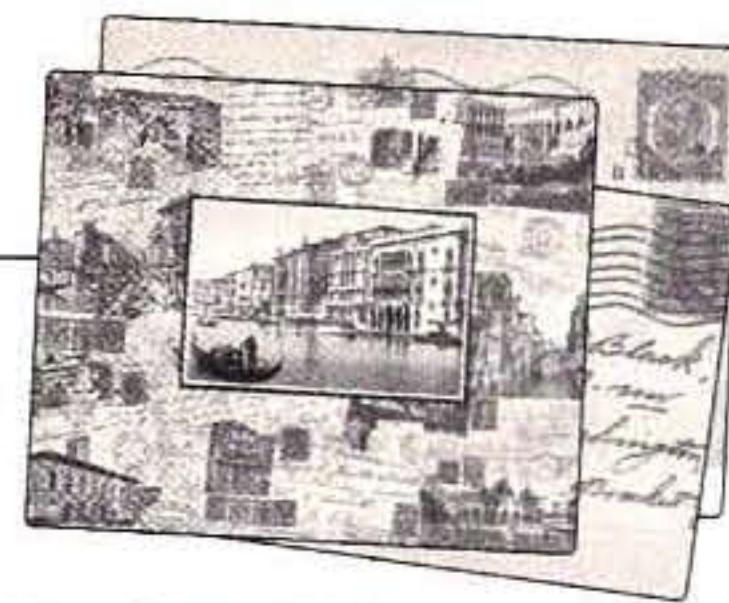


Wish You Were Here...

Postcards From Abroad: France & The UK



■ **CARCASSONNE, FRANCE.** More than just an amazing and heavily restored relic of the past, Carcassonne is famous for providing a fireworks spectacle that sets the whole sky ablaze. It takes place on the night of **July 14th** (Bastille Day). More than 700,000 spectators join together on the banks of the River Aude to watch flames of blue, white, yellow, green, red and gold blazing over the town's ancient ramparts.

Since the Old Town was restored in the mid-19th century, its narrow streets and hundreds of souvenir shops have become a bit of a tourist trap. ■ Instead, head for its dramatic 13th century basilica, **St. Nazaire** on Place de L'Église, which is noted for its beautiful stained glass windows and 16th century organ. And, set aside time to see several of the Old Town's museums. ■ The castle, **Château Comtal** (1 Rue Viollet le Duc, ☎ 011-33-468-117-070, \$11) has a small collection of fascinating medieval sculptures. ■ The **Musée Mémoires du Moyen Age** (Museum of the Middle Ages, near Porte Narbonnaise, ☎ 011-33-468-710-865, \$7) focuses on the intriguing history of the town. ■ Also in the Old Town, **Museum of Chivalry Arms & Archery** (2 Rue Porte d'Aude, ☎ 011-33-468-727-551, \$8) and the ■ **School Museum** (3 Rue du Plô, ☎ 011-33-468-259-514, \$5.25) which is the reconstruction of an old classroom. **Note:** The entire Old Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

You can sleep at the **Hôtel du Pont Vieux** (32 rue Trivalle, ☎ 011-33-468-252-4999, www.lacitedecarcassonne.fr) for \$95/night, incl bkfst. Just a few minutes from the Old Town walls, the country-style rooms are small, comfortable and air-conditioned. The roof terrace and gardens (open for bkfst and drinks) have views over the historic area. **TIP:** Ask for room #6 or #11 — both open onto the garden.



The medieval walled town of Carcassonne, in the south of France, is a magnet for lovers of French history. Allegedly it was the inspiration for the setting of Walt Disney's "Sleeping Beauty." The town also appeared in the 1991 Kevin Costner film, "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves."

Or stay 30 miles north of Carcassonne in Mazamet, a lovely little town in the foothills of the Montagne Noire Mountains. **Villa de Mazamet** (☎ 011-33-563-979-033, www.villademazamet.com), a newly-restored 1930s villa, also has a restaurant and swimming pool. The rate, \$100/night, incl bkfst. **\$TIP:** Throughout 2009, the owners are offering 3 nights for the price of 2. From here you can easily drive to **Albi** (home of a noted cathedral as well as the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum) or to see the distinctive architecture of "the Pink City" and Saint Sernin Basilica, restored by the same architect who helped restore Carcassonne.

