

Hubert Védrine Launches Kalorama Series

On January 6, former French foreign minister Hubert Védrine kicked off the "Kalorama Lectures" series at the Residence of France with a presentation of his latest book, "History Strikes Back: How States, Nations, and Conflicts are Shaping the 21st Century." Addressing members of the press, US government officials, members of the think-tank community, and other distinguished guests, Mr. Védrine explored European-United States relations.

The former foreign minister examined Westerners' assumptions and policies that have shaped their international politics for more than 20 years, referencing both academics such as Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington, and statesmen such as Donald Rumsfeld and Henry Kissinger. He advocated a return to diplomacy, as well as an enduring partnership between the United States and Europe. Mr. Védrine submitted that the two powers should employ a non-cynical "smart Realpolitik" strategy to guide their relations with emerging powers, manage globalization, and handle environmental challenges, in which the West accepts that it lives in a diverse world. "In dealing with the new multi-polar world," Védrine writes in his latest book, "Americans have been too bellicose and Europeans too naïve."

Discussing transatlantic relations in the context of President Obama's presidency, Mr. Védrine stated that "Europeans [...] should above all aim to be partners with the new American President," and added that the Obama administration would most likely be more open to multilateralism. Joining former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, minister Védrine held a discussion earlier that day at the Brookings Institution, the publisher of his latest book.



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Hubert Védrine kicked off the Kalorama Lectures on January 6.

French Counterterrorism Expert Addresses Washington Crowd



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Judge Bruguière presents "The U.S. and Europe Confronting Terrorism."

French Judge Jean-Louis Bruguière, head of the Counterterrorism Unit of the Paris District Court, explored the theme of "The U.S. and Europe Confronting Terrorism" during a Kalorama Lecture at the Residence of France on January 28, which was attended by US Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, members of the press and think tank communities, and other distinguished guests. Characterized by French Ambassador Pierre Vimont as "an architect in cooperation between France and America," Mr. Bruguière asserted that terrorism is a common challenge for Europe and America. Both countries are "chained by the evolution of the threat," stated Judge Bruguière in underscoring the importance of cooperation between the two nations, adding that "The transatlantic partnership is the backbone."

Drawing upon his field of expertise, the French judge stressed that though countries have independently faced terrorism, the solution must come from a global strategy. He referenced his investigations of hundreds of suspected terrorists, and how coordination between intelligence and law enforcement authorities foiled the plots

to attack the World Cup in 1998 and the Strasbourg Cathedral in 2000. Mr. Bruguière also emphasized that the necessity for cooperation among nations is compounded by the radicalization and decentralization of terrorist cells, the difficulty in gathering intelligence autonomously, and the consequent complexity for law enforcement. Comparing the terrorist threat to a jig saw puzzle, Mr. Bruguière stated that "Each state has pieces but we must put all the pieces together."

INSIDE

- 2 Current Events**
Diversity in France
- 3 France & America**
French Writing Festival in New York City
- 4 In Depth**
10th Anniversary of the Euro
- 5 Business & Tech**
Environmental Watch
- 6 Society**
Miss France 2009
- 7 Culture**
The Evolution of Cognac
- 8 France in America**
Rodin Exhibition in New Orleans



Claude Berri is considered the Godfather of French film.

THE WORLD OF CINEMA REMEMBERS CLAUDE BERRI

Last month, the world of cinema honored the life and accomplishments of Claude Berri, the legendary French filmmaker, who passed away on January 12 at age 74. Mr. Berri, known as "the Godfather" of French film, was hailed by French President Nicolas Sarkozy as "the great ambassador of French cinema" to the world. Actor Vincent Cassel and director Roman Polanski were among the many notables of film in attendance for the services for Mr. Berri, reflecting the broad and distinguished nature of his more than 50-year career as an actor, writer, producer, and director.

Mr. Berri is remembered for melding the sensibilities of the French New Wave, the film movement defined by such greats as François Truffaut, with those of Hollywood. He favored either quirky, charming stories or those of epic sweep and, as fellow director Claude Lelouch said, "he always made popular movies but he knew how to aim high." Indeed, two of his most-beloved films remain "Jean de Florette," and "Manon des sources" ("Manon of the Springs"), lush adaptations of a classic French novel by Marcel Pagnol, "L'eau des collines" ("Water of the Hills"). Often, Mr. Berri found inspiration in his own life. His friend and contemporary Truffaut praised this approach, saying "Berri [...] does not consult existing films. [...] He looks to the source, he has many stories to tell." For instance, Mr. Berri's "The Two of Us" tells the semi-autobiographical tale of a Jewish boy during the Nazi occupation.

Claude Berri, born Claude Langmann, began his career in cinema as an actor before winning an Oscar in 1966 for his short film "Le Poulet" ("The Chicken,") which he funded with donations from friends. By 1987 Mr. Berri's own film career had taken off enough for him to found his own production company, Renn Productions. Mr. Berri also founded the Association of Writers, Directors, and Producers (ARP), served as president of the prestigious Cinémathèque from 2003-2007, and avidly collected art in his spare time. He passed away while directing "Trésor" ("Treasure,") a comedy set to be completed despite his departure. In total, Mr. Berri left more than 125 films to his credit.

