down their weapons for a holiday exchange of hams, biscuits, wine and cognac. Today, the *trêve* is a time for family gatherings and pleasures of the table, particularly holiday sweets prepared by the local *confiseries* (candy shops) and *pâtisseries* (bakeries).

This time of year provides an opportunity for citizens to reach out to friends and family. *Cartes de vœux* (greeting cards) in France are one of the country's greatest symbols of holiday cheer and friendship, especially in wake of the New Year. *Cartes de vœux* lend themselves to the occasion to express best wishes for the holiday season and for the coming New Year with a simple "*Joyeuses Fêtes*" (Season's Greetings) and "*Bonnes Fêtes de Fin d'Année*" (Happy Holidays). Cards can be sent as late as January 31, a tradition that differs from the expected timetable for greeting card exchanges in the U.S.

Although Christmas has a long history in France and is the predominant holiday of the season, Hanukkah, a Jewish holiday starting in early December, and Kwanzaa, an African cultural holiday that celebrates African heritage (this year it takes place from December 23 to January 1), are also celebrated by some in France.

Wintery Activities



Chalets are a popular escape for tourists and locals to enjoy the winter holidays.

just as picturesque and enjoyable. During the winter months, cities throughout France open public ice rinks, transforming *la grande place*, or town square, into a winter wonderland. Paris's City Hall rink, which also offers a luge course to children under 12, is one of several iceskating rinks located in the capital. Skaters in Dijon, Burgundy, glide to the scent of freshly baked gingerbread during the week-long Spice Festival in December.

The Ministry of Education provides a two-week break — this year from December 22 to January 7 — for students to be with friends and family during the season. Some students, for example, use their first week off to spend time with family, taking advantage of the many wintery activities during Christmas. Many high school and college students will use the second week to celebrate the upcoming New Year by traveling with or visiting friends at gatherings and various social outings.

With the coming of the New Year, many French look toward the holiday season as a time of renewal, as well as one to escape the bustle of city life. For adventure-seekers, France is ideal for all sorts of outdoor physical activity during the winter months. From the Alps to the Pyrenees, France's many mountains provide a plethora of activities ranging from cross-country skiing, mushing with sled dogs, snowmobiling, spelunking (cave-exploration), and ski-joëring (skiing behind a horse in a flat field). If skiing is a last resort, France offers a number of alternatives to savor the winter wonderland. Mountain-top cabins, for example, tender rest and relaxation to skiers after a long day on the slopes or simply an escape into the wilderness with friends and family.

For those who cannot trade the urban cityscape for a snowy rural landscape, holiday events in town can be



Winter sports such as skating and sledging make for a popular pastime in cities throughout France. This rink, located in front of Paris's City Hall, is frequented by both young and old.

Eat, Drink and Be Merry

In addition to the seasonal pastries, such as the *Bûche de Noël* and regional dishes served during the holidays (see page 4), the French enjoy many beverages and *apéritifs* to complement their dining experience during this time of the year. Muscadet, Anjou, Sauterne and Champagne flow freely during the season alongside the carols of holiday cheer. The French also whet their palette with the traditional holiday favorite, mulled wine (pictured to the right). This toasty winter beverage, whose recipe dates back to the Roman era, is usually a red wine heated with sugar, honey and cinnamon spice. It is often consumed as a "tasty" means of warming oneself up after a long day outdoors and pairs well with a plate of freshly baked gingerbread, cookies, or cake on a snowy afternoon.



Holiday festivities in France do not necessarily end with Christmas and New Year's. In fact, they often last throughout January with the traditional Feast of the Epiphany, or Little Christmas, a holy festival honoring the three wise men that came to the baby Jesus. The Epiphany has been celebrated since the 18th century in France — traditionally on January 6, although the custom is sometimes extended throughout the month — with the *Galette des Rois* (King's cake — pictured to the left). The *Galette des Rois* is typically filled with frangipane (almond paste) in northern regions of France, or fruit filling in the southern regions, and topped with a flaky pastry. Before baking, a "*fève*" — a small china figurine — is hidden in the *galette* and offers the prospect of bringing good luck to whomever finds it in their slice. The lucky guest who gets the piece with the *fève* is crowned "king" for the day and chooses his queen among the other guests. In turn, the royal couple must host the Epiphany celebration the following year to keep this yummy long-standing tradition alive. This celebration takes place all over France in families, as well as between friends and work colleagues. It has also made its way into American traditions: the King's Cake is served in Louisiana to mark the beginning of Mardi Gras.

