

Year 10 French trip to the Chateau de la Chantereine
Friday 31st March – Monday 3rd April 2023

Just after midnight on Friday 31st March, Mr Fox, 17 Year 10 GCSE French students and myself boarded a coach to travel to northern France. Amazingly, we all slept soundly on the coach arriving in Dover in good time to board our ferry, the Pride of Kent. The crossing was rather choppy due to some adverse weather, but we all survived, more or less unscathed. Indeed, we felt extremely fortunate when we found out later, that we had just missed the lengthy coach queues in Dover which kept some school tours waiting at passport control for 24hours.



La Chateau de la Chantereine

Around 1.00pm, we arrived at the Chateau de la Chantereine where we had a delicious three-course meal, followed by some team-building activities with Arshad, our animateur. I was incredibly proud of our students, taking part in some mentally-challenging team-building activities, all in French, after such a long journey. It was then time to check into our rooms, rest and refresh and have another wonderful 3-course meal before bed.

Saturday 1st April

Saturday morning, after a restorative sleep and typical French breakfast of croissants and pains au chocolat, we headed to the pretty town of Dieppe to look around the prize-winning Saturday market.

The students had to complete a market challenge, looking for and buying their own lunch, asking for the food in French from the market stall holders. As it was April Fool's Day, I also told the students to watch out for paper fish being stuck on people's backs. (This is a well-known French April Fool tradition – the "poisson d'avril"). Daisy Jones captured a fantastic photo of an unsuspecting man who had been poisson d'avrilé which you can see below.



After our visit to Dieppe Market, we visited the Maison Maxime Chocolate Factory. We wore very attractive hairnets and were given a comprehensive tour (in French) of the factory, seeing the chocolate production and decoration in action. Many purchases were made – but either through greed or placing the items too near to the coach heating system, I hear that many chocolate figures, did not survive the trip home.

As we were not very lucky with the weather on Saturday, we decided to forsake our walk around the Baie de la Somme and, instead, visited a very busy French hypermarket.

Saturday evening at the hotel, after our evening meal, Arshad ran a French Quiz, again, all in French where students' knowledge of France and French culture was rigorously tested!

Sunday 2nd April

On Sunday 2nd April we visited Rouen. As it was Palm Sunday, we were lucky enough to be able to watch some of the elaborate Palm Day service in the beautiful, impressive cathedral. Mr Fox and I also learnt the French for the plant they were selling for palms, "de la buis" or "boxwood".

In Rouen we also went to see the site where Joan of Arc was burned (Le Bûcher de Jeanne d'Arc) and Mr Fox, due to his keen interest in History, was able to tell the students all about the reasons why Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431.

The group at the exact place Joan of Arc was burned in 1431 aged 19.



Sunday afternoon was spent at the chateau. Arshad taught the students how to make scones (all in French) and, I have to say, they were extremely delicious. The students were pleased to learn the French for yeast “la levure” – this was the only word they were unfamiliar with during the whole cookery lesson.

Sunday evening, after yet another full scale meal, we had an evening drive out to the Funicular railway at the nearby seaside town of Le Treport. We were extremely fortunate to watch a beautiful sunset over the Atlantic Ocean from high up on the cliffs.

Monday 3rd April

After our final French breakfast, we had a short walk down to the sea, then boarded the coach to travel back to the UK. This time we crossed on a much larger ferry, the Spirit of Britain, and had a much calmer crossing, watching the white cliffs of Dover getting nearer and nearer in the glorious sunshine.

After watching the film “Ratatouille” and a stop for tea at Oxford Services where many students took the opportunity to visit Burger King or KFC and charged up their phones, it was the final stretch back north to Church Stretton where all parents were waiting to collect their children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Fox for agreeing to help lead this trip with me at very short notice, and also all 17 students who went to France. They were all an absolute credit to themselves, Church Stretton School and their parents, speaking lots of French and acting in a mature, enthusiastic manner throughout. I am very proud of them and consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to lead this school visit.

A wonderful start to the Easter Holidays!