President Sarkozy Calls for Greater Diversity in France



Nicolas Sarkozy called for greater diversity in France during a speech on December 17, 2008.

In a discourse held at École Polytechnique in Palaiseau on December 17, 2008, Mr. Sarkozy stressed the importance of the French values of liberty, fraternity, and equality, stating that "France would not be France without the passion of the Republic, its values, its

principles." Equal opportunities will be addressed through reforms to diversify education, the workforce, the public sector, and the media.

Mr. Sarkozy emphasized the need for educational reforms in particular. He called for a France "where work and perseverance allow all who are able to reach the elite, to attain a higher duty." Focusing on opportunity based on merit, Sarkozy has asked elite schools to reserve 30 percent of their class for students receiving scholarship or aide by September 2010.

In addition to educational reforms, Sarkozy called for the need to diversify the workforce. Beginning in January, the top one hundred French companies are encouraged to recruit through anonymous résumés to deter discrimination. Also beginning this year, Sarkozy will offer a fiscal incentive to government offices that show the greatest representation of diversity, including the media, in which he encourages companies to set a public example.

France Launches European Anti-Piracy Operation Atalanta

On November 10, 2008, the Council of the European Union approved the launch of the military operation code named "Atalanta," in support of UN Resolutions 1814, 1816, 1838, 1846 and 1851 to combat piracy in Somalia.

Atalanta entails the deployment of a naval force for a period of 12 months in a zone covering some 2 million square kilometres, extending from the southern part of the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, along the Somali coasts.

Altogether, 10 EU countries are participating, including 5 nations that bring a continuous operational contribution — Germany, Spain, France, Greece and the U.K. This naval force, EUNAVFOR, includes 4 to 6 warships, 3 to 5 aircraft (helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft), as well as some 1,200 military personnel. France contributes a destroyer on a permanent basis, as well as a Maritime Patrol Aircraft, "Atlantique 2." It also offers logistical support to the operation from its pre-positioned base in Djibouti. The Operational headquarters situated in Northwood, U.K., is headed by a British admiral. For the first four months, the force will be led by a Greek admiral deployed on a Greek warship.

Atalanta has three objectives: the close protection of the UN World Food Programme ships delivering much needed food items to displaced populations in Somalia; the close protection of vulnerable vessels transiting off the Somali coasts; the surveillance of Somali waters and coasts to detect any threat to maritime traffic, and to deter, prevent and repress acts of piracy.

Since the start of Atalanta on Dec 8, many acts of piracy have been prevented. In early January, the French frigate Jean de Vienne foiled two piracy attempts in the Gulf of Aden, while French Navy commandos captured 19 pirates as they were trying to intercept a Croatian and Panamanian cargo ship.



French special forces captured 19 pirates and handed them over to Somalia authorities on January 4. Above, French commandos transport a group of the captured pirates.

In mid-January, France carried out a "remaniement," a process that describes government officials changing office. While much of the government positions remained unchanged, some government officials assumed new roles. Below is a list of current ministers and government representatives that changed titles or positions. For more information on the composition of the French government, please visit: www.premier-ministre.gouv.

New Minister	Position
Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET <i>Replaced: Eric BESSON</i>	Minister of State to the Prime Minister, with responsibility for Forward Planning, Assessment of Public Policies and Development of the Digital Economy.
Chantal JOUANNO <i>Replaced Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET</i>	Minister of State to the <i>Ministre d'Etat</i> , Minister for Ecology, Energy and Sustainable Development and Town and Country Planning, with responsibility for Ecology.
Eric BESSON <i>Replaced Brice HORTEFEUX</i>	Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Mutually-Supportive Development.
Brice HORTEFEUX <i>Replaced Xavier Bertrand</i>	Minister for Labor, Labor Relations, the Family, Solidarity and Urban Affairs.
Bruno LE MAIRE <i>Newly appointed</i>	Minister of State to the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs.
Patrick DEVEDJIAN <i>Newly appointed</i>	Minister responsible for economic stimulus plan.

New York Hosts a Festival of French Writing

The Cultural Service of the Embassy of France teamed up with New York University (NYU) to host a conference this February in New York to honor French writing and to encourage cross-cultural dialogue between authors. The Festival of New French Writing will highlight French authors who illustrate the emerging diversity of genre and style found in contemporary French writing. The vast range of genre spans from novels and short stories to comic books and manuscripts. Highlighted authors include: Frédéric Beigbeder, Emmanuel Carrère, and Marie Darrieussecq,



From left to right: authors Emmanuel Carrère (French) and Adam Gopnik (American) were among some of the participants at the Festival.



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professors Edmund White, Francine Prose, and E. L. Doctorow, among others.

among others.