MICHELIN HOSTS EVENT TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ROAD MOBILITY



Citroën's new car, presented for the first time in Shanghai.

The French company Michelin hosted its 9th annual "Challenge Bibendum" from November 14 to 17 in Shanghai, China, to promote sustainable road mobility. The event is a concerted effort by vehicle manufacturers, technical partners, energy suppliers and research institutes to provide political and economic decision-makers with the latest vehicle technology to help achieve cleaner, more fuel-efficient, means of transportation.

The Shanghai 2007 event centered around the issue of how to leverage advanced technology to address an ever growing demand for road mobility. One of the main challenges that sustainable development faces, according to the Challenge, is the rapid growth economies, such as China and India, and the exponential motorization and urbanization that accompanies such growth.

This year's Challenge featured over 150 cars from manufacturers throughout France, China, the U.S., Italy and Germany, among others, which exhibited the latest technology to address sustainability concerns. French company PSA Peugeot Citroën displayed several vehicles, including its prototype electric hybrid 307 Hybride HDI and C-Métisse models which use B30 as an energy source. Michelin's Conception & Développement PSI presented its Hy-Light prototype that runs on fuel cells generated from hydrogen. French prototypes such as the Hy-Light and Renault's Eco received some of the highest grades in areas such as CO2 emissions, local pollutants and noise. Ford Motor Company also showed its Edge with HySeries driving prototype, featuring a plug-in fuel cell hybrid propulsion system generated from hydrogen. Automobile manufacturers were not the only ones to participate this year: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency displayed its prototype UPS Package Car with a Hybrid ICE/Hydraulics propulsion system that runs on diesel.

For more information, please visit: www.challengebibendum.com.

France Offers Online Services for Handicapped Persons

A new service has been created for handicapped persons that will facilitate access to recently published books ranging from best-sellers to documentaries, and can be launched from any device connected to the internet. Originally launched as an experimental phase from January 2006 to September 2007, the innovative approach is designed to operate like a public library by making books available to the handicapped in three formats: PDF, PRC (palm pilot application) and WMA (audio file) and can be read with JAWS (Job Access With Speech), a screen reader for Windows used by many visually impaired. *La Bibliothèque numérique pour le Handicap* (BnH—Digital Library for Handicapped Persons), the service boasts more than 1,000 titles and functions much like a normal library where books



The new Bnh service facilitates access to the handicapped.

can be checked in or out while respecting the rights of the authors.

The books will not be available in an adapted version (large text, Braille, etc.), but will be accessible to those who might otherwise not have access to them because of their disability. The aim of the program is to "offer an adapted access to books, not access to adapted books." Although it is currently only available in metropolitan France, BnH plans to first expand on a national level before taking on the international scene.

Alain Patez, BnH's manager, made a step in this direction by signing an agreement with the French National Library. The agreement will allow users to access public domain books from the database.

Hewlett-Packard France brought the program a step closer to its goal by donating, in November, laptop computers and providing the service free-of-charge at the Raymond-Poincaré Hospital, located in the outskirts of Paris. The service is designed to provide patients autonomy as they read. For example, one technology allows users to direct a computer mouse using head movements and blowing through a specialized piece to perform a "click" function. Another version allows users to move the mouse with their chins.

CitySpeaker Unveils Tourism Services for iPhone

The iPhone, one of the most anticipated pieces of technology this holiday season, debuted in France on November 28. The phone is being sold through FranceTelecom's subsidiary, Orange. The iPhone — an innovative device in its own right — has already inspired many to think of creative solutions for a variety of needs, including a service offered for tourists. CitySpeaker.fr, for example, is a French firm that specializes in audio tours that can be downloaded to a variety of devices, including iPods and other MP3 players. The application will enable tourists to use their iPhones as guides to some of France's most popular tourist destinations.



The iPhone debuted in France on November 28.

On its own, the iPhone offers features that will further enhance the experience of those traveling, allowing users to locate tourist attractions and other destinations using the free Google Maps application, as well as place phone calls to these locations with just the tap of a finger.

New Positive Energy School Gives Off "Green" Vibration

France's first school "à énergie positive" ("positive energy") was inaugurated on November 10 in Limeil-Brévannes, a Paris suburb. Positive energy is defined as the production of more energy than one consumes. 200 elementary school students attend the school, L'Ecole Jean-Louis Marquèze, a 30,000-square-foot facility that represents yet another French initiative to combat global warming.

