

LIFE AND PARENTING IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE

# the tots times



PHOTO: LISA ALLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

## President's Letter



With a new season comes a few changes for Tots & Co. We have a new name for the newsletter, a new home in Seilh and of course a brand new committee.

Sally, Claire, Sarah, Carol and I are all keen to maintain the heart of Tots & Co. as a supportive welcoming community of families in Toulouse. We want to make sure the focus is on maintaining and strengthening this network and providing activities for our members. I am very proud to be the figurehead for this wonderful association and I would like to offer a warm welcome for new members and a strong supportive community for everyone involved.

In this spirit of support and community I am thrilled to see so many people sharing their experiences about life as a parent in this issue. In particular, thank you to Dee Davidson for sharing her experiences of PND. This is not an easy subject for people to talk about and I hope with the new series 'Focus On...' we can instigate conversations to help each other through difficult times.

The practical information given about school options is something that is so vital for families living away from their home countries. The choice can be overwhelming sometimes and I definitely benefited from hearing other people's experiences when I was choosing a school for my son.

I'd like to thank all members for their personal contributions and positive attitude to Tots & Co. Let's keep up the good work!

Celia x

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# THE NEW COMMITTEE

## president



**CELIA GREEN**

**Mum to:** Ted, 3, and Honey, 10 months.

**Profession:** Japanese Teacher.

**If you could take only three items with you to a deserted island, what would they be?**

Tweezers, a digital radio and my duvet.

**If you could master one skill you don't have right now, what would it be and why?**

How to surf. It looks so much fun.

**If you could have one superpower, what would it be and how would you use it?**

I would fly and go visit all the people I have met and not been able to keep up with.

**If you could time travel, would you go to the past or the future? Why?**

The past. The future terrifies me.

**If you could have dinner with any one person, living or dead, who would they be and why?**

Kate Bush. I love Kate Bush. I want to find out all about her.

**What words of wisdom would you pass on to your childhood self?**

Being a teenager isn't all that bad Celia. Have fun and just be yourself.

## vice - president



**SALLY ONN**

**Mum to:** Olivia, 2, and Sébastien, 9 months

**Profession:** Solicitor

**If you could master one skill you don't have right now, what would it be and why?**

Parallel parking. In fact, any parking. I don't think I need to tell you why.

**If you could have one superpower, what would it be and how would you use it?**

Flight... so that I don't have to drive. Or park.

**If you could bring one fictional character to life, who would it be and why?**

L'ane Trotro (sort of France's answer to Peppa Pig, for the uninitiated), to entertain Olivia all day long (although he is a donkey, might live to regret that).

**If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?**

Run a marathon, a good, hard, fast marathon, such as the London Marathon perhaps, like I used to pre-babies (I was a sub-3 hour marathon runner). Although this assumes I had trained for said marathon, which is of course in the realms of fantasy.

## secretary

### SARAH LEMEE

**Mum to:** Alice, 4, and Millie, 18months

**Profession:** Customs & Excise Auditor (UK), Customs Clearance/Logistics (France)

**What animal best represents you and why?**

Probably a cat - independent, a thinker, affectionate (but only on my say so as I'm the boss!) and I like being curled up at home on the settee.

**How would you spend a billion dollars?**

Travel the world, make myself, family and friends comfortable then give the rest away to those that need it.

**If you could take only three items with you to a deserted island, what would they be?**

Chocolate, chocolate and some more chocolate.

**If you could time travel, would you go to the past or the future? Why?**

Definitely the past where the world seemed a smaller, more innocent place and we were all a bit naïve. But I wouldn't change a thing for fear of upsetting the future - too mind-boggling!

**If you could bring one fictional character to life, who would it be and why?**

Peppa Pig to come and entertain my kids when I need a break.



## membership coordinator

### CLAIRE HODGES

**Mum to:** Jacob, 4, and Thomas, 18months

**If you could master one skill you don't have right now, what would it be and why?**

The French language - not sure I really need to explain why.

**If you could have one superpower, what would it be and how would you use it?**

Superhuman speed so I could nip to the UK for an afternoon cup of tea and chat with my Gran before doing the school run.

**If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?**

I would rent out a gigantic house on a beautiful warm tropical island and spend a fun filled day with all my friends and family.