The festival also aims to strengthen relationships between French and American authors by addressing similarities and differences between writing in France and the United States. Select well known American authors will present, discuss, and read excerpts from their French counterparts. Like the French participants, the Americans represent a wide range of literary interests, including "New Yorker" staff writers Philip Gourevitch and Adam Gopnik, and

"Lil'Easy" Offers Big Transit Solution for Low-Traffic Areas

The Lil' Easy, an innovative new service launched last month in New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward by Veolia Transportation, provides an efficient public transport through low-density neighborhoods — making the Big Easy "a little easier" to navigate. Lil'Easy is a special on-demand circulator that brings accessible, affordable transit to every resident of the Lower 9th Ward. It operates across a network of 24 new neighborhood stops conveniently located throughout the Ward, and three main bus stops. The flexible stops offer public access in the Lower 9th Ward within two-to-three blocks of residents' homes.

The first service of its kind in North America, the new 14-seat minibuses (Dodge Sprinters) are fuel-efficient and have a capacity that is well matched to the demands of the lightly populated route, according to Veolia. The dynamic-routing service provides a convenient reservation system for passengers who need a ride by calling an hour in advance of their scheduled pick-up time. In addition, recurrent or daily reservations offer regular commuters reliable public transportation.



The Lil'Easy's design reflects the cultural richness of New Orleans.

Many Voices, Many Cultures...



Every year, the Embassy of France sends approximately 1,500 Americans to France to teach English.

Henri de Saussure, the insightful French theoretical linguist and founder of modern linguistic studies, defined language as a manner of "being" and "acting." What could better incarnate this concept than the September 8, 2008, conference on the relationship between language and culture — "I Speak Therefore I Am. Languages of Europe: Unity through Diversity" — which was held in Washington, D.C., under the auspices of the Alliance Française and the Embassy of France. The conference, led by 16 embassy representatives, featured roundtable discussions exploring the vitality of European languages worldwide. Among the topics discussed were: the inevitability of globalization, the sovereignty of each of the members of the European Union, government linguistic policies at many levels, and the inescapable predominance of the English language.

Throughout it all, however, education was the subject that shaped the discussion of the various themes.

Mr. Pascal Saura, Deputy Delegate General of the Alliance Française USA, accompanied by Dr. Catherine Pétilon, Attaché for Educational Affairs to the Embassy of France, presented the effectiveness of a strong commitment to the ideal of "unity through diversity" embodied by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This framework, created by educational and linguistic specialists, aims to establish a solid foundation for the maintenance of European languages and, subsequently, to preserve European linguistic and cultural diversity. One of the principal ways in which the theoretical becomes practical is through the existence of various language assistantship programs, which prompt a universal exchange of native speakers between countries. The Embassy of France, in cooperation with the CIEP, annually sends approximately 1,500 Americans to France to teach English. The program represents an investment that is greater than the sum of its parts: not only does each participant bring something of intrinsic value from their home country, but their active presence in the host country also has far-reaching cultural effects, resulting inevitably in a better mutual understanding between peoples.

For more information on teaching assistantships, please visit: www.frenchculture.org and click on the education rubric.



Joan of Arc trots down the streets of New Orleans during the first annual parade.

On the day of the Epiphany, January 6, Joan of Arc admirers gathered in the French Quarter in New Orleans to take part in the first annual parade honoring the life and contributions of the French heroine, who died two years following her success at the Battle of Orléans during the Hundred Years' War. Featuring Joan of Arc-inspired performance monologues as well as musicians and participants dressed in medieval garb, revelers of all ages paraded down Decatur Street to the St. Joan statue in the New Place de France where they commemorated the 597th anniversary of the French patriot's birth with a toast.

Born in Domrémy, France, on January 6, 1412, Joan of Arc led the French army to crucial victories over the English during the Hundred Years' War, claiming divine guidance. Captured by the English and burned at the stake at the age of 19 for heresy, the young heroine is considered by some as the unofficial Patron Saint of New Orleans. Twenty-four years after her death, the Holy See found her innocent and declared her a martyr. Canonized in 1920, Joan of Arc represents to many people a faithful servant of God, a female warrior, and the rescuer of France.

For some, the parade has perhaps taken on a second meaning, a symbolic call to Joan to help "save New Orleans." One participant commented, "Since she saved the old, why not the new?," making reference to the city's namesake. In future years, the city looks forward to expanding the event into a Joan of Arc festival, featuring films, theater, musical performances, and Renaissance Fair style events reflecting the times in which Joan lived.

The Euro: In the Zone for Ten Years

Ten years ago the European Central Bank (ECB) introduced a common currency called the euro throughout participating European Union (E.U.) member states, effectively binding together a multilingual continent of distinct cultures, economies and governments with a common tender. The euro has become the national currency of 16 countries and is used daily by 500 million people — giving it the highest combined value of cash on the world market. Along with facilitating trade in the E.U., the euro is also a symbolic and tangible daily reminder of a political and economic cohesion forged over 50 years ago with the Treaty of Rome (see NFF 07.04).

Introducing the Euro to Europe

The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 established the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union (see NFF 08.05). Seven years later, on January 1, 1999, the euro was introduced in 11 member states — creating the area known as the euro zone — that met several criteria: little debt, low inflation and stabilized interest rates. France was one of the original participants along with Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain.

