

TIMES OF MALTA

FOCUS FRANCE

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2015

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INTERVIEW

A learning experience

Malta and France can both learn a lot from each other, says the French ambassador to Malta **Béatrice le Fraper du Hellen**.

Ambassador
Béatrice le Fraper
du Hellen.
Photo: Jason Borg



A direct flight from New York to Malta, if it had to operate, would take you 11 hours. As it is, with a couple of stops on the way, you would need around 20 hours to leave from JFK International and land in Luqa.

However, it wasn't the hours that separate New York from Malta that worried French Ambassador to Malta Béatrice le Fraper du Hellen. Rather, it was her expectations of the difference in pace of work.

"Before coming to Malta, I spent four years in New York as counsellor and legal advisor at the French permanent representation to the United Nations," says Ambassador le Fraper du Hellen. "My schedule, as you can imagine, was quite hectic.

"Then, when I was posted to Malta, I started doing my research and familiarised myself with the beauty of the island. The impression that I was given was that this was a sunny island where life was leisurely and that my stay here would be very different from New York.

"However, when I arrived here last February, I found a very busy island. Small in size, Malta makes the most of its EU membership and its strategic geographic location. I found an island that wants to do business and that has valuable experience.

"The impressions that pace might be less hectic in Malta disappeared in a few hours and soon I had a very busy desk. I am lucky I can count on a great network of institutions such as the French-Maltese Chamber of Commerce or the Alliance Française in Malta to help me out."

Ambassador le Fraper du Hellen started her diplomatic career as third secretary in Cotonou, Benin and was then appointed to the United National and International Organisation Directorate at the Foreign Ministry of France. Her next diplomatic post was at the French Permanent Representation to the UN in Geneva. In 1994, she moved to Los Angeles where she was appointed as cultural attaché.

Ambassador le Fraper du Hellen then served as counsellor to the legal advisor of the foreign ministry between 1996 and 2000, after which she served for four years at the French permanent representation to the North Atlantic Treaty organisation in Brussels. For the following two years, she was deputy director in charge of human rights at the Foreign Ministry. In 2006, she was seconded to the Hague International Criminal Court, a post which she occupied till 2010.

"My role in Malta is to promote and facilitate the relationship between Malta and France, at a business, political and cultural level," she says.

"There is already a very good business relationship in sectors such as financial services. However, France enjoys leadership in various sectors such as Industrial innovation and alternative energy. Our relationship with Malta can benefit a lot from raising awareness of such sectors.

"For business relations to thrive, we cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Malta has singular characteristics which warrant tailor-made solutions. Moreover, given the business landscape in Malta, we need to focus on small and medium-sized enterprises.

"Yet it's not a one-sided approach because France can also benefit from good relations with Malta. For French entrepreneurs, Malta is important in itself but also because it is an EU member, a Commonwealth country and has valuable experience in doing business with other countries in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

"The two economies have similarities and therefore we can learn from each other. For instance, for both Malta and France, tourism and the services industry are very important contributors to the economy. We can also share knowledge in other areas. Marseille was European Capital of Culture in 2013 and Valletta will have that status in 2018. I am also work-

ing to help establish more structural partnerships between Maltese and French authorities and entities as well as exchanges between the educational institutions in both countries."

For many Maltese, France is the land of wine, good food and the Eiffel Tower.

"We have to respect those perceptions because they are true," Ambassador le Fraper du Hellen says. "However, beyond that, there is a lot more. Last year, for the first time, Malta received more than 125,000 French tourists, which means that more French people are learning what Malta has to offer. In the same way, I encourage Maltese travellers to explore other areas outside Paris. France's tourism offerings are so diverse, ranging from museums to sport, vintage car events and horse racing in various regions.

"It is through such exchanges that we can learn more about each other and from each other."

Malta and France also share another concern: the situation of migrants in the Mediterranean. Recently, French President François Hollande said that quotas for migrants in Europe were "out of the question" but said that he supported a better distribution of refugees between EU countries.

"Our position is not to say no to the proposals of the European Commission," Ambassador le Fraper du Hellen says. "Rather, our concern is with the word 'quotas'. When discussing asylum seekers, we need to do so within the context of refugee law and human rights. France will consider relocations and resettlements. In principle, we agree that all EU countries should have equal responsibilities - however, we must keep in mind two very important considerations. First of all, there are international obligations under refugee law. Secondly, statistics should be interpreted well. For instance, Malta has experienced a drop in migrant arrivals - however, the island is still carrying the responsibility of arrivals from previous years. Moreover, while some countries did a lot for migrants in recent years, other countries didn't.

"We feel that the words 'quotas' and 'burden' are not appropriate within the migrant context. We are talking about human beings here.

"The bigger picture is political stability and dialogue because these are the foundation of stability and good economic performance. Malta has the ear of the French political leaders and the two countries have a strong political relationship. Moreover, Malta and France hold dialogues not only in the EU context but also in specific Mediterranean fora such as the 5 Plus 5 or within EU in the Mediterranean Group, which was previously called the Olive Group, which brings together foreign ministers of Mediterranean EU member states.

"It is only through such dialogue that we can continue strengthening our relationship."



An Established Presence

Since 1978, **Express Trailers** has been operating a scheduled weekly service to and from France with departures and arrivals from Paris and Lyon.

Having provided total logistics solutions by sea, air and land for all these years, **Express Trailers** have earned immense know-how of the French market which we now apply to our low risk, efficient and complete service to our customers.

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COMMERCE

The French connection

Our aim is to facilitate good relationships between Malta and France, says **Joseph Bugeja**, president, Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce.

For many, France is a series of stereotypical images: the Eiffel Tower blinking its lights at midnight, a stretch of vineyards in Burgundy, the Gallic rooster emblazoned on the shirt of the national football team, and sweet-toothed people outside Ladurée, queuing up for a taste of those wonderfully colourful creations: macarons.

And yet France is much more than that. France has Europe's largest aerospace, nuclear and agrifood industries, the second largest chemicals industry, the fifth largest international oil and gas company in the world, and is the third largest automotive manufacturer in Europe and the fifth largest in the world. It also ranks high in ICT, engineering, services, construction and innovation.

"France is a global economic power and its list of industry leading sectors is exhaustive," says Joseph Bugeja, Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce president. Bugeja has just been re-elected president after serving a three-year term in 2009. Bugeja, who is a member of the UK Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, comes from the maritime sector and has been directly involved in ship owning and operations for the past 43 years.

Last year, the chamber, which was set up in 1989, celebrated its 25th anniversary. Its principal aim is to promote and develop commercial, industrial and tourist exchanges between Malta and France.

