



I wouldn't have known about Diana and her restaurant if it hadn't been spotlighted in *FRANCE Magazine*.

Lisa M. Price
Texas

Not so secret

The feature on France's 60 best-kept secrets (US July 2014, issue 124) brought a wry smile to my face.

In 1982 we decided to spend a few days off the beaten track en route to the coast. After spending a great deal of time poring over maps and guidebooks, I discovered a fair-sized village in south-west France that seemed to be in the middle of nowhere.

It was miles from the nearest main road and the routes leading to it were the smaller D roads, all very twisty and, according to Michelin, *routes pittoresques*.



It was within striking distance of places of interest, and had a castle and a hotel. It sounded just our sort of place.

Imagine our dismay when we arrived in the village square of Najac (pictured above) in the Aveyron *département* to see that there were four other cars with GB stickers already parked there. So much for my discovery.

On subsequent trips I have found a few very special places in France, but I share their locations only with close friends!

Barbara Dewick
Bookham, UK

OUR AWARDS

2013

- Winner of Young Travel Writer of the Year at the British Travel Press Awards (Zoë McIntyre)
- Winner of Best Travel Article at the Outdoor Writers' & Photographers' Guild (Judy Armstrong)
- Winner of Gastronomy Article of the Year at the Atout France French Tourist Board Travel Publication Awards (Eve Middleton)
- Winner of Travel Article of the Year at the Abtof (Association of British Travel Organisers to France) Travel Publication Awards (Judy Armstrong)
- Winner of Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Publication Awards (Judy Armstrong)
- Runner-up for Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Publication Awards (Ray Kershaw)

2012

- Winner of Best European Destination Travel Feature at the British Guild of Travel Writers Awards (Judy Armstrong)
- Runner-up for Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Publication Awards (Ray Kershaw)

2011

- Winner of Best Travel Article at Outdoor Writers' & Photographers' Guild (Judy Armstrong)
- Winner of Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Publication Awards (Eve Middleton)
- Runner-up for Best Magazine Article of the Year at the Abtof Travel Publication Awards (Paul Lamarra)
- Runner-up for Culture Article of the Year at the Atout France French Tourist Board Travel Publication Awards (Eve Middleton)



Jamie Schler

Writer Jamie Schler first visited France in 1985, and after several trips back and forth to the USA, she met and married a Frenchman. The couple spent six years in Milan, before returning to France in 1998 where they have lived ever since. Jamie



writes about food and culture, and is author of the blog *Life's a Feast* (www.lifesafeast.blogspot.co.uk).

Two years out of university, living and working in New York City, I decided that I needed to find a place that suited me better socially, culturally and politically. I came to France because after four years of high school French I thought I knew both the language and the country better than anywhere else.

I have been married to Jean-Pierre for more than 25 years. After living in Paris for about ten years, we moved to Nantes and discovered a France which is so different from Paris, one which is calmer, quieter and greener, with a long and fascinating history and a people passionate about their city and region. I have raised two multicultural sons and France really is more home to me now than the US.

One aspect of French culture that has always appealed to me is the food; I love the abundance of fresh produce and markets, the many great chefs who prepare tasty food from local products, and the increasingly affordable *bistrot*s *gourmands*. As a food writer, I have discovered innovative, passionate farmers, breeders and winemakers returning to or preserving traditional methods, more and more of it organic.

I also love how much culture France has to offer; its museums, châteaux, monuments, gardens and natural parks all have a rich and fascinating history and provide plenty of distractions for young children and teenagers. I also appreciate the slower pace of France, the long family meal times, the smaller yet vibrant cities in which everything is within walking distance and the healthcare system.

However, I find that the things I love most about France also drive me crazy. It is often a frustrating, complicated country and system to deal with for an American used to less of a class system, more freedom of creative expression, less social pressure and everything open at all hours.

Despite having spent almost 30 years in France, I do miss certain aspects of US culture, particularly the more casual, convivial way of life. I find it much easier and faster to make new friends in the US and people get together more often and more spontaneously.

France has so many exciting and wonderful things to offer, but relocating to any country means dealing with the nitty-gritty of daily life – such as schools, doctors, jobs and taxes. I would advise anyone wishing to relocate to define why they are coming to France and then make sure they understand how it all works, in order for it to be a success.