



Walking For Violet

by Suzette Jeapes



From the 6 September to the 6 October 2019 my 62 year old husband, David, will be walking from our house in Saint-Pardoux (79310), France to Hastings, East Sussex (where our granddaughter Violet lives). This will take 30.5 days door-to-door.

He will be travelling through departments 79, 49, 72, 61 and 14 to the ferry, and

arriving at Portsmouth. He will then be walking along the coast from Portsmouth to Hastings. David is following the GR36 hiking route in France and the coastal route in the UK, it is just over one million steps.

The support vehicle will be an old, shabby Citroën 2CV and his mascot (Simon-the-Bear) is the 'retired' mascot for the Metropolitan Police, Public-Order Training Centre (POTC). Simon retired to France with one of the instructors.

David is fundraising for our four year old granddaughter who has 'complex needs' and we will also be making a donation to two charities; one in France (APEIMC), and one in the UK (SCOPE).

People can help by either sponsoring a car sticker or item of clothing with their company logo on, or holding their own fundraising event

(our local bar has planned a raffle and bingo night for us). We are also hoping that some people might want to join in for part of the walk and ask friends to sponsor them.

In France, we are asking if people can help by offering him, and his support driver, a bed for the night along the route (either at a reduced rate or free?). In the UK we are going to ask local B&Bs to sponsor a room for them.

Sponsors will be offered a digital photo and a logo-link on our website.



If you would like to sponsor David or find out more about his walk go to: walkingforviolet.com

View from the Vendée

by Karen Taylor



I've never been a great one for theme parks in the UK, so when I heard that the Vendée is home to the award-winning Grand Parc du Puy du Fou, I was not unduly impressed. Big mistake!

Yes, it may be billed as a theme park, but it's unlike any other that I've ever visited in the past. The whole park is based on an historical theme, from the reconstructed medieval town to spectacular shows to restaurants, with entertainment included.

I eventually agreed to go to the park for the daytime entertainment (more about the other options later) a couple of years ago. We'd been advised to check on the internet the evening before our visit to make a note of the show times. Just as well that we did, because it was a real logistical operation to ensure that we managed to see all the major shows as well as some of the other entertainment around the site. In the end we did see all that we'd planned, but lunch was just a quick snack on the hoof to make sure that we didn't miss a thing.

We decided to buy tickets *en période jaune* for a reduced price visit in May or June. It was also a lot less busy than visiting in July or August which apparently can be quite manic (and very hot!).

Just a word of warning - as the park continues to grow every year, it's now virtually impossible to see all the attractions in just one day. There are five hotels on site though, so you could take advantage of one of their package deals which includes the park and an overnight stay (or two!).

The two other types of events at the Grand Parc are just as interesting.

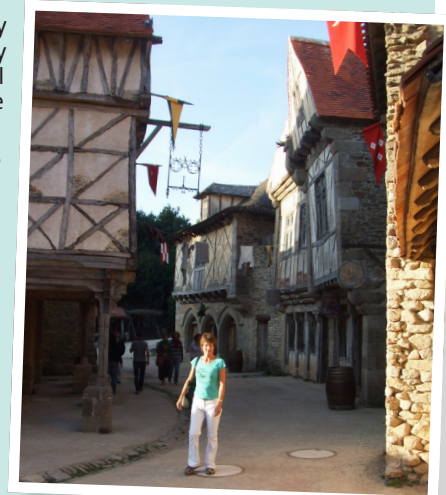
The evening show, *la Cinéscénie*, is hugely impressive, though it only takes place during the high summer (and the tickets get booked up well in advance). And finally their Christmas show really puts you in the festive mood, but make sure you give yourself plenty of time to wander round the village and park as well - it might be your only chance to experience snow in the Vendée this winter!

Fact file

- The first *Cinéscénie* evening performance was in 1978. Due to its popularity, the Grand Parc was created in 1989 as a daytime attraction.
- The *Cité Médiévale* opened in 1995, and the *Bourg 1900* in 2004.
- Since 2012, the Puy du Fou has regularly won international awards for theme parks and shows.
- A Puy du Fou-style *Cinéscénie* opened in County Durham in 2016, with a theme park opening there in 2020.



Karen wandering through the *Cité Médiévale* in Grand Parc du Puy du Fou



Karen runs a *gîte* business near the Vendée coast at: www.gitedumoulin-vendee.com