"There is a very good relationship between the two countries," says Bugeja. "With regards to the economic exchanges, the latest figures show that the value of exports to France stands at €240m annually, while the value of imports is at €290m. Various French firms are setting up business in Malta, while Maltese firms have expanded their operations to the French market. With regards to tourism, for the first time ever, we have hit the 125,000 mark in incoming figures, which represents a 7.7 per cent in-



Joseph Bugeja. Photo: Chris Sant Fournier

crease over 2013. Furthermore, Malta has received another 71,000 French tourists that visited Malta through the cruise liner business activity.

"Still, there is further potential for growth, especially considering France's leadership in various industries and the large projects that Malta is embarking on."

Bugeja believes that there is potential not only in specific industries but also in the way business is conducted. For instance, Bugeja is a firm believer in the concept of business and competitiveness clusters.

"France is again a leader in this sector and has, to date, 71 clusters. In principle, the main aim of such clusters is to bring together competitors to share a vision to the benefit of the industry and the country."

Clusters boost competitiveness and help the development of growth and jobs

in key market segments by accelerating innovation efforts and providing support for high-tech, creative and service activities. This helps give a country greater international visibility.

Bugeja believes that Malta should embrace the concept of clusters.

"An economy needs to organise itself in clusters in order to operate efficiently and effectively. For instance, we have taken this approach in the maritime sector. Competitors work together and act as a consultative body to government. The results are there for all to see: Malta has the sixth largest merchant ship register in the world and the largest in Europe, with a record performance in 2014."

The chamber, which is an affiliated member of the Union of French Chambers of Commerce Abroad as well as a close collaborator of the French Agency for International Business Development, works very closely with the French Embassy in Malta, Malta Enterprise and Bank of Valletta to further facilitate good relationships between Malta and France. This is achieved through delegations, seminars, networking and fact-finding missions. Although the chamber operates on a voluntary basis, it manages to coordinate functions with the competent authorities, organisations and constituted bodies of the two countries.

Another successful initiative that the chamber has taken is student internships and exchanges. During these exchanges, university students from France spend time in Malta working with a local business.

"Until 10 years ago, we were barely managing to attract 20 students. Therefore, we decided to establish a new system and nowadays we assist up to 80 students in finding work experience in Malta. This is a long-term investment: these are all university students who will eventually embark on a successful career. When they return to

France, they take with them knowledge of what Malta has to offer and therefore, they become ambassadors for our country."

Malta can draw various advantages from having good relations with a bigger economy. But what does France stand to gain?

"France appreciates the way we do business in Malta: we are professional and efficient. Moreover, our geographic position makes us a gateway to other markets. Both France and Malta can be considered as holding similar positions as dynamic markets with access to further potential in the rest of Europe, the Middle East and Africa."

What are Bugeja's aims for his three-year term as chamber president?

"Currently, the chamber has 80 members – the objective is to increase membership. Together, chamber members will continue working hard to identify avenues to bring together potential business entrepreneurs from both countries to explore the potential that both countries have."

The Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce's successful record was achieved through the strong teamwork of its 10 council members who dedicate their business knowledge and personal time to the organisation. The council members are: Joseph Bugeja, president, Kevin Deguara, vice president, Ann Petroni, honorary secretary, Mario Genovese, public relations officer, John Rausi, treasurer, Bernadette Bonnici Kind, Mark Miggiani, Richard Cleland, Gilles Gutierrez and David Fleri Soler, council members, Odette Vella, chargee de mission. For more information visit www.mfccmalta.com.

MALTESE * FRENCH
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Weekly transport service since 1978

France remains one of Malta's top business partners. Products arriving from France include various imported commercial items such as automotive parts, fashion wear, food, manufactured products, chilled and frozen products, pharmaceuticals, luxury packaging and chemicals.

"We have always seen great potential in this market. In fact, Express Trailers has been operating scheduled weekly transport services between France and Malta since 1978," said Franco Azzopardi, Express Trailers chairman and CEO.

"With departures and arrivals by sea, air and land from both Paris and Lyon, we have been providing a total logistics solution to all those doing business with France. We have 37 years of business experience with France and this gives us immense knowhow of this market and allows us to provide a more complete and low-risk service to our customers," added Azzopardi. "Logistic risk management has become our routine because we believe that our customer is ever more sensitive to risk in today's business environment."

Today, Express Trailers offers efficient, continuous and reliable groupage services and part loads, both for import and export as well as transport of dry, chilled or frozen food products. Express Trailers is also regularly entrusted with the transport of specialised cargo namely pharmaceuticals and works of art.

Express Trailers' hugely popular online platform www.shiplowcost.com also gives online shoppers the opportunity to buy from France. This web portal solution for online shopping has already been in operation for almost three years and allows online shoppers

to have their items sent to Express Trailers' depot in Paris from where they are shipped right to their door here in Malta.

"The competitive edge we offer here is that since the solution is powered by our trailer service, there are no size or weight limitations imposed on the products purchased," explained Azzopardi.

"We can safely say that Express Trailers delivers reliably, continuously and efficiently to France, from France and through France. Above all, no matter what market, Express Trailers delivers trust. That is our promise," added Azzopardi.



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RACING

It's Le Mans man

The 24 hours of Le Mans is not just a day at the races. It's a drama of speed, endurance and emotions.

Did you know that Henry II was born in Le Mans, France? Or that the Musee de Tesse, the fine arts museum of the city, houses paintings by John Constable and Theodore Gericault?

Of course you didn't. Because what most people know about the French city is that it hosts one of the most dramatic races in the world: the 24 hours of Le Mans.

The 24 hours of Le Mans is an emotionally charged affair. It's a battle between cars and performance, racing drivers and endurance. The speed is thundering: cars race at an average speed of 219km/h and push on at full throttle to reach 400km/h on the Hunaudieres straight. The history is prestigious: the 24 hours of Le Mans is the oldest active sports car race in endurance racing and has been held annually since 1923. And the human effort is heroic, from driver Romain Dumas stopping to fix his Audi R18 in 2012 to Jack Gerber starting the race at 68 years of age.

The race has all the elements of a sports drama. And as in any drama, the actors are first class.

First, you have the Circuit de la Sarthe which, at 13,629km, is the longest circuit in the world. The circuit consists of a combination of public roads which are temporarily closed and a specialist racing circuit designed to test the speed and endurance of competing cars. The circuit is unique because it combines light and darkness. The

24 Hours of Le Mans starts in the afternoon but about eight of the 24 hours are run in darkness. At night, the circuit becomes magical: as the air cools, the cars go faster with headlights ablaze and brake discs glowing red in the dark.

Then there are the cars. The biggest and most prestigious carmakers in the world, including Porsche, Ferrari, Audi and Toyota, line up their entries for the legendary prize. The first cars to race the 24 Hours of Le Mans were obliged to retain part of their original off-track equipment. Over the years, the cars evolved into prototypes and

"At night, the circuit becomes magical: as the air cools, the cars go faster with headlights ablaze and brake discs glowing red in the dark"

road models modified for a competition in which speed, endurance, economy and good management of fuel, tyres and braking materials are key.