Initially an electronic banking currency, the euro was used for accounting purposes, computerized monetary exchanges, and denoting value on traveler's checks. In 2002, hard banknotes and coins entered into circulation, with the ECB printing a total of 221 billion euros.

Because many people in the euro zone had never seen the money prior to its introduction, an education program about the new currency was launched in preparation for the changeover. Posters, t-shirts, and even playing cards were printed with the design. Retailers, restaurants, and post offices listed prices in both the national and euro values to facilitate conversion between the two currencies — a practice that continued even after the euro's inception. Banks began issuing "euro starting kits"— plastic pouches with a selection of coins and bills to familiarize the public with the shapes, colors, and corresponding values of the tender.

The currency became legal tender on midnight January 1, 2002, to the backdrop of a celebration outside the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany. Because the euro was valid on the French island of La Réunion in the Indian Ocean three hours ahead of continental Europe, the first official purchase was a kilogram of litchis — a tangy tropical fruit.

Since then the euro has expanded to five more countries: Greece in 2001, Slovenia in 2007, Cyprus and Malta in 2008 and Slovakia which joined the euro zone last month.

Designing Europe's New Currency

The ECB named the E.U.'s new currency the euro — a moniker that represents the entire continent and is easily pronounced in all languages spoken within the euro zone. The ECB also oversaw the design of the euro's symbol, banknotes and coins.

For the symbol, the ECB narrowed the choice to two options and then let a public polling select the winning design. According to the European Commission, "Inspiration for the euro symbol itself came from the Greek epsilon — a reference to the cradle of European civilization — and the first letter of the word Europe, crossed by two parallel lines to 'certify' the stability of the euro."

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary

Leading up to the tenth anniversary of the Euro, the ECB hosted the fifth Central Banking Conference that brought together experts from universities, international institutions and central banks across Europe to discuss lessons and successes of having a single currency across diverse countries. The concluding talk, "International Interdependencies and Monetary Policy," was Webcasted live and is still available online at www.ecb.int.

In addition, the ECB minted 90 million commemorative two-euro coins for the anniversary. The general public voted among five finalists and eventually selected the design by a Greek sculptor. The coin features a primitive stick figure blending into the euro symbol to represent the long history of trade starting with its pre-historic origin. The ECB also redesigned its logo to include "The First 10 Years" — reminding Europeans of their collective past and shared future.

For designing the banknotes, ECB mandated an appealing currency readily accepted and usable by all in the euro zone including, visually-impaired persons. Additional guidelines stipulated that the currency avoid national biases as well as incorporate security features.

Out of 44 submissions, the ECB selected the design by Austrian artist Robert Kalina for the seven denominations of the banknote. Based on the theme "ages and styles of Europe," each note is dedicated to a different period in European architectural style but does not represent actual physical structures, to enforce the collective identity of the entire continent. The front of each banknote depicts windows and gateways, symbolizing the "European spirit of openness and cooperation." The reverse side of each note depicts a bridge representing "cooperation and communication between Europe and the rest of the world." The architectural depictions progress in time with increases in banknote value. The lowest five banknotes depict classical structures, whereas the highest denomination — 500 euros — showcases 20th-century works with glass and steel.

The banknotes boast a variety of features to aid the seven million visually-impaired persons in the euro zone: the sizes of the bills increase with their value; the denomination of each note is printed with raised ink, allowing value determination from touch alone; and the alternation of coloring of each note between warm and cool hues on adjacent denominations helps to avoid mix-ups and confusion.

In addition, the banknotes contain multiple security features to protect against counterfeiting. On the lower-

right corner, notes of 50 euros and higher feature color ink that changes from purple to green at various angles. All banknotes are also printed on uniquely watermarked paper that depicts the circular constellation of the EU flag for extra protection. For added security and anti-counterfeiting measures, black magnetic thread runs through the middle of each note, and is visible only when held up to the light.

While the banknotes are harmonized across the euro zone, coins contain elements of both the European Union and individual national identities. There are eight coins of the euro that range in value from one cent to two euros.

Each coin has a common side depicting a map of Europe as well as a unique design on the opposite side representing an EU nation. For example, the one- and two- euro coins minted in France feature the outline of the country surrounded by "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" — Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood — the national motto.

Some coins have become collectors' items and fetch prices well above their denomination, such as those from European microstates like Monaco, San Marino, and the Vatican City State.

In addition, every year all euro zone member-states are allowed to issue one commemorative piece. Last July, France launched a two-euro coin to celebrate the start of its presidency of the Council of the European Union (see NFF 08.07). The ECB also frequently mints commemorative two-euro coins. Past coins have celebrated the 2004 Athen's Olympics, and the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.



The dark blue area represents the euro zone, whereas the light blue area represents EU member states outside of the euro zone.

Green Piece Brings New Meaning to Environmental Watch

French environmentalists just found a new meaning for keeping watch on the environment. Catering to the population's desire to monitor and decrease their ecological footprint, Citypulse is introducing "la montre verte," or green watch. Along with measuring time, the internal mechanisms gauge both CO₂ and noise levels,



The Green Watch measures levels of air pollution.

and determine location through a GPS system. While AirParif is a nonprofit that surveys the air quality in Paris with ten sites throughout the French capital, Citypulse's model gives citizens the ability to keep a "hand" on the environment themselves. Each digital watchdog transmits data on atmospheric conditions to a centralized database, which collects similar statistics from other participants. The results are then analyzed for differences in pollution levels across the city to

improve public health and environmental interests.

