



# Ambassador's Activities

2013

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Speech by HE Bernard Emié,  
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

at the open day to promote the Causses and Cévennes areas

25 May 2013

Chairman,

Secretary of State,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

First of all, let me tell you in a few words how pleased I am to welcome you to the French Residence today for this fine tribute to the Causses and Cévennes area.

I particularly want to welcome Jean-Paul Pourquier, Chairman of Lozère General Council and of the *Entente Interdépartementale des Causses et des Cévennes*, and Jacques Blanc, former Secretary of State, former Senator, Chairman of Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council until 2004 and Chairman of the Lozère Departmental Committee. Your professed love of the region and commitment to promoting this remarkable area were, I know, decisive factors in its inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List on 28 June 2011.

And I haven't forgotten Mme Sandrine Lagloire, Director of the *Entente Interdépartementale des Causses et des Cévennes*, and M. Pierre Spirito, Director of the Lozère Departmental Committee, who spearhead this project with great energy and played a large part, along with Atout France, in organizing this event.

Before handing over to Jean-Paul Pourquier, who will take you on a journey to the heart of that stunning area, allow me to tell you why the French Residence is welcoming you here today.

Nestling in the heart of France between the departments of Aveyron, Lozère, Gard and Hérault, the Causses and Cévennes area is a priceless jewel of France's natural and cultural heritage, where some of the most illustrious pages of our national story have been written.

Rooted in the history of the Gévaudan country, the area is forever associated with the names of Pope Urban the Fifth, a native of the region who built Gothically-inspired architectural wonders, and Bertrand du Guesclin, who died outside Châteauneuf-de-Randon while trying to recapture it... from the English!

Above all, it was in the heart of the Cévennes and Lozère that, from 1940 onwards, thousands of Resistance fighters, most of whom remain nameless, refused to surrender and joined the Maquis, risking the ultimate sacrifice to oppose Nazi barbarity. As the cradle of the Resistance, the area forged France's identity and saved her honour, as well as writing her legend.

Shaped by both man and nature, the area's natural and cultural heritage is equally remarkable. First and foremost, the Causse and Cévennes offers a majestic natural backdrop, with the Gorges du Tarn canyon, the Cévennes National Park and Mont Lozère. Its diversity is unique, its colossal architectural heritage fusing with the landscape between town and country, sky and land. The local players have paid special attention to that heritage and highlighted it magnificently.

A haven of agro-pastoralism and responsible agriculture, the area produces a few of the most renowned French gastronomic specialities, like the incomparable Lozère lamb, Aubrac beef, Bleu des Causses cheese and, of course, Roquefort. Symbols of excellence and refinement à

*la française*, recognized by the national and European labels, they fully deserved an international accolade, following the one for the whole of our gastronomy, which was included on the 2010 Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

So today's meal – which has been prepared by Daniel Lagrange, chef at the Mont Aigoual Hotel in Meyrueis, Lozère, with the help of the Residence's head chef, and which will be served in a few moments – is above all a tribute to the cattle breeders of the Causses and Cévennes, to their ancestral know-how and the love they have for their land.

Recognition by UNESCO on 28 June 2011 was the crowning achievement of years of intense efforts and hard work by the General Councils and prefectural authorities of four French departments, Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées Regional Councils and also all the local players.

By giving global recognition to a model based on geographical balances, heritage conservation, equitable and sustainable development, and excellence in terms of the environment and food, UNESCO reminds us that we in France can accomplish great things together and bring out the very best in our local regions.

Now looking towards the future, the *Entente Interdépartementale des Causses et Cévennes*, which is in charge of this project alongside the *Association de Valorisation des Espaces des Causses et des Cévennes*, also has the ambition of making the area a recognized destination for responsible and rural tourism.

It's an ambition well on the way to being achieved, since the region, which already has many German, Dutch and Spanish visitors, has for some years been experiencing an invasion – fortunately a peaceful one – of Britons. They make up 30% of European tourists in the Lozère department, sampling the charming vernacular heritage of its villages such as Couvertoirade and Roquefort, staying in authentic rural *gîtes* and discovering great natural areas such as the Causse du Larzac, the Jonte Gorges and the Cirque de Navacelles.

Our British friends are, moreover, lucky, given the many direct flights from the UK to Montpellier, Nîmes, Carcassonne and Rodez.

So before handing over to Jean-Paul Pourquoi, I have only one thing to say: « *Venez, venez en Lozère, chers amis !* » ./.