In recent years, the cars have become test-beds for innovation and technology. In 2006, Audi won the race with a diesel sports car while in 2012, the Audi R18 e-tron quattro became the first hybrid electric vehicle to win at Le Mans. The cars are also an artistic showcase: just consider that artists Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons all created liveries for BMWs competing at Le Mans.

The drivers are the best in the world: race winners include Jacky Ickx, who started from last place to win in the most dramatic of ways, to Tom Kristensen, who won the 24 hours of Le Mans an incredible nine times. Incidentally, Kristensen was a late replacement for an injured driver in 1997 when he won his first Le Mans race.

Organised by the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, the 24 hours of Le Mans is also one of the biggest media events in France, at par with the Cannes Festival. More than 250,000 eager fans attend every year while around 2,400 journalists from over 160 countries relay the news to millions of people around the world.

This year, the 83rd edition of the 24 hours of Le Mans race will be held on June 13 and 14. On Saturday, at 3pm, the French flag will be lowered to release the grunt of



powerful engines. But even though the 24 hours of Le Mans is, as its name denotes, a full day affair, the week leading up to the race is a full schedule of concerts, vintage car exhibitions and qualifying practice sessions. Spectators can also get up close to the cars and drivers during the weigh-ins and scrutineering, which take place at the Place de la Republique.

Just a couple of hours away from Paris, the 24 hours of Le Mans can be an exciting stop in your French itinerary. Well, it's not exactly a stop because, with cars thundering at an average speed of 219km/h, it's an adrenalin rush.

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NEWS



Promoting Malta in French

A film by HSBC Bank Malta p.l.c. highlighting the attractions of living, working and running a business in Malta will be translated from English into French as well as four other international languages.

Unveiled in December 2013 to coincide with the launch of the Malta Trade for Growth Fund, the 12-minute *Why Malta?* film is an excellent tool for business to use when talking to potential customers.

As well as showcasing Malta's inspiring potential and great opportunities, along with its rich and cultured history, the film highlights the island's position as a centre of excellence in a number of sectors and a perfect international hub for business.

HSBC Malta CEO Mark Watkinson highlights HSBC's role in supporting Malta's growth and adding value to its economy, as well as using its global connectivity to help companies prosper at home and overseas.

Through breathtaking visuals, the film describes Malta as a modern, cost-effective eurozone jurisdiction with attractive investment incentives, double tax agreements with major countries and a clear regulatory framework.

HSBC Malta head of commercial banking Michel Cordina then explains HSBC's aim to connect customers to opportunities, with over 50 relationship managers on the ground providing that level of support and insight of the local market. He continues that Malta has a strategic location and has a huge potential to become a main hub as a logistics, warehousing and distribution centre from where companies can service European and North African markets.

To watch the *Why Malta?* film visit <https://www.hsbc.com.mt/whymalta>.



What's cooking?

Do you like to cook and enjoy French cuisine? Now you can combine both passions by joining one of Alex Bognor's classes.

Bognor provides you with a fantastic opportunity to learn and enjoy authentic French cuisine in Malta, using fresh local produce, while enjoying the beautiful surroundings of Madliena.

Every class is different – however typically you will learn how to prepare a three-course meal. Afterwards everyone sits down to eat and taste their delicious food.

Bognor's menus focus on easily available ingredients, emphasising local seasonal vegetables, meat and fish. Bognor does more for you: cooking lessons in the comfort of your own home.

Bognor's background is in the micro-technology, automotive and chemistry industries. During all his professional life, one of his main goals was to train people

in new techniques. Meanwhile he continued to cook for his family and also with his mother-in-law, continually innovating and trying out the latest trends in modern French cuisine.

Today, Bognor is ready to share his passion and experience with anyone who loves good food, in a spirit of friendliness and without the need to invest in professional equipment or to ask you whether you will succeed or not when you will try the same recipe at home.

Bognor combines the taste of recipes from his grandmother's French cuisine with a modern twist and simplification, using fresh local products. Add to that the basic rules of hygiene and a few tricks to save time and to avoid the risks to hurt yourself. It is Bognor's intention that you will love the good times that you spend together to cook and enjoy French cuisine.

For more information visit www.cookwithalex.com.

METHODE ELECTRONICS MALTA LTD.

Methode's long standing business relationship with the most renowned French Automotive Manufacturers such as Renault S.A., and Peugeot Citroën S.A. will continue to endeavour with Methode's innovative and holistic custom-engineered solutions and continuous research and development targets. Methode proudly serves this industry as an original equipment manufacturer, supplying various high-end electronic car components such as brake / clutch sensors, interior switches, and bus bars amongst others. Methode Electronics is committed to serve its French customers achieve their global aspirations with engineering support in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. Apart from leveraging a worldwide network of hundreds of engineers, Methode Electronics has manufacturing and distribution outreach across continents, capable of reaching customers anywhere round the globe.

Malta is the location for Methode's Headquarters in the EMEA region, with engineering and sales support services also in Germany, UK, Lebanon, and a satellite manufacturing plant in Egypt.

Methode Electronics Inc. is a world-class custom-engineering based manufacturing company that specialises in the design of highly technological electronic devices and components. It services a wide range of industries including the Automotive, Railway and Transportation, Military and Aerospace, Medical, Communications, Consumer and Commercial white goods, Alternative and Renewable Energy & the Heavy industry.



Methode's multi-national team of in-house expert engineers focus their efforts in four market areas,



namely in User Interface - HMI solutions, Sensors and Switches, Power, and Data; serving globally renowned clients with a diversified and an innovative product portfolio.

Methode is a trusted partner with a history of delivering unique innovation and superior quality products. It aims at helping customers win in their end markets and be successful by providing an unmatched combination of client focus, differentiated technology, problem solving and world-class manufacturing under several quality

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Our team of qualified engineers provides fast and professional support during the development, tooling, testing and production stages up to delivering the final product. All this, from the European headquarters in Malta, only 2.5 hours flight from Paris.

Methode Electronics Malta Ltd. employs over 1,200 employees, while Methode Electronics Inc. employs over 4,500 globally. In Malta, the high-end manufacturing industry employs circa 15% of the total labour force, with Methode Electronics Malta Ltd. being one of the top 5 local companies that contribute to Malta's GDP and its economy.



BUSINESS

We mean business

The business relations between Malta and France are thriving.



From left, Benjamin Carlotti and Valery Bollier

Valery Bollier
CEO, Oulala Games Limited

What was your first experience of Malta?

I arrived in Malta 10 years ago to launch an iGaming site called Zeturf. I will always remember my first night on the island. It was May 25, 2005 and the restaurant I was eating in was showing the UEFA Champions League final between Liverpool and AC Milan. There was a huge crowd and an extraordinary atmosphere.