Carol Alexander-Reid remains as treasurer and also joining the team are Lisa Allen (Night Out Coordinator), Charley Sheffield and Christina Dier (Bumps to babies) and Emma Evans (Tiddlers/toddlers).

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT: NEW MEMBERS

## *Pattie Fellowes*

### What brings you to Toulouse?

Our family left Bristol and arrived in Toulouse only a few weeks ago. My husband, Alex, got a new role at Airbus, and my daughter and I followed him here to support his career.



### Tell us about your family

Our little girl, Emilia, is two years old. She loves animals, especially cats, and enjoys going to zoos and farms. She's proud to become a 'big sister' at the end of November!

### What did you do before motherhood/ what do you do now?

I love being a mum and enjoy spending time with little ones. Before I had Emilia, I was an art practitioner, teaching film production and photography at the University of the West of England. My daughter inspired me to take a new career step and to set up my own baby and family photography business. I really hope to re-establish it here in the future.

### What do you do in your free time?

In my free time I like doing craft, such as sewing dresses for little girls and babies. I also practice Pilates and aerial dancing.

### What are your favourite things about France?

Originally from Poland, but living in Bristol (UK) for the past ten years and with dual nationality, I'm used to living in various cultures and I feel very 'international'. We really enjoy France so far. We love the sunshine and our spacious house and garden. Emilia loves her trampoline, which wouldn't fit into our Bristol space. Thanks to all the lovely welcoming people and very friendly English playgroups, we settled here very well. We miss our friends and family, but it is easy to keep in touch these days.

We're very excited about our French adventure and what life in Toulouse will bring for us.

# NEWS.....

Bumps to Babies (Tots & Co's pregnancy and new mums' support group) is delighted to welcome five new mini tots.

We wish all of the new mums big congratulations from everyone at Tots & Co.

**Carol Alexander Reid** gave birth to baby Violet on 30th July at 8.50am weighing 4.1kg

**Karma Morgan** had a baby girl Amber on September 20th, weighing 3.4kg

**Freya Knapp** had a baby boy, Yannick, on September 21st

**Dominique Helstrip** gave birth to baby Robert on 7th October at 11am, weighing 3.7kg

And lastly, **Sonia Utrera Ruiz** had baby Lucas on 10th October at 6.40am, weighing 3.5kg



## IN OTHER NEWS.....

- Tuesday Tunes and Friday Funday have been taking place at our new hall in Seilh.
- The AGM in October saw an almost entirely new committee voted in.
- Members voted to continue to support Association Dominique as its nominated charity for the year.
- Members approved a proposal to have a single membership level (removing the current social membership) from 2016/17 while keeping the fee the same at 45 euros.
- Lastly, the committee appealed for anyone willing to lead the organisation of a larger fundraising event (in the past this has been the Spring Fair) to come forward, otherwise the committee will hold a series of smaller fundraising events over the course of the year to support the vital work of Association Dominique.

“WHAT IS YOUR FAILSAFE MEAL THAT YOU KNOW YOUR TODDLER WILL EAT EVEN IF THEY ARE BEING FUSSY?”

*Salmon with pasta and a cream or crème fraiche sauce.*

**SHARON FLOOD**



*Bolognese. Or I make a hidden vegetable sauce which I use with pasta or as a base for pizzas.*

**BECKY COLES**

*Pasta and chicken bake. Or pasta salad. Basically anything with pasta!*

**RAQUEL WOJTOWICZ**



# focus on.. **POSTNATAL DEPRESSION**



In our new series, Focus On, we will be looking at a different health issue each edition with the help of Tots & Co's medical expert, Dr Danielle Davidson.

I am standing looking at this tiny creature whilst the midwife moves over her. Hands expertly undress, soothe and transfer the little pink body into the hospital sink for her first moment back in water since the womb. The midwife's assistant is talking to me although her voice sounds muffled, far away, as if I am underwater. 'Come closer' she is saying but I can't move. I don't want to get closer. I don't want to touch the baby. Please, I say, I don't want to be here. And at that very moment the dread that has been building in my chest for the past two days explodes and suddenly I am crying; huge uncontrollable heaves and I am bent over double as the fear pours out of me.

Later, the midwife stops by my room. It is normal, she says, the Baby Blues are common, it will pass. But I don't believe her. All I know is that there is something very wrong with me.

