



Magic Moments



We talked to **Faith Warn**, the editor of the *French Connections* website, about the aspects of France that she holds closest to her heart...

What was your first French experience?

I first saw France as a teenager on a family car trip, when we stopped in a suburb of Paris to visit my pen pal. I enjoyed speaking the language and was impressed by the welcome of wine and 'boudoir' biscuits – so much more sophisticated than a cup of tea.

Later, we drove through the centre of Paris at night and I was utterly captivated, especially by the Tour d'Eiffel with its lights and fountains. For me, this trip confirmed my youthful feeling that Britain was a bit too confined and mainland Europe more expansive.

How often do you visit France?

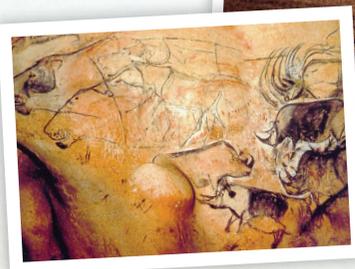
At least once a year, whether it's to stay or on a day trip.

I like to discover new destinations each time. I enjoy travelling through on the *Autoroutes* as well. The illustrated brown signs always make me want to turn off randomly to explore.

What are your favourite places to visit, local or beyond in France?

I'm fascinated by pre-history and ancient sacred sites, so Carnac in Brittany is a favourite, with its massed rows of standing stones. Also the Dordogne's prehistoric museums and painted caves, along with the mind-blowing Ardèche Gorge with the Pont d'Arc and the replica of the Chauvet Cave.

Recently, I fulfilled a lifelong desire to visit the Camargue, inspired by the *White Horses* TV series. I enjoyed the fabulous flamingos and herons, the church at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and throwing myself into warm sea off the little beach



there. Closer to home, I'm always happy

browsing Honfleur for the harbour, architecture, food and crazy art, and Monet's garden is heaven. For a quick hop across the Channel, I like Ardres and the beach at Wissant.

Tell us about a secret special place you love...

The Coiron in Ardèche is a high, wild plateau with massive skies and all-round views, from the Alps to the Massif Central. Strolling the Coiron feels like walking on the roof of the world – there's little around you but grass, gorse, scattered rocks and wind-bent trees.

There's a remote stone farmhouse where they keep goats and have a tiny, pristine front-room shop selling cheese with a choice of age and firmness. It's the best goat's cheese I've ever tasted.

Clockwise from above: Camargue horses; 'boudoir' biscuits; the Caverne du Pont d'Arc

If you could buy in France, where would it be and why?

A quiet spot off the tourist track on the Med coast, close to arty harbours and villages, and accessible to a chic, historic town or city – Languedoc-Roussillon?

In summer I'd have a little boat and go swimming or wander the markets, vineyards and lavender fields. In winter I'd visit the mountains, get the train to Paris and take a trip over the border into Spain. I've never actually been to this area, but I could enjoy exploring it in search of my perfect location! 📍



● Faith Warn is a journalist and editor of the *French Connections* website, www.frenchconnections.co.uk

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