Once the match ended, half the crowd partied all night long. The following day, I asked my lawyer where such passion came from and he explained to me the connection between Maltese people and Italian and English football teams. This was the first proof of Maltese generosity.

Why did you decide to set up base in Malta?

Benjamin Carlotti and I launched the beta version of fantasy football site Oulala in August 2013. Malta was a logical choice: an English-speaking EU member state, only a few hours away from any major European city. Malta also has the most efficient pro-business environment that I have ever seen in my career. When launching a start-up, it's essential that your energy is not wasted on, for instance, Kafkaesque administrative issues. Here, we can focus on what matters most for our company.

What inspired your decision to settle down in Malta?

Apart from assets such as safety, great weather, nice people and the sea, Malta also has a very good edu-

cation system and a modern and efficient health system – my son was born at Mater Dei Hospital and I was amazed by the quality of service. When you add all the business and personal factors, I think Malta is one of the best places to live right now.

What growth have you experienced?

We have attracted more than 16,000 registered clients, built partnerships with major football brands like AS Monaco, and are gaining visibility every day all over Europe. We're also currently closing our first external funding round. We're working hard with our team to maintain and increase our current competitive advantage.

How do the Maltese and French markets compare and differ?

France has amazing assets. However, it's a very mature market: therefore, when you come up with an innovation, you'll probably annoy someone and will need to fight hard to survive. On the other hand, Malta is a land of opportunity. I'm also always amazed by Maltese people's optimism about the future, which is in harmony with the entrepreneurial spirit.

What are the main hurdles to doing business in Malta?

The overall system still has to improve at different levels – for instance, we need more venture capitalists to help and finance Maltese start-ups. Still, the Maltese business landscape has improved exponentially over the last few years. I'm impressed by the work done by Malta Enterprise and by the emergence of TakeOff business incubator. Maltese people are very pragmatic and when I see the dedication that Economy Minister Chris

Cardona and his professional team is investing to build an even more pro-business environment, I also share the Maltese optimism about the future.



Margot Pisani
Country manager, Sanofi Malta Limited

In which sector does Sanofi Malta Limited operate?

Sanofi Malta Limited is a sales and marketing affiliate office of French company Sanofi. The company is the result of the merger of many pharmaceutical companies, most recently Genzyme, a company dedicated to the treatment of rare diseases, and Zentiva, a manufacturer of generic drugs.

Locally, many Sanofi products are household names. Sanofi is focused on delivering medical innovation especially in oncology, rare diseases, diabetes, inflammation and disease prevention and patient support.

Sanofi Malta Limited is an affiliate of a large French pharmaceutical company. How does this Franco-Maltese relationship work?

Sanofi Malta Limited was set up 10 years ago. Early on we were approached by the economic office of the French Embassy in Malta and the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce. Both offered assistance and welcomed us into the local French business community.

As for working with the French corporate office, this was not difficult. Since the work ethics are very

similar and Sanofi is a multinational company, corporate office is used to working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

How do the Maltese and French markets compare and differ?

The markets are similar in that both countries are regulated by the local and European medicine authorities. In both Malta and France, the general public is taking a bigger part of their own healthcare in their own hands and patients are using social medial to seek more healthcare information.

In Malta we have two distinct and separate markets: the private market where the patient pays full cost of medication and the public market where the cost of drugs is paid for by the government. In France there is only one market where the patient pays for the drugs but the government pays part of the cost. This system allows for quicker introduction of innovative medicines to be available to the patient in an affordable way.

What opportunities does France offer to the Maltese entrepreneurs and vice-versa?

France is the sixth largest industrialised country with a population of 66 million people. By interacting with this large market, Maltese entrepreneurs might learn from the areas of French expertise.

Even though we're a small nation we have come to expect services and products that are available in other larger countries to be available also locally. The market is a good representation of any market and may be useful to the French entrepreneurs to assess the success of a product before launching it in larger markets.

Marc Frasson Botton
Director, LMT Trading Limited

Why did you decide to set up business in Malta?

Last year, Bureau Vallée, a chain of low-priced stationery stores, organised a conference in Malta to explore the potential that the island offers. Bureau Vallée CEO Bruno Peyroles invited those present to consider opening the first Bureau Vallée store in Malta.



Marc Frasson Botton

The CEO's invitation interested me and, after discussing it with my wife, we decided to go for it. So we left France and settled down in Malta. My wife and I had already been discussing opening a business abroad. At first, we were thinking of going to Canada but the opportunity in Malta was too good to pass.

Were you familiar with the local market?

I had already been to Malta on business so I was familiar with the market. Moreover, I was in charge of opening 30 Bureau Vallée stores so I knew what it takes to open one in Malta. A few months down the line, Bureau Vallée Malta – which is the 250th Bureau Vallée store in the world – is doing very well.

What advantages does the local market present?

The local typical office set-up is similar to that in France: we both use A4 paper, which means being able to offer the same products such as printers and envelopes.

Also, in our sector, the Maltese market is more advanced than the French one. Internet and smartphone penetration and social media usage are high while a lot of businesses operate in the cloud. All these factors translate into challenges to our sector. The Maltese market today is what the French one will be in five years. This enables us to anticipate and prepare for the challenges that the French market will face in the near future.

Moreover Malta's strategic geographic location enables us to keep an eye on North Africa and the potential there.

Did you find it difficult to settle down in Malta?

I'm from Marseille, which means that we share a lot of things with Malta, from the architecture to the culture. This facilitated my settling down in Malta with my wife and three children, aged nine, six and two. Malta is also very safe and has a very good education system. The children immediately made a lot of friends and we were welcomed by everyone we met. Malta is not only a good place to do business but also to live.

FRENCH COOKING LESSONS & LUNCH

Do you like to cook? Do you enjoy French cuisine?
Now you can combine both passions by joining one of my cooking classes.

I will provide you with a fantastic opportunity to learn and enjoy authentic French cuisine, using fresh local products, while enjoying the beautiful surroundings of Madliena.

Cooking lessons are held on Tuesday and Thursday
from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm (in MADLIENA near Torre Paulina).

Classes are followed by lunch served with drinks (including French wine),
either in the kitchen or in our garden.



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NEWS

A worldwide outreach

Methode Electronics Inc's long-standing business relationship with renowned French automotive manufacturers such as Renault S.A. and Peugeot Citroën S.A. is built on Methode's innovative and holistic custom-engineered solutions and continuous research and development.

Methode serves this industry as an original equipment manufacturer, supplying various high-end electronic car components such as brake and clutch sensors, interior switches and bus bars. Methode is committed to help its French customers achieve their global aspirations with engineering support in Europe, North America, Asia and the Middle East. Apart from leveraging a worldwide network of hundreds of engineers, Methode Electronics has manufacturing and sales outreach across continents and is therefore capable of reaching customers anywhere around the globe.