The watch screen displays three clear measurements of air quality: good, fair, and poor. Such indicators help identify the areas most conducive to physical exercise and outdoor activities. The initial launch will produce at least 200 watches, thus increasing surveillance sites in Paris by twenty-fold.

Citypulse has taken root alongside the program "Villes 2.0," which was created in 2006 to explore opportunities to improve cities from a technological and environmental point of view. The goal of Citypulse and Villes 2.0 is to promote a long-lasting and durable city. The project will assemble citizens, organizations, businesses, and public figures alike in hopes of encouraging awareness and active participation. For more information, please visit www.villes2.fr.

Bicentennial of Louis Braille, Revolutionary Inventor

This past month, the bicentennial of Louis Braille's birth gave visually impaired people and their advocates the world over cause to celebrate. The Frenchman who invented the revolutionary writing system which bears his name was born on January 4, 1809, in a small village east of Paris. Braille created a tool which, combined with ever-improving technologies, is more useful now than ever before.

Braille's invention was a story of personal triumph; Braille himself became blind at age three after injuring himself playing in his father's workshop. This tragedy set the resilient young Braille on the path to his creation. At the Royal Institution for Blind Children in Paris, he learned to read using an early system of raised letters. Soon, Braille became interested in a newer method of reading adapted from the night writing procedure used by the army. The system represented only sounds, and Braille quickly realized that it could be improved

by finding a way to represent such elements as grammar, punctuation, and mathematical or musical notation. Braille devoted all of his free time to enhancing the system, and by 1837 it was finalized.

Today "Braille" is a universal benchmark. 200 years after Braille's birth, the visually impaired can now work, read time, and even co-pilot aircraft, thanks in particular to Braille maps. Braille also enables people to take full advantage of new technologies — for instance, computer text can be deciphered using a Braille panel fitted to the side of a keyboard. Although Braille's initial invention has undergone subsequent incarnations, his memory lives on as well. "People with a visual impairment have a particular connection to Braille," says Gérard Colliot, president of the Valentin Haüy association, one of the main activist organizations for those with vision loss. "He is their 'big brother,' the one who gave them the alphabet."

French Embassy Hosts Space-Awareness/EU Presidency Soirée



Science on a Sphere shows the world in a new light.

diameter which reproduces the findings of satellites, such as climate change, on a model world with great realism. Mr. Lipkowski paid special thanks to principal partners of France's National Space Agency in the United States, specifically NOAA and NASA, who have been developing close relations with the French space agency for several decades.

Similarly, French Ambassador Pierre Vimont reflected on the recent major accomplishments in the framework of transatlantic space cooperation — notably, the successes of ATV (Automated Transfer Vehicle) missions, the Columbus lab onboard the International Space Station, and the launching of the ocean-researching satellite, Jason-2. Petr Kolář, Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United States, also paid homage to the dynamism of French leadership before revealing the logo of the Czech presidency of the E.U. Dr. Sandy McDonald, who designed the Science On a Sphere system, gave a presentation focusing on climate change and the consequences of human activities before giving the floor to Alexandra Cousteau, the granddaughter of world famous French explorer and filmmaker Jacques-Yves Cousteau, who shared some surprising information about the world's water resources.

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS



At the beginning of the year, the French Government enacted a new business provision encouraging entrepreneurial growth and facilitating management processes for small enterprises in France by reducing bureaucratic requirements. Titled "auto-entrepreneur," this policy simplifies and reduces annual expenses by waiving initial registry fees and making taxation solely a function of revenue collected during a specific period. If no revenue is collected, then no payments are necessary. This novel status eases requirements for both creation and management of small businesses in France. According to the *Agence Pour la Création d'Entreprises*, certain pre-tax revenue limits define the parameters of what is considered a small enterprise. For example, a business cannot collect more than 80,000 euros for the sales industry and 32,000 euros for the services industry.

AIRFRANCE-KLM TAKES ALITALIA UNDER ITS WING

AirFrance-KLM entered into a business partnership with Alitalia airlines on January 9. The partnership called for AirFrance-KLM to fund a 323-million euro acquisition, amounting to a 25 percent stake in Alitalia, according to AirFrance-KLM. In addition, the Air France-KLM group will obtain three seats on Alitalia's administrative council. The centralized management of the partnership aims to facilitate supervision and executive organization. AirFrance-KLM chairman Jean-Cyril Spinetta and CEO Pierre-Henri Gourgeon explained that cooperation between airline companies will be crucial to reaching the next level. The partnership strengthens the outlook of both companies, and fosters their development on the world stage. While the passengers may see no difference during flights, they will be offered more of them. The partnership brings AirFrance-KLM to the top of the airline industry in terms of size, soaring to new heights.