I had read about the Baby Blues during pregnancy. I had been told about it during the preparation classes and had even seen it first hand during my medical training. Thought to be linked to chemical and hormonal changes after birth, 80% of new mums experience symptoms of weepiness, anxiety and sadness lasting anywhere from a couple hours to a few days. Requiring no treatment other than reassurance the Baby Blues are considered a normal part of the post-partum period.

And yet I wasn't weepy or sad, I was terrified. Anxiety gripped my chest like a vice. When I wasn't crying I felt I was suffocating. Every time I looked at my baby I felt angry that I had ruined my life by having her. These feelings did not pass and, in fact, worsened as the weeks went on. I turned to my husband a week after the birth and pleaded with him to have her adopted. I had realised the problem was with me, that I was missing the part of my brain which would allow me to feel anything for my own child. She needed to be given to someone who was capable of loving her.

Post Natal Depression (PND) is motherhood without the joy. And without the joy the darkness feels endless. For me it struck almost immediately but PND can happen at any point during the first two years post birth. Although certain risk factors exist everyone is vulnerable whether it is your first or fifth baby. It is a spectrum with psychosis at the most severe end and mild Baby Blues at the other but many fall somewhere in the middle experiencing significant lows in the struggle to adjust to the new, often overwhelming, responsibilities.

When it is missed or misdiagnosed it is because the common symptoms



are attributed to sleep deprivation, the physical and emotional strains of pregnancy and childbirth and the sudden changes in relationships and priorities. Life is a chaotic whirlwind of feelings of inadequacy or loss of self and freedom. Some women continue to care for their children in a robotic fashion whilst struggling against a daily cloud of depression and anxiety. Others find themselves completely debilitated by a lonely bleakness.

The cause of PND is still unclear but it is widely accepted as a combination of psychiatric and biophysiological factors beyond our control. One in ten new mums are affected by symptoms such as persistent sadness, anxiety or desperation and feeling unable to bond with their baby. In severe PND thoughts about harming the child or hoping for his or her death are extremely common. When the customary belief is that a baby should bring unconditional love and joy, mothers suffering from PND are understandably reluctant or ashamed to admit they are finding motherhood desolate or struggling to cope.

Although the consequences of untreated PND can be devastating, the good news is that it is the most treatable form of depression. If recognised quickly joy can be restored and the bond between mother and child built without lasting repercussions. Those affected need understanding and the opportunity to converse openly without judgement. Sharing the responsibilities of childcare, talking therapies and antidepressants are all that are needed in most cases, even in those with severe symptoms.

I would never have sought help because I didn't believe I was depressed. I was convinced I lacked the ability to love my own child and that could never be fixed. But I was lucky. My husband reacted swiftly and I received appropriate care. I switched from breast to bottle and with psychiatric input and medications I slowly emerged from the depression and discovered I was capable of loving my daughter. She is now a demandingly delightful toddler and big sister and it is a joy to be her mother.

In order to recognise PND we need more honesty and less judgement. Support the new mothers in your life. Give them a chance to talk openly. Listen and reassure but do not ignore the warning signs. PND will not go away but it can be treated successfully. I am a testament to that.

If you are feeling depressed or anxious, you can find an expert to speak to in English, based in Toulouse, by visiting [www.thecarenetworkmp.com](http://www.thecarenetworkmp.com).

## DISCLAIMER

All information in this Newsletter is entirely the view or opinion of the author. It is advisable that you verify any information from this Newsletter before relying on it.

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# SCHOOL OPTIONS ROUNDUP

## Local French school – by Catherine Savage

2nd September 2014 – Isla’s first day at school. Isla had some prior exposure to French, a few hours a week in a bilingual setting, but could barely speak or understand a word. We are the only Brits in our village. So it was with some trepidation I taught her the words: ‘je veux faire pipi’ and enrolled her in petite section at our local maternelle. When we set off on that first short, sunny walk to school I had no idea what to expect. Isla was excited, taking everything in her stride. I smiled politely yet awkwardly at the other parents (any chit-chat being out of the question). A year on la rentrée was very different. Isla was really excited at seeing her friends again and began a countdown a week or two before the big day. In preparation, she began chatting away to herself in French whilst playing (she was fluent before the end of the school year). I relished catching up with other parents, many of whom are now firm friends.