Malta is the location for Methode headquarters in the EMEA region, with engineering and sales support services also in Germany, UK, Lebanon, and a satellite manufacturing plant in Egypt.

Methode is a world-class custom engineering based manufacturing company that specialises in the design of highly technological electronic devices and components. It services a wide range of industries including the automotive, railway and transportation, military and aerospace, medical, communications, consumer and commercial white goods, alternative and renewable energy and the heavy industry.

Methode's diversified multinational team of in-house expert engineers focus their efforts on four market areas: user interface-HMI

solutions, sensors and switches, power, and data. Thus, Methode serves globally renowned clients with a diversified and innovative product portfolio.

Methode is a trusted partner with a history of delivering unique innovation and superior quality products. It aims at helping customers win in their end markets and be successful by providing an unmatched combination of client focus, differentiated technology, problem solving and world-class manufacturing under several quality certifications including the ISO 9001, Ford Q1, ISO 14001, and ISO-TS 16949.

Methode's qualified engineers provide fast and professional support during the development, tooling, testing and

production processes up to delivering the final product. All this is based in the European headquarters in Malta, only 2.5 hours flight from Paris.

In Malta, Methode employs over 1,200 employees, who share their expertise with over 4,000 Methode employees worldwide. In Malta, the advanced high-end manufacturing and distribution industry employs around 15 per cent of the total labour force, with Methode being one of the main local companies that highly contributes to Malta's GDP and its economy. Methode is also one of Malta's top five exporters.

For more information contact Methode Electronics Malta Limited on info@methode-eur.com or visit www.methode.com.



Welcome to Malta

Malte Accueil is an active association for French expats and Francophiles.

Set up three years ago, Malte Accueil has developed into a happy and lively group, doubling its number of members in the last year.

The association is animated by volunteers and anyone who wishes to offer their time and share their passion with the other members is welcome to do so. This gives members opportunities to meet and develop their own personal relationships. Regular events such as dinners, picnics, morning coffees, or new expat welcoming are held all year around. On a monthly basis, Malte Accueil members also go to Xemxija to help Frank Scerri keep the Heritage Trail clean and accessible to visitors.

The group is composed of families and people of all ages - 13 different nationalities, including Maltese, are represented. This association helps its members enrich their life in Malta in many ways while enjoying the French language and culture.

For more information visit www.malteaccueil.org or the Malte Accueil Official Facebook page.

Why Malta?

A land of inspiring potential and great business opportunities.

Throughout its rich and cultured history, Malta has distinguished itself across a range of industries, including financial services, knowledge-based sectors, high-end manufacturing, maritime and aircraft maintenance. High levels of education and a skilled workforce have helped Malta develop into a centre of excellence, positioning itself as a perfect international hub for business.

Meantime, as Malta increasingly becomes a globally recognised player in the logistics sector, we at HSBC appreciate that international connections will be vital to Malta's future economic growth. Through initiatives such as Malta Trade for Growth, global connectivity and invaluable market insight across continents, HSBC Malta is best placed to help Maltese businesses to access opportunities across the globe that previously were out of reach.

As we look to encourage overseas companies to invest in Malta and take advantage of its unique, strategic location, HSBC has developed an in-depth video that highlights the benefits of doing business in Malta. The video demonstrates the island's business attributes and why Malta is a great place to live and work.

HSBC has a wealth of financial sector expertise that provides a one-stop solution for those seeking to locate their business in Malta. HSBC can provide you with a real local insight and understanding to help you set up or expand your business in Malta.

The 'Why Malta?' production is available on USB, DVD or online through hsbc.com.mt/why_malta. Speak to us now for more information.

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HSBC 

CHEESE

Counting sheep

Say cheese and celebrate the 90th birthday of Roquefort.

Roquefort is more than cheese. It is the flavour of myth and history: Pliny the Elder wrote about its rich aroma while Charles VI granted the people of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon a monopoly for ripening the cheese.

It is political. In 2009, when the European Union banned imports of US hormone-treated beef, the Bush administration retaliated by singling out Roquefort and imposing a 300 per cent import duty on it.

The tangy, creamy cheese is also a symbol of our gourmet inventiveness: green mould, an unwanted ingredient in any other food, is what

gives Roquefort its distinct marbling and makes it so singularly delicious.

This year we celebrate the 90th birthday of Roquefort. Of course, the cheese is much older. However, it was in 1925 that it became the first cheese to receive official legal protection within the Appellation Origine Protegee system. Among various requirements, these new regulations stipulated that Roquefort must be aged in the caves of Mont Combalou in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, France.

Roquefort doesn't taste a day over 90 years. And what better way to celebrate this sheep's milk cheese than to make it the star of a menu.

Roquefort, leek and mushroom pasta bake

You need

500gr dried penne
1tbsp olive oil
Butter
150gr Roquefort
1 leek, cleaned and sliced
125gr chestnut mushrooms, sliced
75ml double cream
White wine

Method

Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the butter and leeks. Cook gently for five minutes until the leek is soft. Then add the mushrooms and cook for another five minutes. In the meantime, cook the pasta in boiling water.

When the vegetables are ready, add a splash of wine, simmer for two

minutes and add the cream. Add three-quarters of the cheese and stir it through until it has melted.

Add the vegetables to the pasta and mix. Transfer to an ovenproof dish and dot with the remainder of the blue cheese. Cover the dish and bake for 25 minutes until the top is lightly browned.



Bruschetta with Roquefort, fig and ham

You need

One small baguette, thinly sliced
2tbsp olive oil
100gr Roquefort
5 slices prosciutto, torn into pieces
5 figs, quartered

Method

Heat the oven to 200C. Brush the baguette slices with olive oil and season. Bake for five minutes until crisp. Leave to cool and then spread over some Roquefort. Top each slice with a piece of ham and a fig quarter. Season with pepper and serve.



Mulled pears with Roquefort dressing

You need

3 pears, peeled, halved and cored, with stalks left on
300ml red wine
3tbsp caster sugar
1 cinnamon stick
Toasted pecan nuts
A handful of watercress

Sprinkle over the sugar and add the cinnamon stick. Cover with a lid and simmer for 10 minutes. Leave to cool.

To make the dressing, mix the vinegar and oil with seasoning. Warm the Roquefort with the crème fraiche on a gentle heat until it has melted. Toast the pecans in a dry pan.

Drain the pears, slice them lengthwise and fan them out on a plate. Toss the watercress in the vinegar and oil dressing, pile onto a plate and sprinkle over the nuts. Pour the warm Roquefort dressing around the pears.

For the dressing

100gr Roquefort
1tsp white wine vinegar
3tsp olive oil
125ml crème fraiche

Method

Put the pears in a pan and cover with the wine and water.

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TRAVEL/NEWS

Island hopping

What do you get when you mix a bit of France with exotic ingredients? A ticket to the fantasy islands of Guadeloupe, French Polynesia and Reunion Island.