MONTE-CARLO HISTORIC RALLY

The Historic Monte-Carlo Rally will celebrate its 12th anniversary this month when the high-speed car race finishes in Monte-Carlo—the famed city in the Mediterranean principality of Monaco. Founded in 1997, the Historic Monte-Carlo rally is organized by the Automobile Club de Monaco and is one of the most strenuous car races in the world. Similar to the time-honored Rallye Automobile Monaco established in 1911 by Prince Albert I of Monaco, the Historic Monte-Carlo Rally follows analogous race routes but is reserved for vehicles built before 1980. Known for its dangerous stages in mountains and challenging terrains, participants in the Historic Monte-Carlo Rally are restricted to pre-determined maximum speeds during certain sections to ensure safety and account for differences in car makes. Drivers start in various cities across continental Europe and race to a common finish line in Monaco. Driving teams select departure cities based on a first-come-first-served criterion judged by the successful completion of their registration. Past starting lines include Barcelona, Copenhagen, Reims, and Turin. It was held from January 29 to February 4.

NAVIGO TO REPLACE CARTE ORANGE

The Paris public transport system has recently switched from the Carte Orange to the new and improved Navigo card. The Parisian public transport operator, RATP, asserts that Navigo's RFID magnetic microchip lends itself to more efficient recharging, replacing, and updating than its paper predecessor, and aims to streamline travel throughout the city. For instance, patrons of the Navigo pass are able to change their subscriptions according to varying schedules, so that cards may be canceled and reopened at any time. Additionally, the Navigo's yearly rates amount to about 10 euros less than the Carte Orange, and the pass is more eco-friendly—reducing the consumption of paper passes. The Carte Orange, named for its recognizable color scheme, revolutionized public transit when it was first introduced in 1975. Prior to its inception, five tickets might have been necessary to traverse Paris. The Carte Orange simplified commutes by giving passengers unlimited access to all of the region's public transportation for a flat rate and during a specified time period. Navigo seeks to build upon Orange's success. Even those new to the Paris public transit system can obtain the Navigo pass online at no extra cost if they live or work in Ile-de-France. While Navigo is intended for residents and commuters, "le passe Navigo découverte" is also available for those who live outside of the area and can be purchased at any metro ticket window for immediate use.

Dual French-American Citizen Crowned Miss France

Last December 19-year-old French-American Chloé Mortaud won the Miss France 2009 competition — becoming the first dual citizen to win the title. Mortaud represented her home department of Albigeois Midi-Pyrénées in southwest France.

Born in Lisieux, France, the French-American beauty is an international business student at the University of Toulouse who hopes to enter the field of international trade. A woman of many talents, including dance, piano and theater, Chloé enjoys jazz and classical music. With a passion for adventure, the young Miss France is also an avid hang-glider and world traveler, as well as fluent in English, Spanish and Chinese.

The daughter of an African-American mother and Caucasian French father, Mortaud is also a testament to the cultural diversity of France, she emphasizes. "I want to go to people and explain to them that fear of the other is unfounded," she told the Associated Press the day after being crowned. "I want to incarnate [...] today's French



Miss France 2009, Chloé Mortaud, celebrating Mr. Obama's inauguration at the Residence of France.

diversity at international beauty pageants." Mortaud's mother was born in Mississippi and grew up in California, and her father's French heritage goes "as far back as we could trace the family tree," the reigning Miss France stated. Mortaud will represent France at the Miss Universe 2009 and Miss World 2009 pageants.

Keeping in touch with her American roots, Mortaud attended a reception held in honor of President-elect Obama's inauguration at the Residence of France on January 18.

"Winter Respect" Raises Ever-Green Awareness for Outdoor Activities



Operation "Winter Respect" educates the public about the basic safety and eco-responsibility in the mountains.

The French Office of Tourism launched an educational initiative, Operation "Winter Respect," that teaches basic safety and eco-friendly guidelines for outdoor activity through a series of work-

shops and interactive programs. The operation aims to cultivate a better sense of understanding and maximize the enjoyment of winter sports in France's mountainous regions while promoting safety and environmental responsibility.

"Winter Respect" offers a creative learning approach that includes shows, experiments and obstacle courses for all ages during the ski season in France. Theatrical performances teach children the responsibilities that come with trekking across the mountain environment, such as instruction on avalanche rescue protocol. At various resorts, participants can play games focusing on environment and mountain safety during the day. In the evening, the winners are awarded prizes —hot chocolate for children and mulled wine for adults.

This public awareness campaign also conducts a variety of conservation programs. "Eco-DIY" demonstrates innovative and creative ways of reusing refuse, thereby eliminating trash buildup on peaks and valleys. Children's "eco-experiments" workshops teach children basic phenomena about the environment through simple water and earth field tests.

Blogs

WINTER SEASON BRINGS HOT INTEREST IN SEMI-ANNUAL SALES

Twice a year, French stores hold official sales known as *les soldes*. The annual winter sale season in France runs from January 7 to February 11, and offers up to 70 percent off selected merchandise. This year, *les soldes* is a particularly anticipated event as shoppers make up for lackluster holiday spending. The Convention and Visitors Bureau distributes a shopping guide to direct shoppers in Paris's principal fashion districts and an estimated 300 hotels and restaurants offer special promotions for the hordes of

fashion aficionados attracted to the low prices.