Throughout last September I questioned whether we had made the right decision, effectively throwing Isla in at the deep end. A real wobble came on day one when she suffered a nasty black eye (I later discovered from a hula-hooping incident) that healed within a week but starkly demonstrated the difficulties the language barrier posed for me. This September the thought has not even entered my head. I can wholeheartedly say for us it was the right decision (though I accept not for all). The most common criticism I hear about French schools are they are stricter than in the UK (let’s not forget our two and three year olds wouldn’t even be in school yet in the UK). Isla is my oldest child so I have no comparisons. There are rules and discipline (with 28 in a class there needs to be) but also creativity, play and regular school trips. Isla has embraced learning, school life, rules, la cantine (who wouldn’t with duck breast and melt in the middle choc pudding?) and much more with gusto. She has thrived and matured into a confident and happy little girl. I understand not all teachers are created equally and huge differences seem to exist in the quality of schools and teaching. We got lucky! Isla’s maîtresse Danielle was warm, kind, supportive and genuinely knew how to get the best from kids. She really cared. I lay so much of the credit for Isla’s development over the last year firmly with her. Maîtresse Céline has a lot to live up to but so far she is.

An unexpected benefit of Isla going to our local French school is the way I feel genuinely and warmly welcomed into my local community. Before Isla started at school I spoke briefly to my neighbours and made an effort to be friendly to all I met but it was not until Isla started at school did I truly feel part of my community. Now roll on September 2016 when my younger monkey starts.

## International School of Toulouse (IST) – by Claire Hodges

Jacob started full time in Foundation Stage 1 at the International School of Toulouse in September 2014 when he was three and a half. A week before starting school we had a home visit from two members of staff. Whilst I discussed practical aspects, Jacob got to know and play with his teaching assistant. This visit significantly reduced Jacob’s nervousness about beginning school, a concern of mine as he often struggles in new situations.

The approach in the IST primary school is that children learn through play and they often choose the activities they participate in. This approach is helped by classes having a ratio of fewer than

ten children to an adult. Over the year Jacob proudly bought home many junk model cars, spaceships and robots as well as spending many hours playing outside on the bikes and scooters.

The school has specialised staff teaching French (one hour a week), music and sport. Throughout the year we had regular feedback meetings and received his first school report this June - to my husband's delight they already think we have an engineer in the making! The biggest downsides of the IST are having to travel by car and not easily meeting local families, although Jacob is currently designing a flying car to mitigate the first problem!

## **Kaleidoscope - by Kate Gondouin**

We first came across Kaleidoscope in 2013 when we were looking for a school for our eldest daughter, Sophie. We felt that it offered the best solution for her.

There are many aspects that we liked but the key ones for us were: the structure of school life (two days in French and two days in English with an option of Wednesday club also in English); the size of the school (fewer than 50 children over two classes) - this will increase in 2016 with the opening of a new, larger school in Plaisance du Touch; having native speakers of French and English for both teachers and teaching assistants; French and English teaching styles and approaches on a series of themes for the year allowing pupils to adapt more easily to either French or English teaching systems in the future (very important when we didn't know where we were going to be in a few years' time); the extra-curricular activities (eg swimming, cycling, music, visiting local library, cinema trips, theatre, museum, golf etc) all adding to the opportunities for the children; the positive vibe and commitment of the people we met including teachers, management and parents.

Unfortunately as Sophie was so young when she started (two years and three months), and possibly fuelled by the arrival of her little brother into the world a month before the start of school, drop-offs during the first term were difficult! But the teachers, assistants and older pupils were all there to help and the pairing of older children and newbies worked very well.

Obviously the size of the school and premises does have an impact (for example parking can be tricky sometimes) but we are happy with the choice we made and intend to send our son there full-time as soon as he is old enough.

## **Rainbows English Playschool - by Laurelle Hughes-Carre**

Rainbows English Playschool is situated in Le Pergert Centre Commercial in Colomiers. The ethos is to provide a bridge between home life and preparing them for preschool.

We moved to Toulouse in February and could not find a place for my four-year-old son in any English, Montessori or bilingual school. I decided to home school him and finally got a place at Rainbows after being in Toulouse for more than two very difficult months. I watched my social butterfly of a boy slowly lose his spark. The staff at Rainbows was supportive, patient and so nurturing, yet allowed him to gain independence through creativity and exploration. They truly embody the true meaning of learning through play. The teachers provide learning opportunities for children allowing them to explore their areas of interest through the early years curriculum. In the short time my son has explored the weather systems, learnt about the body, numeracy, practical life skills and has been encouraged in imaginative independent play. The children are encouraged to

help and support each other and younger kids, which I found very impressive. The parents are all supportive and give a great community feel. The classrooms are well stocked with equipment and older kids are taught numeracy, phonics, pre-writing and reading.