Mention the name of a place and our mental projector start whirring with images.

It's like a series of postcards from a place that we have visited or read about as part of our plans to visit. So with Italy, it's a hive of Vespas buzzing along Corso Vittorio or a main course of fish flavoured with Sicilian *agrumi*. Mention Spain and it's a passionate dance of tapas, Gaudi's flying buttresses and a late night in Madrid. As for France, it's the fairytale castles of Avignon, the food markets of Paris and Jura's rolling vineyards.

And yet France also extends its offerings to frilly cocktails, palm trees and sand as soft and white as talcum powder. Because France is not just Europe: its borders extend to the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The French territories consist of a flotilla of small islands scattered all around the world. And yet, despite their individual size, together, they add up to more than 2.5m people and a combined land area of almost 120,000km². And collectively they form a veritable brochure of exciting destinations. So if you've had your fill of wine, cheese and croissants, choose from a specials menu of active volcanoes, creole cuisine and Caribbean dance.

Guadeloupe

Frequently referred to as the pearl of the French Caribbean, the French archipelago of Guadeloupe, located between Dominica and Antigua, consists of five islands: Basse-Terre, Grande-Terre, Les Saintes, Marie-Galante and La Desirade.

The two biggest islands are Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre and from above, they look like a butterfly. Indeed, they are as beautiful, colourful and exotic as a butterfly. Separated by a narrow strait that is crossed with bridges, the two islands have an individual identity: while Grande-Terre is largely flat and boasts a beauty of white sand beaches which can serve as a backdrop to your castaway fantasies, the lush and mountainous Basse-Terre is in fact an active volcano.

Guadeloupe has such dreamy landscapes that it's what you make of it. You can rent a *gite* and have a quiet holiday on some hidden beach, only interrupting your nap for a cocktail or three and a lunch of traditional *bokit*, which is a naan like bread stuffed with meat and vegetables. Or else you can choose the more adventurous trail and move your muscles at the Parc National with its various hiking options.

French Polynesia

We might be familiar with Tahiti through the masterpieces of Paul Gauguin. However, French Polynesia is more than big flowers and dusky maidens.

This French territory in the South Pacific Ocean consists of 118 islands that are dispersed over what is the largest marine territory in the world. The names of the islands – from Windward Islands to the Tuamotu Archipelago – conjure up dreams of fantastic forests, paradisiacal myths, tropical beaches, and palm-fringed lagoons. But this is no fantasy because the islands here are indeed a combination of volcanoes, blue coral atolls, endemic species, turquoise lagoons and legendary hospitality.

When travelling to French Polynesia, it's best to pack your dancing shoes because you will get to exercise your moves. In Polynesian culture, dance and music are considered to be a means of communication. And there's always a festival going on, whether music, dance or sports. The biggest one is the Heiva i Tahiti festival in July, which includes stone lifting competitions, coconut tree climbing and javelin-throwing events.

This is one of the best places in the world to hike and dive. Hiking follows an adventurous trail of mountains and caves while rocky depths, lagoons, coral formations and reefs make diving a spectacular and unforgettable experience.

All this activity will help you work up an appetite. Which is good because French Polynesia has a delicious cuisine where fresh tuna and mullet, breadfruit, papaya, suckling pig and coconut milk are larder staples.

Reunion Island

Together with Mauritius and Rodrigues, Reunion Island forms the Mascareignes archipelago, right in the heart of the Indian Ocean. The island is a mix of cultures and flavours, courtesy of a chequered past during which it served as a trading post of the East India company and a pirate hideout.

Reunion Island boasts a magnificent landscape: primitive forests, waterfalls, lush vegetation, lagoons, sandy beaches and tropical gardens. That means that you can enjoy yourself from 40 metres under the sea to more than 3,000 metres above. You have the same choice when it comes to investing in your waistline: from curry and *rougaille* to *cari* and combinations of vanilla and fresh fruit, the flavours are natural, local and delicious.



Get the business noticed by 120,000 French tourists

Lepetitmaltais.com has become an essential source of information for French tourists and residents in Malta. Indeed, 3,000 new Francophone tourists visit the site each month.

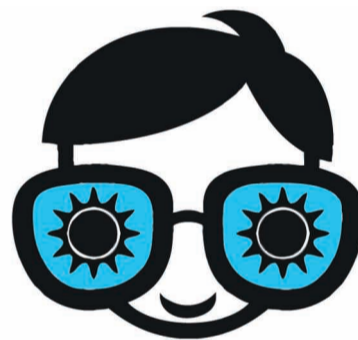
The site is designed to help them discover all the facets of Malta in a humorous tone: tourist guides, local life, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist activities and services, not to mention an innovative approach to advertising English language schools, increasingly popular for the French market.

In addition, a new French directory of Malta already boasts 400 companies listed. These Maltese companies interested in French tourists can have a complete multimedia web page: description, photos, Google Map, street view, video, social networks and a dedicated space for promotions. As soon as a company is registered, its pages benefit of advanced positioning on search engines like Google. You can list your company for free at annuaire.lepetitmaltais.com/free-subscription.

The investor and mentor of this start-up is Ali Zarzouri, a French entrepreneur who moved to Malta because of the substantial benefits offered. He is passionate about helping others to invest in Malta. Zarzouri has a number of businesses and is based at the Takeoff Business Incubator at the University of Malta. He is a senior consultant in the field of franchising, a particularly flourishing industry in France. Aside from the portal, he is helping Maltese companies to find the best franchise networks in France. For more information e-mail contact@lepetitmaltais.com.



From left: Mègane Tandin, Emmanuelle Cours, Armelle Monstin, Ali Zarzouri, Morgane Lauzin.