The school's energy production exceeds its consumption thanks to the 7,500 square feet of solar panels affixed to its roof and facade. To maintain a low use of energy, the building employs a number of special techniques and technologies, paying particular attention to cooling and heating.

To keep the building cool during warmer weather, the windows are opened at night to allow fresh air to cool the building down for classes the next day. During the day, exterior window shades protect against sun rays. In the winter, a geothermal heat-pump uses specially installed coils that have been extended as far as 200 feet below ground, to circulate water downward, where the temperature of the

earth is significantly warmer than the air above ground. The water collects the heat and circulates it back into a special furnace in the school which converts the natural energy into heat for the classrooms. Additionally, the school is kept even warmer using a special ventilation system that captures heat from the air before expelling it.

The building is carefully insulated for both the summer and winter. Instead of the standard 5-6 inches of insulation, this building has over 8. Additionally, ubiquitous windows reduce the need for artificial lighting and are *triple-vitrage*, meaning each window has three panes of glass separated by thin pockets of air to keep heat from entering or escaping.

While this project may seem ambitious, the school is just one example of what will soon become a national standard in France: by 2020, all new constructions must be à énergie positive, as outlined in the *Grenelle de l'Environnement* (see NFF 07.11), France's comprehensive plan for environmental action and sustainable development over the coming years. For more information, please visit: www.limeil-brevannes.fr.

Final Phase of No-Smoking Initiative to Take Effect

The final phase of France's two-step initiative aimed at reducing smoking to promote a healthier community is set to take effect this coming January 1. The first stage of the initiative was implemented on February 1, 2007, when smoking was prohibited in public facilities such as: schools, sports centers, stores, hospitals, doctors' offices, business offices, train stations, airports, theaters, and all public transportation.

The second and final stage of the restriction will ban smoking in bars, casinos, discotheques, restaurants and cafes. Even though these social venues have been given a one-year grace period in order to adapt to the code, a voluntary regulation strongly encourages restaurant owners to place a "No-smoking establishment" sticker in their windows.



© Justin Shearer
The second step of the French smoking ban in closed areas will take effect January 1.

The effects of cigarette smoking remain a prevalent issue throughout the world. According to the U.S. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, smoking is related to approximately one of every five deaths in the United States every year. Exposure to second-hand smoke has led to a fatality rate of nearly 5,000 French citizens per year, and the government is taking the public health initiative

very seriously. Some 175,000 French agents have been assigned to oversee the legislation's implementation in public spaces, state offices and private work places with the duty of penalizing smokers who disregard the law. France's smoking ban grants hope for a breath of fresh air and a healthier society in years to come.

France Launches Public Health Nutrition Program in Schools



Starting next fall, French schools will be handing out free fruit to promote healthy eating habits.

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away," so the expression goes, but it was the French government, not the doctor, that decided on November 12 to launch a program to distribute in-season fruit in schools free-of-charge starting with the 2008-2009 school year. This move by Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Michel Barnier and Minister of National Education Xavier Darcos will make healthy food more accessible to the school population, particularly disadvantaged children.

This decision comes amidst reports that French children and

youth under 20 consume four times less fruit and vegetables than their grandparents. In fact, studies have revealed that fruit consumption increases with age in France, reaching a peak with adults between 55 and 65 years old. The official recommendation in France (from the National Program of Nutrition and Health — PNNS) calls for the consumption of at least five servings of fruit and vegetables per day.

To make the PNNS recommendations accessible to the public, the National Institute of Health Prevention and Education created a Web site to help the French make smart decisions about healthy eating. The site provides guidelines concerning daily consumption from each food group. It also makes available a healthy eating guide (*La Santé Vient en Mangeant*) that offers solutions against obstacles to a balanced diet, such as a tight budget, a tendency to snack, and food restrictions for religious purposes. For more information, please visit: mangerbouger.fr.