On the downside, there is no outside play area which doesn't seem to matter much because somehow my son is always tired at pick up. In short it's a great playschool and has helped me and my son immensely.

## **La Tour Rose Bilingual Montessori – by Christina Dier**

Nestled among the trees in Labège, La Tour Rose is a French/English Montessori that emphasizes self-directed activities, hands-on learning, and collaborative play. For our daughter, who has attended La Tour Rose for the past year, the quaint setting and Montessori pedagogy have been a perfect fit.

Children are divided into three mixed-age classrooms: 18 months-three years (15 children, one teacher, one assistant), three-six years (30 children, two teachers, one assistant), and six-12 years (30 children, two teachers). In addition to traditional school subjects, students are exposed to practical life activities like cleaning up and gardening on a daily basis. To our delight, our daughter also comes home with more drawings and paintings than we can possibly fit on our walls. Most of the teaching is done in French, with English as a clear second language.

Children attend school everyday but Wednesday. Drop-off is between 8.20am and 9am and pick-up is between 4.30 and 4.45pm, though the two younger classrooms have half-day options. Garderie is also available until 6pm for those who need it (at an additional cost). As one expects in France, the weekly cantine menu is always well-balanced and fancy.

Most families at the school are French, however, there are a handful of other nationalities represented. The school's parent association does a wonderful job to create a sense of school community by organizing holiday goûters, school clean up days, and family activities outside of school.

We've found our daughter's teachers to be kind and dedicated to their profession. The school director and office staff are extremely helpful and I've consistently felt well informed of what is going on at school (e.g. illnesses, my daughter's progress, upcoming events, etc.) through email newsletters and frequent in-person communication with school staff.

We've been highly pleased with La Tour Rose and would strongly recommend it to other families. The school's next open day is planned for Saturday 16 January from 9.30am-1pm.

# SURVIVING OUR FIRST

## 'LA RENTRE'

BY KATY EALES

When George arrived in the summer of 2012, the idea of him starting school was a distant consideration. Fast forward three years and I find myself awake at 3am, wondering whether I'm making a huge mistake sending my little prince to the big scary French school round the corner. Although born and raised in France, my husband and I are English and so G's primary language is English and aside from the odd 'bonjour' to the neighbours that's as far as it goes.

We had considered all the schooling options in Toulouse, but our main objective, given our plan to return to the UK in the near future, was to expose G to as much French as possible and hope some of it sticks.

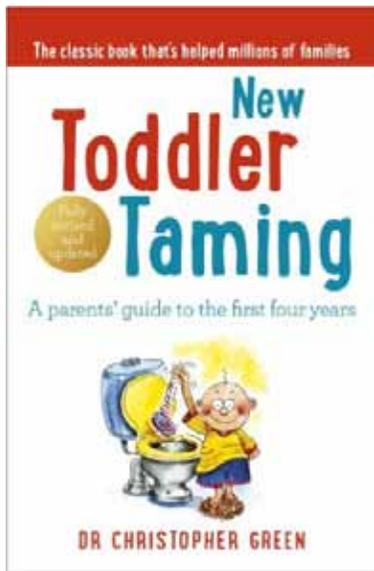
We are now four weeks into French school life and this morning, at the door to the classroom, G confidently said: 'OK mummy I'm going in now, you can go.' I shed far more tears as a result of this than I had on the first day.

It's been by no means a stress-free start to his education, but little by little we have adapted and his confidence, enthusiasm and interest in school for now, gives me hope that we made the right decision for him. Here's what I've learnt so far:

1. Chances are you will know very little about the school/teacher/school day before they start. We didn't even know what day or time to arrive.
2. Find a local friend who can give you invaluable advice/tips.... thanks to Becky Camwell we arrived on the right day.
3. Consistency and openness. Whilst I have found the school very happy to indulge my overprotective side and let G start with only mornings, what they do need is consistency, so the children can quickly begin to understand the rhythm of a week and know what to expect each day.
4. We found that G was exhausted after school so naps have made a reappearance. Sadly so has a later bed time!
5. Throw in the odd French word. I found it really helped to teach G some basic French words at home e.g. sit down, stop, wait, wee, poo etc.
6. Books. We read a few French and English books about starting school during the summer before the start of term, (we read *Pirate Pete goes to Nursery* and *T'choupi Rentre a l'École*)
7. Visit school, even if it's just to take a look from the outside. It's helpful to eliminate as many new things from the first day as possible.
8. Remember even if you leave them in the most heart wrenching mess you are likely to find them as happy as Larry when you pick them up.
9. Be brave! They are way stronger than we give them credit for sometimes.