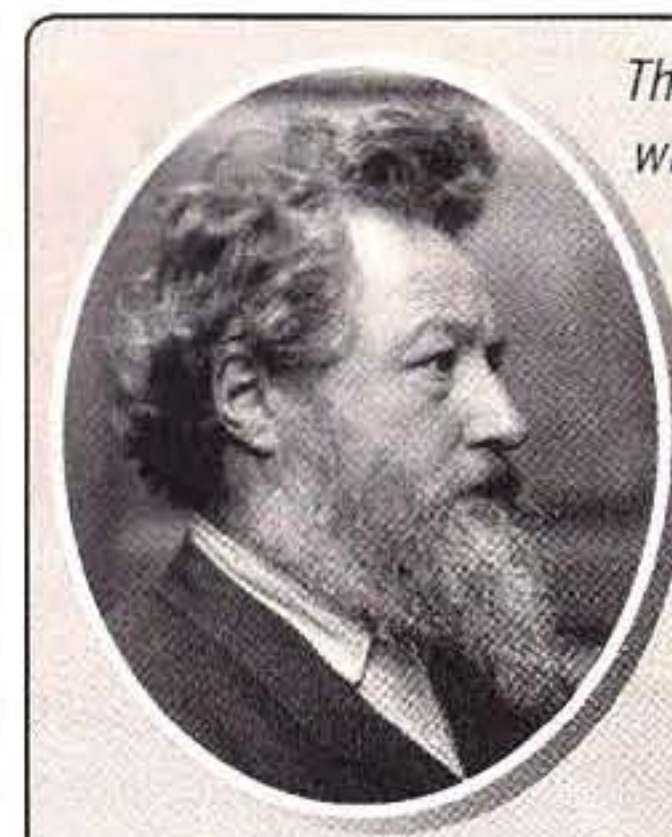
MORE INFO: ☎ 011-33-468-102-430, www.carcassonne.org.

■ **ENGLAND.** The Cotswolds, as you know, are inevitably packed with tourists. We've found a fine exception — **Chipping Campden** with its famous High Street, a wonder of stone cottages, Georgian terraces and ancient inns. The lack of a railway station is a plus in that it means the town never has long lines of visitors! Nevertheless, trains from London's **Paddington Station** (☎ 011-44-207-278-5240, www.nationalrail.co.uk) take just 1.5-2 hours and cost only \$46. They stop at **Moreton-in-Marsh**, 15 min from Chipping Campden by taxi or bus (☎ 011-44-145-182-0369, www.pulhamscoaches.com).

In addition, buses #21 and #22 run almost hourly from **Stratford-on-Avon** (☎ 011-44-871-200-2233, www.traveline.org.uk).

Among the unmissable delights of Chipping Campden is the presence of those bulwarks of the **Arts and Crafts movement**, William Morris and C.R. Ashbee. The movement, which began in the late 19th century as a reaction to the industrial revolution, emphasized manual skills and master craftsmanship. Morris' **Kelmscott Manor** (☎ 011-44-136-725-2486, www.kelmscottmanor.co.uk) not far away in the village of Kelmscott (near Lechlade) is a Tudor farmhouse with a fine collection of Morris textiles, furniture and paintings.

For horticulturists, **Hidcote Manor Garden** (☎ 011-44-138-643-8333, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hidcote/) is also nearby and a must! It features unusual plants from around the world as well as a wonderful old rose garden. You can play a game of croquet on the theatre lawn or tennis on the garden court.



The British designer, writer and Socialist, William Morris (1834-1896). Best known for his wallpaper and fabric designs, Morris' goal was to create beautiful yet affordable (even free) household things for common people.

Eight Bells (Church St, ☎ 011-44-138-684-0371, www.eightbellsinn.co.uk) is the town's oldest inn. Built in 1380 for the stonemasons working on the town's church, it has 7 rooms priced from \$118/room. The inn's country-style gastro pub, has very good if not spectacular food.

For more exciting dining, head for **Ebrington Arms**, (☎ 011-44-138-659-3223, www.theebringtonarms.co.uk), a few miles away. The new chef, **James Nixon**, is bringing in the crowds so make reservations for a weekend table. The beautifully prepared local food is well worth the detour! **Note:** Both Eight Bells and Ebrington have outside dining.

(Filed from London by Phoebe Phillips; additional research by George Woodward)



Villa de Mazamet, a beautifully restored B&B within a short drive of Carcassonne, has a fine restaurant, swimming pool, gardens and five luxuriously decorated rooms.