For a virtual sense of shopping, the blog "Soldes" (soldes.doctissimo.fr) is devoted entirely to shopping during the sales period. The Web site includes an extensive calendar that offers advice on where to look for sales throughout



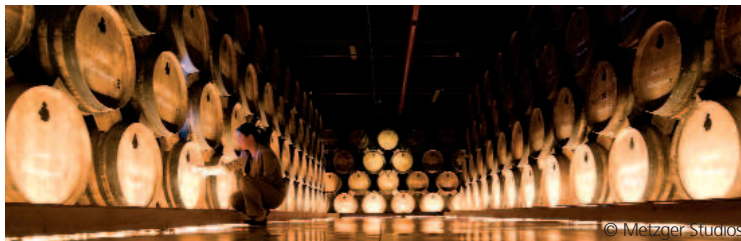
France, as well as recommendations on where to shop for chic discount clothing, and a guide to sale-shopping tac-

tics. Daily posts on this blog highlight the current fashion trends and numerous pictures illustrate styles ranging from daily wear to haute-couture.

For those who prefer to shop from the comfort of their own home, portions of the blog are devoted to online sales. These sections provide retailer Web sites and corresponding sale recommendations. Along with advice on clothing, the blog also offers links to an array of information on beauty, health, and fitness.

News From France does not endorse the content, views and opinions of authors expressed in the aforementioned Web sites.

Age-Old Drink in a Fresh New Light



Barrels of Courvoisier age quietly in the house's expansive cellar in Jarnac. Cognac's transformation is whetting the palettes of a new generation.

Cognac is not solely a stiff *digestif* to settle stomachs. Traditionally served with water at room temperature or chilled, the king of brandy is experiencing a resurgence in popularity among premier mixologists who incorporate the time-honored spirit into fresh cocktails. New recipes have been concocted, such as a drink created by the *Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac* combining Cognac with ginger, lime and lemonade, plus cucumber peel. The recent winter edition of *France Magazine* traces the history of this 400-year-old brandy.

Exclusively produced in the Charentes region of France, Cognac is created by distilling Ugni Blanc grapes and allowing the resulting mixture to age in oak barrels for various amounts of time — a

period that ranges from a minimum of two years to nearly 200 years — prior to blending. This process allows for the development of the distinct flavor that is praised for its fruity and earthy tones.

While previously the stereotypical nightcap of elderly grandparents, the drink is becoming progressively more popular among younger generations thanks to the increasing availability of premier vintages. In the 1970s, Cognac production underwent major renovation. Vineyards were restricted to the best terrain and improvements in distillation as well as the aging processes allowed for optimal taste. Also some 400 distinct brands suiting every taste are increasingly available on world markets.

In addition, long-established manufactures such as Rémy Martin are attracting new patrons by revamping bottle designs. New presentations include a work by American artist David LaChapelle that honors jazz-era performer Josephine Baker.

For more information on Cognac, as well as a list of hot spots throughout the U.S. to enjoy it, please refer to *France Magazine's* winter edition. To purchase a copy, please visit: www.francemagazine.org, or contact Rachel Beamer at 202-944-6069.

Incentives to Attract Foreign Filmmakers

American director Woody Allen kicked off the year by announcing plans to film a "charming comedy" taking place throughout France and particularly in Paris. While plot and actors are not finalized, Allen hopes to incorporate French talent and engage the expansive fan base in the country where he is described as "the most French American director" by French daily *Le Figaro*.

Allen's decision to film in the City of Light complements a recently launched incentive to lure more foreign filmmakers. France's time on the silver screen could double in coming years thanks to a new tax incentive designed to attract foreign film production companies. Some filmmakers can cut as much as \$5 million out of their budget by claiming tax credit for 20 percent of production expenses incurred in France in exchange for including scenes that are universally recognizable as French.

Indeed, France is no stranger to the big screen—it has a long cinematic tradition and developed many of the early advances in movie

pictures. Late 19th century French film pioneers such as brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière developed early filming and projection techniques. Their 46-second short film "Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory" (1895) was the first film ever publicly screened.

Today France sponsors numerous filmmaker development programs and has become a popular place to make movies. Last year alone Paris hosted 840 film shoots, which averages to nine films shot per day and nearly 3,500 total days of filming. In recent years, France has hosted numerous feature-length American films, such as 2006 summer blockbusters "The Da Vinci Code" showcasing the Louvre Museum in Paris and "Marie Antoinette" which uses the Versailles Palace as a backdrop.



Woody Allen announced plans to film in France.

Waived Admission Fees Draws Young Crowd

French President Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled a plan last month to grant French youths under the age of 25 and professors free admission to 50 national museums in France. Expected to take effect in April, the plan is part of an initiative to entice the public, especially young people, to visit the museums and national heritage sites.