# book review BY NINA BAUSEK



I am no expert on advice books for children behaviour, as I, probably like many of you, thought for a lovely 22 months that I wouldn't need them. My little baby was growing up just fine, walked, talked, smiled and was happily up for anything. Until that day where I explained to her that we couldn't take an apple into the store, as they would make us pay. Now I know reason is not to be expected from a toddler, but I was not prepared for the cataclysmic consequences – my first full-on tantrum experience, blocking the supermarket entry with a wailing child on the floor. I did manage to shrug this one off and get my vegetable shopping done until we could negotiate again, but when about 17 tantrums followed the next day I was ready for some HELP! My lovely friend lent me her copy of New Toddler Taming by the paediatrician Dr Christopher Green. What makes this book most suitable to read at the onset of the 'terrible twos' is the about 10 page summary of the main messages and techniques of the whole book at the very beginning – a life saver for those with very limited reading time (possibly due to a tantrum

throwing toddler). The chatty and slightly sarcastic tone of the book greatly appealed to me, but might not be to everyone's taste. It does make a very funny read at times though, such as the 'smash and grab shopper (parent), with sparks flying from their trolley wheels' in order to outrun the toddler's preparation time for a public tantrum (my hence adopted shopping policy. Disadvantages include that I never make it to the aisles with cleaning products and toilet paper).

The reason I dislike many educational books is the warfare-like tone of how to deal with 'them'. The atmosphere in the New Toddler Taming is entirely different, as the main message is to 'savour the magic of toddlerhood', with all its innocence, creativity and honesty, with all the sunshine and the hailstorms. His fundamental belief is that toddlers want attention, time, and love and affection, and cannot be spoilt by too much of any of these, and problems often result from insufficient supply of these toddler basic needs.

He then follows up the main behavioural problems, such as tantrums, sleep issues, eating habits, toilet training, and day care related questions with very hands-on tips and techniques to solve the issues, lots of examples from his experience as a paediatrician, as well as the omnipresent message that this is all normal toddler behaviour! I have tried and tested his method to deal with tantrums (for a start). As a preventative measure for most problems, spending quality time with your toddler might reduce the frequency and intensity of these. If a tantrum can't be avoided by last minute distraction, the book recommends staying calm and kind without giving in or punishing and waiting for the subsiding of the wave. Tantrums are no fun without audience. I found this one to be especially true as I waited for another tantrum attack to peter out, this time blocking the swing on the playground. It does come with the double difficulty of trying to shrug off your child's behaviour and the public frown of parents with different educational ideals. Hang in there, it does work. You might have to change playground though.

# DAYS OUT

BY SHARON FLOOD

## la ferme du paradis

Our day trip to La Ferme du Paradis was a Father's Day treat. My (at the time) 18-month-old loves animals (what child doesn't?) but not as much as Daddy does!

The park boasts more than 200 animals starting with an abundance of the usual farm animals like pigs, goats, horses, rabbits etc, as well as some slightly more unusual animals like kangaroos, wallabies, ostrich, reindeers and it's even home to the odd water buffalo. On entering the park you are handed a small bag of food to feed the animals and children can have a pony ride too.

The park is located in a forest so there are lots of shaded areas, perfect for hot days and lots of opportunities for picnics with many picnic benches dotted around the park, just watch out for the friendly but very hungry miniature goats that freely frequent the park!

There is also a bouncy castle and trampoline area and small water park for the little ones to cool off on hot days all included in the entry price of €5.50 for over 12s, € over 2s (under 2s free).

It's a fun place to visit to see a wide variety of happy-looking animals, to enjoy a picnic and for the little ones to enjoy a splash around and happily not too far from Toulouse.