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FRANCE

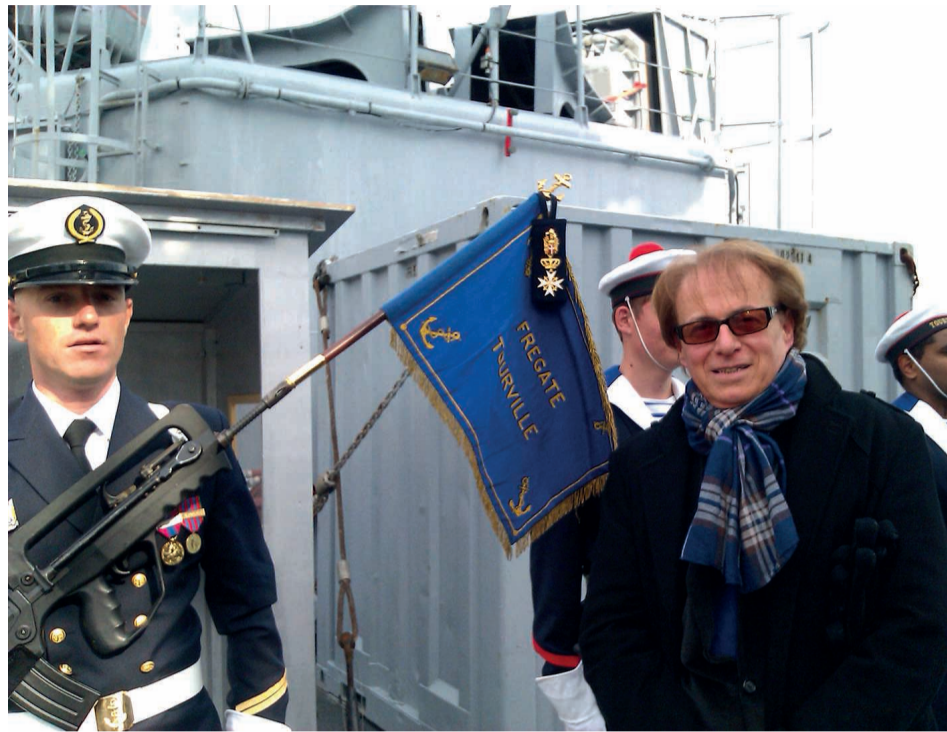
Remembering the French

Charles Xuereb retrieves historical French connections that helped build our present identity.

That Malta has inherited a potpourri of cultures from different civilisations in the Mediterranean and beyond is not disputable. Even if our genetic timbre has remained 95 per cent Sicilian, including a notable North African variety, we cannot erase or change the collective memory that generations of successive settlers especially during the last millennium have constructed to produce our present identity.

Some past experiences have been perpetuated with considerable ease: we all 'remember' the Great Siege of 1565, the 450th anniversary of which we are commemorating this year and the recent British connection, especially World War II. The former because of the huge and impressive archival and artistic collection of reminders which have kept memory alive through abundant military edifices, numerous works of art and a pyramid of documents chronicling live events while the latter mostly through a generation of war survivors who, though rapidly diminishing in numbers, have left a strong mark through their emotional accounts.

Other communal experiences seem to have faded into sites of memory either through conscious manipulation because it suited certain generations in particular



The French navy still names prominent sea craft after several of their admirals who were French Knights of Malta, among them de Grasse, Souffren, Chevalier Paul and Tourville, seen here in the Grand Harbour in 2011. All these carry the Maltese eight-pointed cross. The author is on the right.

periods of time or because they were not as significant as the previous two episodes. However, that does not mean that today's society cannot retrieve what it lost over the centuries. As Sieyès would put it, nations exist in the state of nature and are ultimately the source of power, will and law. They may slumber through centuries but continue to subsist beneath the debris of history until the moment of their rebirth.

Cultural legacy

The majority of our cultural legacy was made available through a number of powers that ruled this small strategic island for purposes not necessarily always in consonance with the wishes of the inhabitants. After the assumed arrival of Arabic-speaking Muslim settlers from Sicily in mid-11th century, one would hardly believe the new islanders, whose main stock

survives, would have welcomed Count Roger with open arms. Yet the Normans and, by the 13th century, the Angevins were eventually the ones to shepherd the Maltese islands back to Latin Christian civilisation. Both of them were also ultimately responsible for raising the archipelago to higher geopolitical significance.

Both powers came into the Mediterranean and elsewhere from what is now France. Maltese scholars of this medieval period seem to agree that whatever social and administrative pressures were applied to impose Christianity on all inhabitants it must have been done, at least till 1270, in an atmosphere of relative tolerance. The presumed illiterate Maltese of the time were apparently motivated to convert to the new religion in order to safeguard their original Semitic properties, villages, language and family lineages.

Another major French connection had to wait till 1530 with the arrival of the Order of the Knights of St John that in the end was to leave its strongest mark on the islands and entice the community to aspire towards nationhood. This European noble Order hosted a community of eight *langues*, three of which were Provence, Auvergne and France. Between them, these produced no less than half the members of the chivalric society. Suffice it to say that during their 268 years of local rule, 12 out of 28 grandmasters were French – most of them built what could now be termed as our principal symbols of civilisation. Valletta with its palaces and St John's – grandmasters La Valette and La Cassière were responsible for the buildings respectively – are clear signs of significant strides through which these grandmasters ascertained Malta's prominent place on the world map. That it became the capital of Malta when French general Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 established a central government and invited the Catholic Church to assume its esteemed place in St John's could

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FRANCE/NEWS

be considered as the destiny of the birth of a nation through French connections.

Territorial collectivity

The 1789 French Revolution and the republican Rights of Man Declaration created chaos in Europe towards the end of the 18th century. They were not only to cause the fall of major medieval monarchies but also to sound the death knell of the Order mostly as an economic enterprise. In 1792 the Knights' income from *commanderies* received a fatal blow that was to spell its total collapse. But it was perhaps the new ideals of liberty and democracy, as understood in those days, that fired Maltese intellectuals to facilitate the early arrival of these tenets in Malta through the French *armée* on its way to the Orient.

Bonaparte immediately liberated Malta of two of the three ecclesiastical authorities, namely the Inquisition – which he had already wound up in Rome – and the waning Order, leaving the Church as the only religious institution enjoying national competency in the community. For the first time in its long history Malta was to have its own secular central ad-

ministration and aspire to become a territorial collectivity within the French Republic.

But to find out when the Maltese were first recognised as a distinct national community one has to rewind the clock back to 1669 and revert to France and its Sun King, Louis XIV. Through a royal edict Maltese *commerçants, marins et matelots* benefitted from *le droit d'aubaine* which meant that if they died on French soil their descendants would inherit them. In 1765 Louis XV considered 'the inhabitants of the islands under the Order of Malta' citizens of the Kingdom of France with rights to settle, buy and sell property in that country. No other foreign monarch seems to have awarded such rights to Maltese citizens.

Hobz tal-Franciz

When Malta belonged to the Knights it enjoyed close relations and ambassadorial exchanges with many countries, the closest being Spain, the Italian states, including the Holy See, and France. The 18th century brought Malta closest to France with the king having a strong say even in the choice of grandmasters. Naval connections were so strong since the founding of the

Marine Royale under Richilieu that several prominent Knights of Malta not only served as admirals but left their mark on the French navy till this very day. Shipbuilding, military weaponry as well as defence architecture were decidedly French. The economy, budgeting and the cuisine were French, so much so that besides introducing confectioneries in Valletta we remain perhaps one of very few countries where local bread has to be quaintly identified with its provenance – *hobz tal-Malti* – so as to differentiate it from *hobz tal-Franciz*. University students and patients alike used to proceed to Montpellier and Paris to study medicine or seek convalescence up to the time of Pasteur into the 19th century. Strolling any day in Valletta, bidding *bonjour* or *bonsoir* was so common that both salutations remain in our common parlance till this very day as '*bongu*' and '*bonswa*'.