A smaller-scale program headed by the Ministry of Culture in 2008 successfully increased the number of museum visitors by waiving the \$9-to-\$12 admission fee to view the permanent collections at 14 national museums in France. The experimental measure boosted the attendance of regular patrons as well as



The Louvre will be participating in the free-admission initiative.

attracted foreign tourists who account for three-quarters of the museum visitors between the ages of 18 and 25.

In addition, President Sarkozy announced a 100-million euro budget increase for the expansion of culture programs, including the foundation of "Maison de l'Histoire de France," Museum of French History. The president also proposed the creation of a Council for Artistic Creation, which will decide priorities for public arts funding. Co-chaired by the current minister of culture, Christine Albanel, as well as French filmmaker Marin Karmitz, the Council will work "in close cooperation with artists, professionals and the public" to promote culture endeavors in France.

FRANCE MOURNS THE LOSS OF A PATISSERIE VISIONARY



Gaston Lenôte revolutionized *la pâtisserie*.

Gaston Lenôte is credited with elevating *pâtisserie* to an art by creating lighter, more savory versions of traditional recipes in unconventional flavors and forms. Before his death at 88 last month, Lenôte established a gastronomic empire with over 60 stores in 13 countries, a pastry school that trains 3,000 chefs annually, numerous cookbooks, and a three-star restaurant. Offering his condolences, French President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that France has lost "one of the greatest masters of taste." After opening his first pastry shop in Paris in 1957, Lenôte attracted a wide clientele craving his savory *charlottes*, mousses, and macaroons as well as his original creation "*succès*," which is a base of macaroons covered with an almond brittle. In 1985, Lenôte partnered with the hotel conglomerate Accor and founded an international chain of boutiques and catering services which established Lenôte as an ambassador of French cuisine around the world. This international exposure set Lenôte's technique as the universal standard by which all pastry chefs are judged.

SPA-TROTTING IN PARIS

Le Carousel du Louvre in Paris hosted the annual water and wellbeing trade show *Salon Thermalies* last month. The five-day exposition granted the general public access to the latest in holistic health from total body spa therapy to thalassotherapy facials—a reinvigorating treatment that uses the skin-renewing properties extracted from seawater. Six exhibitions showcased how water sources indigenous to France can be used to treat an assortment of diseases. Hydrotherapy, one of the featured treatments, uses mineral water from springs native to southern France to soothe muscular and skeletal pains and disorders. In the "Wellbeing Pavillion" visitors could speak with health advisors as well as attend workshops on harnessing the properties of water to promote good health. Information was also available on spas throughout *l'Hexagone* where curative waters are available. For more information, please visit: www.thermalies.com.

LSU to Open "Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession" Exhibit

The French Consulate of Louisiana partnered with Louisiana State University (LSU) to showcase the life and works of French sculptor August Rodin in an exhibition titled, "Rodin: a Magnificent Obsession." The exposition displays the most comprehensive collection of Rodin's work including sculptures such as "The Gates of Hell," "The Kiss," and "The Thinker," as well as photographs and a short film that explore the creative and technological process behind his masterpieces.

Rodin is widely known for his work with bronze casting—a sculpting method where liquid bronze is poured into a plaster mold and solidifies. Using this technique, he was one of the first sculptors to express human emotion through physical manifestations of



Courtesy: LSU MOA

The Rodin Exhibition will showcase the artist's most famous works, including his sculpture, "The Thinker."

the body; depicting extreme pain or exuberance through hand gestures rather than facial expressions.

Rodin's work includes lifelike human figures. He was meticulous with detail and accounted for the effects of light on bronze by coating his bronze figures with several layers of green patina. His technique produced such realistic sculptures that Rodin was occasionally accused of *surmoulage*, a technique where the plaster cast is directly molded on a live model.

"Rodin: a Magnificent Obsession" will be held at the Shaw Center for the Arts in the LSU Museum of Art. It is supported by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation. For more information, please visit: www.lsu.edu.

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French Films in the Spotlight at Atlanta Jewish Film Festival

The ninth annual Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (AJFF) screened several French films surrounding Jewish identity at various cinemas throughout Georgia's state capital last month. Last year alone, the festival entertained over 15,000 people, showcasing 40 international works. Over the course of twelve days during this year's edition, the festival featured 50 international films exploring various aspects of Jewish life, culture, and history. The following seven French films screened at the festival develop topics including the resonance of WWII as well as Jewish identity in France, titled: "Hello Goodbye," "Les Citronniers," "Faut Que Ça Danse," "Plus Tard, Tu Comprendras," "Un Secret," and "Nous Étions l'Exodus."



Courtesy: AJFF

"Les Citronniers" humanizes the Israel/Palestine conflict when two neighbors become divided over something as trivial as a lemon tree.

The organizers of the festival, the American Jewish Committee, maintain that film is one of the best mediums to spread understanding by relating a personal story that engages and connects with the public. The goal of the festival is to share cross-cultural experiences to encourage greater acceptance between different religious groups, ethnicities, and nationalities.

In addition to film screenings, the festival also included appearances from actors, filmmakers, authors, and various other experts in the field. Audience members had the opportunity to vote for the winners of the AJFF Audience Best Narrative or Best Documentary Award.

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

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