La Ferme du Paradis is located in Rieumes about 30 minutes from Toulouse and is open every day during the school holidays from 10am-7pm and during term time it is open Wednesday afternoons from 1.30-6pm and weekends from 10am-6pm.



# CAFE REVIEW

BY KERRY EADY

## Philibert,

5 Rue Riguepels, 31000, Toulouse

Philibert, in central Toulouse, is a restaurant/wine bar with a fabulous view from its terrace on the square of St Etienne cathedral. The room is cozy with seats at regular tables, a few at the bar, and some at higher tables, which suit its selection of French-style tapas. Open six days a week, it offers a good fixed-priced menu on weekdays with a wider choice at night and on Saturdays. More restaurant than wine bar, it's nevertheless a nice place to drop by for just a drink as they have a good, constantly changing, selection of wines by the glass, as well as a full list by the bottle.

We tend to go for Saturday lunch, so are able to sample the full menu. Like most restaurants in Toulouse, kids are welcome, but there aren't any specific facilities for them. Over my many visits though, I've seen them happily warm up food brought by parents for their offspring and my one-year-old is happy to plough through pretty much the entire menu. The young manageress speaks good English having worked in New Zealand for a couple of years.

At the weekend and the evenings their starters are tapas style, with perhaps ten on offer, all at 6 euros, except for a couple which are more expensive - the squid and a plate of Spanish ham the day we were there. The tapas are ample sized and one per head suffices as a starter though I have to admit it is rare we are that restrained. But it's easy to skip the main courses entirely and savour a wide variety of the tapas instead and the restaurant is more than happy with this approach.

We shared two starters - the local Rocamadour cheese, roasted and served on a slice of toasted bread and drizzled with honey - delicious, and inspiration for an easy-to-recreate lunch at home. The other was a totally fabulous Basque squid dish; baby squid stewed in a tomato, garlic and red pepper sauce and the kind of thing I'd happily eat every day.

The menu changes daily, but there are some ever-present dishes. The most expensive thing on the menu is cote de boeuf for two at 55 euros, and as enormous as that price tag suggests. Caesar salad with chicken, a classic burger, steak tartare and faux-filet steak are also on there, ranging in price from 13 euros for the burger to 21 euros for the steak. Portion sizes are substantial.... As I don't eat meat, I always go for the fish option, which usually comes in around 18 euros. This time, it was a beautifully cooked plaice with spicy saffron rice and creamed leeks.

For pudding, the cafe gourmand at 7 euros gives you a chance to sample their small dessert menu. If you prefer to focus on just the one thing, there is always a fabulous chocolate mousse, not too bitter, and the day we went, a gateau Basque, with a whole fig baked into it. For me, the only downside to the place is that they don't offer a cheese course, which seems a real pity, given the delicious wine on offer.

Philibert, 5 Rue Riguepels, Toulouse, 31000. Open lunch and dinner every day except Sunday.



# CRAFT CORNER

BY JACQUELINE GLANVILLE

## hedgehog craft

**THIS FABULOUS PICTURE IS A GREAT WAY OF USING THE MOUNTAIN OF LEAVES AND NUTS THAT HAVE BEEN COLLECTED ON AUTUMN WALKS AND IS REALLY SIMPLE FOR YOUR CHILDREN TO CREATE.**

### YOU WILL NEED:

Hedgehog template\*  
Collection of autumn leaves  
Acorn case or small nut  
Glue



### HOW TO MAKE:

Cut out the hedgehog and cover the body with glue. Let your child have fun arranging the leaves on the hedgehog. Glue the nuts to make the nose and eye. To finish, stick the collage on to a colored sheet of paper.

A little tip - You can dry leaves with a household iron.

Template can be found at <http://krokotak.com/2013/03/fall-leaf-hedgehog/>

# AN INTERVIEW WITH MUM

## KATY EALES AND GEORGE (AGE 3 YEARS)

1. **What makes Mummy happy?**

Martha (his little sister!)

2. **What makes Mummy sad?**

Daddy!!!

3. **How old is Mummy?**

4 years old (he is desperate to be older but thinks everyone is one year older than him!)

4. **What is Mummy's favourite thing to do?**

Shopping!

5. **What is Mummy really good at?**

Buying pastries

6. **What is Mummy's job?**

Getting me to go to sleep!

7. **What is Mummy's favourite food?**

Apples

8. **What do you and Mummy do together?**

Cuddle

