

MAINSTAGE



2012-2013 SEASON EVENTS

September 27th

AQUILA THEATRE CYRANO DE BERGERAC

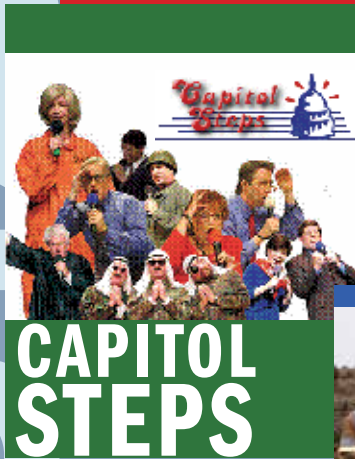
Schaeffer Theatre, 7:30 pm



September 29th

AQUILA THEATRE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Schaeffer Theatre, 7:30 pm



November 9th

CAPITOL STEPS

Lewiston Middle School Auditorium, 7:30pm



January 26th

CHRISTOPHER O'REILLY "OUT OF MY HANDS"

Franco American Heritage Center, 7:30pm



LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO

February 8th

LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO

Franco American Heritage Center, 7:30pm

CHRISTOPHER O'REILLY

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Franco Files

Maybe you didn't hear me. "*Bienvenue au Maine.*"

BY RHEA CÔTÉ ROBBINS

While the majority of Mainers are of French heritage, their presence as speakers of that language is but a whisper. Yet, acting like a detective, one finds a sense of conversational French is alive and well and living here, everywhere you turn. The trick is to create your own DIY tour. With a few starting points, you can get the lowdown on each town—where to get hooked-up with local cuisine, conversations, and more.

LES BROCHURES

Begin with the Maine Tourism site, which offers a French-only brochure, "*Le Maine: Découvrez beauté et sensations au milieu des splendeurs de l'État du Maine.*" Click on the French flag, bottom left, to access the brochure along with an online version of "*Le Maine de A à Z.*" Also, by using any Internet search-engine translation feature, you can plug in the websites and *voilà*, you have a DIY tour *en français!* visitmaine.com/resource/pdf/brochures/french.pdf; visitmaine.com/resource/pdf/LeMaineAZ.pdf

COMITÉ DE RÉCEPTION

If you seek authenticity, join one of the French-language groups that dot the state like a neon necklace of cultural exchange. Some groups meet in cafés, libraries, and clubs, while others meet at kitchen parties and potlucks. What's most important are the people you meet and their connections to the communities. All of the meetings are open to the curious DIYer.

Here are some leads on the *mondes*.

THE RUSTY FRENCH CLUB. Meetings are held the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in the Community Room of the The Goodall Library, 952 Maine Street, Sanford. 324-4714

FRENCH CLUB meets every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at McArthur Public Library, 270 Main Street, Biddeford. 284-4181.

LA RENCONTRE meets 11:30 a.m., first Fridays, at the Franco-American Heritage Center, 46 Cedar Street, Lewiston. 783-1583

LES BAVARDS is a gathering of Franco-Americans and French speakers every Saturday at 9 a.m. in Jorgensen's Café, 103 Main



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ROOTS

Street, Waterville. 872-8711

RENDEZ-VOUS, a French-conversation group running for over 30 years, meets on first and third Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Starbucks, 38 Bangor Mall Boulevard., Bangor. 262-0490

NANCY LAMARRE hosts kitchen and house parties with music, food, and French culture in the purest form once a month at changing locations in Bangor. 947-3875

LE CLUB FRANÇAIS in Madawaska hosts monthly meetings and various programs to preserve French culture in the St. John Valley. Call Ross and Judy Paradis for programs and events. They're in the book, or ask anyone you meet. 728-4649

TOURS GRATUITS

Start off on the right foot with something free! These tours of cultural history and geography offer context on why the French are so present in the state.

Online audio, maps, websites, and listings give a SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN'S EXPEDITIONS IN THE BAR HARBOR REGION. nps.gov/archeology/visit/Champlain/about.htm

THE OLD CANADA ROAD follows U.S. Route 201 and was a major thoroughfare for traveling between Maine and Québec. visitmaine.com/attractions/culture_history_museums/kennebec-chaudiere/upper/old-canada-road

KENNEBEC-CHAUDIÈRE CORRIDOR, which follows the rivers in Québec and Maine, is complete with online audio tours and bilingual panels along the route depicting the important historical sites. visitmaine.com/attractions/culture_history_museums/kennebec-chaudiere