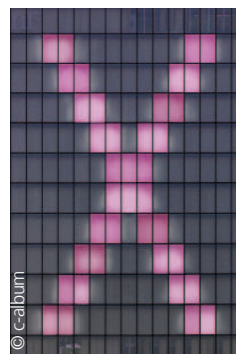
All "Hell" Breaks Loose in the National Library of France

A three-month long exhibition being held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) titled "*L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque, Eros au Secret*," ("The Restricted Section of the Library, Eros in the Closet"), is raising some eyebrows. Named after an 1844 underground publication celebrating the power of lust, the exhibition is dedicated to centuries of French literary and artistic debauchery as well as bookish eros. The word "*L'Enfer*" in French means "Hell," and has referred, since the beginning of the 19th century, to the part of a the National Library where licentious publications are kept.

The exhibition, featuring approximately 350 works by French writers, includes novels, pamphlets, poetry, encased manuscripts and accompanying designs by such celebrated libertines as the Marquis de Sade, Charles Baudelaire, and Pascal Pia. Throughout the 16th and 20th centuries many of these texts were illegally published, bought and sold on the black market, because the content did not conform to the moral codes of European society.

The exhibit, not necessarily designed for the faint of heart, and forbidden to those under the age of 16, will be open to the public until March 2, 2008. Some of the works are so controversial that the president of BNF Bruno Racine keeps his own corner of "*L'Enfer*" under close watch to ensure the peace of mind and serenity of the visitors to the collection, and to avoid attracting too much attention from other library guests.

In France, however, the BNF's collection of erotica has opened and closed its doors repeatedly over the years in tandem with the moral climate of the time. This year, the exhibit starting in December is sure to shed some light on who's being naughty or nice this season. For more information, please visit: www.bnf.fr.



© Calabum
This "X" is displayed on the outside of the French National Library to promote its new exhibit that is raising eyebrows.

MODERN BRA TURNS 100

2007 marks the 100th anniversary of the modern bra, an item of clothing that has changed as much as the century in which it was developed. To celebrate the bra's centennial, the Galeries Lafayette department stores throughout France put on *Le Festival de la Lingerie* (Lingerie Festival), in which limited edition commemorative bras were sold amidst in-store exhibits and presentations featuring the evolution of the bra. The word "bra" comes from "*Brassière*," a French word whose root, "bras," means "arm." *Brassière* is derived from "*bracière*" (an archaic term for an "arm protector" in military armor, which later became known as a breast plate) that came to describe a woman's corset.



© Mary Evans/Keystone/Eyeota
This picture, taken by Joel Feder in 1928, shows a woman donning the modern "soutien-gorge," as the bra is called today in French.

Parisian couturier, boosted the bra's status in the fashion world by declaring the corset *démodé* (out of fashion). *Vogue Magazine* agreed, and, in 1907, featured a bra in its monthly chronicle of style. With a little support from American socialite Mary Phelps Jacob — who was in 1914 the first to patent a design for a bra — a new era was ushered in.

The bra evolved throughout the following decades, taking advantage of new advancements in production and synthetic materials such as spandex. Innovation was not the only influence — social changes affected the bra as well. Feminism, for example, in the 1970s led to a temporary decline the bra's popularity. From the 1980s on, however, the bra reached new heights of comfort, technology and style as designers employed ever more innovative ideas.

Meilleurs Voeux

L'équipe de News From France vous souhaite de joyeuses fêtes et une bonne fin d'année.

News From France will not be published during the holiday season, but please look forward to the next edition due to enter circulation in February.

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Miami Heats Up with *French Kissin'*

French artistic influence has always served as inspiration to the creative world, and on December 4, the international art show "French Kissin' in the USA" marked the first time that current emerging French artists were exhibited in the United States. The show took place at the influential Moore Space, a Miami art institution dedicated to presenting international contemporary art forms. "French Kissin' in the USA," titled in the spirit of the 1986 hit song by Blondie, was part of this year's ArtBasel/Miami Beach International Art Show, and presented the works of 18 contemporary French artists who have not

yet been widely received outside their native France. These artists included Adel Abdessemed, who recently opened "Dead or Alive" at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) as well as Tatiana



"Séparation," 2006, Adel Abdessemed

Trouvé, who was recently awarded the prestigious Marcel Duchamp Prize on October 20, granting her the opportunity to create a piece for the Centre Pompidou of Paris in 2008. These French artists create work that reflects the visual production of the 21st century, which is largely multi-disciplinary, and explores subject matter as diverse as the relationship between art and philosophy, music and film, and the dependency of concept upon form. To accompany the show, a 30-page full-color catalogue

was produced to document the exhibition and included an introductory text by the Moore Space director and exhibition curator, Silvia Karman Cubiná.

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