We have so many anniversaries commemorating events such as the laying of the first stone of Valletta next year, the inauguration of the aqueduct by Wignacourt this year, the setting up of our precious Biblioteca, the opening of the Manoel Theatre, the founding of new towns like Senglea, Paola, gates such as Fleur de Lys – which is being rebuilt – de Rohan, Porte des

Bombes or bastion girdles by various grandmasters that it is impossible to celebrate each and every occasion. Other commemorations are at times superseded by more recent landmarks: we celebrate two centuries of the Police Force as instituted in their present form but forget that police and military Maltese units have been with us since the medieval *dejma*.

As the future beckons we would do well to examine our highly charged calendar of events and try to balance what happened to our forebears over the past millennium when the Maltese archipelago used to attract the strongest powers of the Mediterranean and beyond. Then and only then we might be able to find our authentic identity and put into perspective each and every milestone that helped us aspire to become the independent thriving republic we are today.

Dr Charles Xuereb is the author of *France in the Maltese Collective Memory, Perceptions, Perspectives, Identities After Bonaparte in British Malta*, Malta University Press.

The land of beauty

France is still synonymous with beauty products and fragrances, says **Reginald Fava**, Chemimart chairman.

Chemimart was set up in the early 1960s with the aim of giving an innovative and efficient service to our customers.

We ventured into the retail sector by opening our first pharmacy in Freedom Square, Valletta. This pharmacy was set up as a self-selection outlet where customers could walk in, select their requirements where toiletries are concerned, or go to the pharmacy counter for advice and for the dispensary of their requirements.

At the time it was customary for customers to purchase fragrances and cosmetics from pharmacies. However, it was evident that the trend was about to change. Being specialised in whatever you do was very clearly becoming the name of the game.

In the early 1990s I decided to open our first perfumery in Republic Street, Valletta. At the time we had the sole distribution rights for a number of top brands in make-up, skin care, and fragrances including the world famous name of Helena Rubinstein. In a sense I was very lucky to have met this great lady in person and to some extent unlucky because I met Madam Rubinstein in her very late years in life.

This personality together with Norman Hartnell, who was the designer for the British Royal Family and for Hartnell in Love, did influence me immensely where fragrances and beauty are concerned. From then on I never looked back and successfully acquired and opened a number of high street premises from where we still operate.

In the wide range of fragrances and skin care products we have available within our portfolio, products of French origin do have a special niche. Until some years ago fragrances were synonymous with France. As this came to be one of the areas where huge sums of money were being spent by women of all ages, other countries joined the bandwagon. Notwithstanding, fragrances and beauty products of French origin do carry a very special message till this very day.



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Stock up at these markets

Food markets in France cook up the tastiest regional specialities.

Have you ever seen a French person at a food market? They will wander from one stall to the next, their brows furrowed deep like a freshly ploughed field. They will pick up a garlic bulb and look at it with the same intensity of a CSI operative examining a DNA sample. Then they will taste the cider, worry a bit, stare a fish in the eye, worry some more, and dip an asparagus spear in homemade mayonnaise. Then they will crack a smile and you know that all is well in their tasty world.

The French have a preoccupation with food. But it's a healthy preoccupation. And it's one that keeps them busy because the French larder is always full.

Nowhere is this bounty more beautifully displayed than at the daily or weekly food markets. Every town and village in France has a food market. And not one is the same as the other because each cooks up a different regional speciality. Marseille has its fish markets with a pride of squid, oysters and mussels on ice, Normandy stalls take pride in their cider, Calvados and Camembert,

Alsace markets appeal to stronger tastes with their *choucroute* and Munster cheese, while the mountainous villages of Auvergne smell of the region's famous blue cheese, Fourme d'Ambert, buttery Cantal and fresh Saint-Nectaire.

It's not just the region that dictates the offerings. Every season brings a harvest of different delicacies: green, purple and white asparagus in April and May, cherries and strawberries in spring, peppers and tomatoes in summer and early autumn, truffles and mushrooms in winter.

"For a selection of the best patisserie, head to Rue Cler, a pedestrian area where the locals go to indulge their sweet tooth"



Paris

The French capital probably has the best and most generous spread of food markets. It's difficult to say which Parisian market is the more delicious because they all are: your choice depends entirely on your tastes and on what you feel like on the day.

Le Marche Raspail is an up-market option with various stalls offering organic fruit and veg. This is also where food trucks park to dish out gourmet burgers, organic pate and gutsy Gallic

gastronomy. In the 12th arrondissement is Marche d'Aligre, an authentic food market that is open six days a week. The speciality here is olive oil from some of France's top producers.

The pride of the second arrondissement is the market at Rue Montorgueil, one of the oldest in Paris. The atmosphere here is beautifully busy: against the backdrop of Saint-Eustache church is a huddle of cafes, restaurants and stalls selling meat, fish and cheese.

An arrondissement away is Le Marche des Enfants Rouges. Built in 1615, this market sells fresh fare as well as more exotic offerings such as falafel. For a selection of the best patisserie, head to Rue Cler, a pedestrian area where the locals go to indulge their sweet tooth.

Gascony

The Villefranche-de-Rouergue market in Gascony may only open on Thursday mornings. And yet, in this one day, this old market makes you feel happy that you're alive. The medieval setting in Place Notre Dame will have your senses craving for a taste (not one, of course) of the region's delicacies. It is not unusual to see nuns selling homemade cake from the cathedral porch.

Thuir, Languedoc

Every Saturday, the main square in Thuir comes alive with more than 100 stalls selling fish, wine, vegetables and flowers. The market here is especially renowned for homemade tapenade and heritage tomatoes. After you've done your shopping and noon is approaching, sit down at one of the stalls and have lunch.

Marche des Arceaux, Montpellier

From fruit and cheese to vegetables, charcuterie and fresh bread, you can find it all at the Marche des Arceaux, which sets up near the aqueduct on the Boulevard des Arceaux. Vendors are more than happy to let you sample their fresh produce, which is all sourced locally.

Cours Saleya, Nice

The main market in Nice sets up from Tuesday to Sunday right outside the historic centre. Flowers and food share the limelight, especially regional specialities such as pigs' ears and heads. Other essentials of Nicois cooking include various parts of lamb and the freshest seafood.

Victor Hugo Market, Toulouse

Named after the author of *Les Miserables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the Victor Hugo Market in Toulouse is open every day except Monday from dawn till 1pm. Every stall is dedicated to a regional speciality: from lamb chops, escargot ready to be cooked in butter and garlic to camembert and almond *patisserie*, everything will have you queuing up for second helpings.

Palais des Ducs, Dijon

Renowned for its mustard, Kir, blackcurrant liqueur and gingerbread cake, Dijon is a foodie town. Les Halles, a covered market near the Palais des Ducs, is open every day selling a pride of fresh vegetables, fish, *liqueur de cassis* and herbs.



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