VOICI THE VALLEY CULTUREWAY FOR THE ST. JOHN VALLEY offers an online, self-guided audio tour. voicithervalley.org

MUSEUM IN THE STREETS heritage trails provide bilingual historical panels for self-guided tours of Waterville, Thomaston, Searsport, Hallowell, Biddeford, Belfast, and Augusta. themuseuminthestreets.com

FÊTES DE LA FRANCE

While on your DIY tour, many festivals offer a taste of French heritage and language:

LA KERMESSE, Biddeford, June 21-24, lakermessefestival.com

MAINE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Waterville, July 13-22, miff.org

ACADIAN FESTIVAL, Madawaska, August 9-15, acadianfestival.com

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ROOTS

AMERICAN FOLK FESTIVAL, Bangor, August 24-26, americanfolkfestival.com

WORLD ACADIAN CONGRESS, New Brunswick, August 8-24, 2014

Heritage centers and museums around the state offer information on the contributions of the French in Maine. "With more than 300 museums, libraries, and historical societies, Maine is considered a museum di-amond mine," mainevacations.net states.

Two sites in northern Maine offer tours in French: The Acadian Village in Van Buren and Musée culturel du Mont-Carmel in Lille.

DE LA CUISINE

For an authentic taste of Maine's French cuisine and an ideal picnic, try MAILHOT'S BEST CRETONS PORK SPREAD, found in grocery stores. The same company offers TOURTIÈRE and SALMON PIE. Also look for PLOYES. Made with buckwheat flour, these gluten-free treats are as pure and delicate as CRÊPES. Add a lovely bottle of wine, and bon appétit!

KEN'S PLACE in Scarborough has a bilingual menu, and owner Dave Wilcox says he has staff who speak French, but if they don't happen to be working on a particular day, customers will order by pointing to the items in French they want.

FRÉQUENCES RADIO

Experience French culture through the airwaves—literally.

TV5, FROM QUÉBEC, offers a variety of programs from the international French-speaking world.

Sirius Satellite Radio offers several stations in French: L'OASIS FRANCOPHONE, LATITUDE FRANCO, and BANDE À PART. And while touring northern Maine, dial in to several New Brunswick radio stations. On Sundays at 9 a.m., Lewiston-Auburn's WEZR 1240 AM hosts "La Revue Francaise" with Connie Cote. She's headed the program for over 40 years.

LA PLUS BELLE

Life wouldn't be complete without a session at a hair salon and a treatment *de la belle langue française*. Nancy Lamare, owner of MON AMI SALON in Bangor, styles hair in her native French tongue as well as in English. And these aren't her only talents; Nancy also plays accordion and sings traditional music as her avocation. She's also your connection to house parties in the Bangor area.

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Northern Maine's businesses sport signs in their windows like "*on parle français ici*," alerting the savvy DIY tour guide to the abilities of the staff to parlay in French fluently.

Colorful metaphors, body language, and the mother tongue are the rule at Long Lake Sporting Club in Sinclair, where meals with out-of-this-world portions are delivered with aplomb—and in French—*chère* and *cher*.

DORMIR SOUS LA LUNE

In southern Maine, Old Orchard Beach's **KEBEK 2 MOTEL** and **KEBEK 3 MOTEL** offer their accommodations in French as well as English. Why? It was started by the Beaulieu family from Sillery, Québec.

DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES

For literary lovers, a tour of **PETITE PLAISANCE**, the Northeast Harbor home of French novelist **MARGUERITE YOURCENAR** (*MÉMOIRES D'HADRIEN*), provides insight to how Maine's French heritage figured in world literature. Yourcenar's a particularly significant figure, being the first woman admitted to the Académie Française.

Another gem: a French-language immigration story by **CAMILLE LESSARD BISSONNETTE**: *CANUCK ET D'AUTRES HISTOIRES*.

L'IDENTITÉ FRANÇAISE

It's difficult not to acknowledge the gulf between the DIY tour and complete immersion. I'd be surprised if there were any French-only venues in Maine. But the act of living bilingually is making a political statement—committing a political act, as I tell my students in my Franco-American courses.

Going to **KEN'S PLACE** in Scarborough and reading their bilingual menu is to see my language and culture reflected in the public space. I took a menu home as evidence of this fact. What they're doing is showing business savvy.

The DIY tour is best fueled by a little curiosity and a deep love for the language and its customs. It's like living in a parallel universe. These immersion experiences make us rich with reflections. ■

Rhea Côté Robbins is the author of *Wednesday's Child*. ▶▶ To read our interview with the late Marguerite Yourcenar, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/05/yourcenar.



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