

In praise of small French independent camping sites

A Naturist experience off the beaten track by **Gary Smith**

I rode down through France to Spain in the summer to test my new off road motorbike in the Picos Mountains, then travelled east to ride the Alpine passes and then north to end my journey at my favourite small independent campsite in Saint Christophe En Bresse.

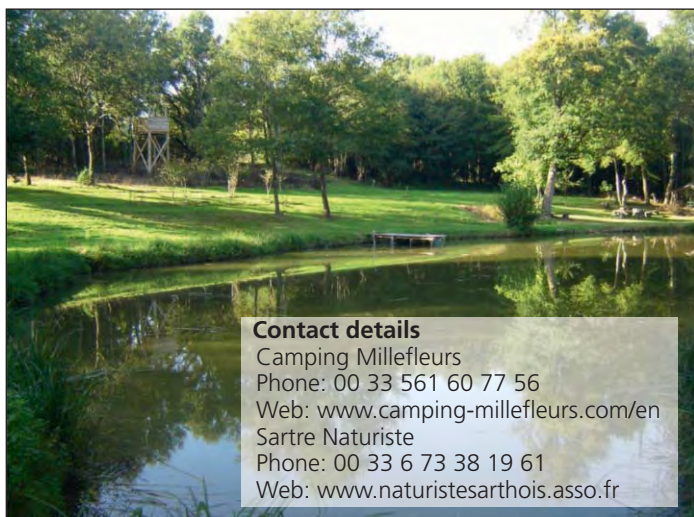
There is no shortage of information about large Naturist camping sites in France on the internet, but I prefer travelling to smaller sites which tend to be hidden away when you look for them. I have taken the opportunity to review three sites I have visited during my solo motorbike travels. All three sites welcome single members with INF recognition which of course comes with our BN Membership.

Camping Millefleurs is situated in heart of the Ariège district in the south of France and is very close to Andorra, which is a tax free state and allows you easy access to top up on any duty free you may desire moving south or north. Hans and Simone live on the site which is open from April to November and will make you very welcome. The site is very popular with visitors from the Netherlands and has a pool, sauna, and one of the best equipped and well maintained shower, toilet and laundry facilities you will find in the region. If your Dutch, German or French is not up to scratch then Simone and Hans both speak fluent English. Pitches for motor homes and tents are available, as is a free camping area if you prefer more privacy. Travelling on the bike this far south in the summer can be tiring with daytime temperatures in the mid 30s so early starts are required to maximise opportunities to explore and there is certainly plenty to see and do. For foodies like me the cheeses are sublime. I recommend the Rogallais.

Sartre Naturist is situated near Le Mans in a residential area but despite that, it really is an oasis of pine trees, rambling walkways and recreational facilities and is extremely private and discrete. The site is an ideal base for a one night stop over when travelling north

or south through France. If you enjoy motorsports then a visit to the Le Mans track, museum and cafe is a welcome diversion. There is plenty to see and do without paying for trackside entry. The Sartre Naturist site is very private with fencing erected and large access gates preventing any unwanted attention. Facilities on the site are basic but clean and the members I met were extremely welcoming. As English is not widely spoken here, it gave me plenty of opportunity to practice my developing French language skills. There was much interest in my bike and I stuttered through tales of places seen and people met. Comfortable camping is limited on this site as the spaces tend to be hard standing or of gravel, so pick your pitch carefully if you are in a tent.

Gîte des Chênes is my personal favourite in France. It is a tranquil, private and beautiful little gem. The site itself is situated near the quiet village of Saint Christophe En Bresse which is an easy six hour drive from Calais and one of my personal favourites for a few days of rest and relaxation before riding back to my home in Mid Wales. Lucien and Dominique live on the site and run the guest house, caravans and camping facilities. The site has a chlorine free pool, loungers, club house and acres and acres of woodland with well marked and signed walks into the forest. Evening club activities are held on special occasions and fresh milk, bread and morning goods are delivered to your door (or as in my case tent flap) each morning. There are some stunning local beauty spots plus the eccentric Chateau de Savigny les Beaune which houses a massive collection of motorcycle, racing cars, Abarth racing memorabilia and, strangely, 80 fighter jets all of which you can wander around. You can also purchase some of the excellent wines produced in-house at the Chateau. It really is an ideal place for weekend exploring. All this on our doorstep and lovely food, friendly locals and delicious French food and wine – fantastique!



Contact details

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