

# Serendipity Travels

## Log of the Gey

We are now in the main part of the Canal du Midi, and will spend a week climbing to the summit of the canal. There are several interesting structures ahead of us, and, fortunately, no more lakes or rivers to delay the trip.

### 3 October 2014

The Pont Canal de Béziers (right) was constructed in 1856 to carry the canal over L'Orb river. Before that time, boats would have to travel a part of their journey on the river.



Just beyond this bridge, one encounters L'Échelle de Fonserannes, a series of seven locks in a staircase that lifts the boat 13.60 m. Here, again, one must heed the clock. Vessels start down at 8:30; vessels going up wait until 10:00. We arrived plenty early and were able to observe several vessels finish their descent. One of the most interesting was a large barge, constructed to exactly the maximum allowable dimensions. Check the pictures in

the map tour to see how close he was as he turned in the basin at the base of the staircase.



When our turn came, Meredith was assisted in her line-handling duties by a nice gentleman, another ex-pat from the U.K. His boat was above the locks, and he had walked down to decide whether to descend later in the day. Seeing her by herself, he offered to help. Line handling is important, as you can see in the picture to the left the water comes in quickly. It takes about 30 minutes to cover the full seven locks distance, under the watchful eyes of the lock masters.

After clearing the last lock chamber, I picked up Meredith and we proceeded along the canal to Colombiers, where we found a nice mooring next to a café for lunch. We had intended to buy groceries at the store here, but the store closed for lunch from 12:00 – 16:00. Rather than wait, we journeyed on after lunch.

We did find an open mooring at the town of Capestang, and walked into the town. The “Super Marche” is more than a kilometer from the moorage, giving us our exercise for the day – especially the trek back with groceries.

We drove on for another hour and a half, reaching the Pont de Sériège before stopping for the evening. Adjacent to the Pont is a country inn. We walked up and asked if we could have dinner there – yes, but we’d have to sit outside since all the tables were reserved. The proprietor must have felt sorry for the wandering Americans, however, the meal was superb.

#### 4 October 2014

We did not replenish our wine supply in Capestang, but we knew there was a Cave in the upcoming town of Ventenac-en-Minervois. We arrived before noon and were able to visit before he closed. We were amused to see the facility for bulk wine purchases – bring in (or buy) a 3 or 5 liter plastic jug, and he will fill it with your choice of white, rosé, or red. We opted for a few bottles instead, but were tempted.



Adjacent to the cave, which was originally a château that has been converted to this use, was a small open-air café. We had a pleasant lunch watching the local chickens do clean-up duty.

Proceeding after lunch, we stopped at a *very* old canal bridge. The oldest in France, and perhaps in the world, it was constructed in 1676 (that is 100 years before the American Revolution!) and still in use today.

*To see pictures of our trip from Béziers to Colombiers, overlaid on a map, click: [Canal du Midi II](#)*

*To see pictures of our trip from Colombiers to Homps, overlaid on a map, click: [Canal du Midi III](#)*

Evening found us moored in the town of Homps.

### 5 October 2014

Today we concentrated on cruising, our goal is to be within a half-day of Carcassonne by the time we stop. The canal route is quite scenic, with a bit of whimsy at l'Écluse de l'Aiguille. The lockkeeper has constructed a number of statues out of scrap wood and metal.



Evening found us moored in the town of Trèbes. We had a casual dinner at an outdoor tapas bar across the waterway from our mooring spot.

### 6 October 2014

We drove a bit later than originally planned the last three days, and made up most of the lost time. Our plan for today was to make it to the medieval walled city of Carcassonne. There is a substantial canal-boat port there, with laundry facilities, and hopefully we could find an internet connection to allow us to catch up with the rest of the world.

We reached the outskirts of town just before noon. After lunch, Meredith went up to the lock and arranged our passage, as well as contacting the dock master for the marina on the other side and arranging two nights moorage for us. We were through and docked by 14:00.

Our visit to Carcassonne and the remainder of our trip on the *Gey* are reported in the next installment of the log.

*To see pictures of our trip from Homps to Carcassonne, overlaid on a map, click: [Canal du Midi IV](#)*