



## Seminar Centre

Les Écuries Seminar Centre stands alongside a classic French «Maison de Maître» in the heart of the ancient wine growing village of Cesseras, in the Languedoc area of France. The restoration of this original 18th century stables block has been guided by an award winning architect to provide the latest in modern seminar facilities. Respect has been paid to the building's history by retaining the signature elements to create a stunning combination of the old and the new.

Les Écuries offers a meeting location and environment totally different from the usual venues: the tranquillity enhanced by a setting among the vineyards enables your team to focus on the task in hand, in an ambiance far from the stress of daily business.

At Les Écuries, we can organise all aspects of your event down to the finest detail. Our service is tailored to your specific wants and wishes.

The location is most suited to small groups up to a maximum of 18 participants. It is ideal for strategy meetings, new business planning, trainings, team-building or employee incentive events and special courses.

## The Region

The village of Cesseras is situated in the Minervois region of France, at the centre of the vineyards. The main towns of the area are Carcassonne, Narbonne and Béziers. In addition to the production of wine, the area also produces olives and is famous for its medieval castles and villages, many of which were inhabited by the Cathars. The countryside is typical of the Garrigue where you find swathes of wild thyme, lavender and rosemary and the wild boar is hunted. To the north the land rises towards the Montagne Noire and to the south, the Mediterranean coast is within easy reach. The Canal du Midi, built in the 17th century, winds its way through the beautiful Minervois countryside, just a stone's throw from Cesseras.

During the year there are many local events and festivals to combine with your meeting. Some examples are:

- **February - Vinisud biennial wine fair in Montpellier**
- **June - Foire de l'olivier (olive fair) at Bize-Minervois**
- **July - Tour de France passes through the region**
- **July / September - Festival de Carcassonne - music, dance and theatre**
- **September - «Visa Pour l'Image» Photojournalism Festival in Perpignan**
- **September - Les vendanges: grape picking**
- **October - Festival de Jazz in Perpignan**
- **October / November - Olive picking**
- **December / February - various Foires aux Truffes (truffle fairs)**
- **December - Foire aux Foie Gras in Rieux Minervois**



## What We Offer

Les Écuries organises any aspect of your meeting that you may require, from name tags to guest speakers, from slide production to presentation coaching and media training: in fact, as much or as little as you wish. If you have your own organising group, then we can provide you with a unique venue and an exceptional quality of on-site catering services and you do the rest.

Accommodation is arranged in nearby villages to suit your preferences and budget. This ranges from small, charming hotels, typical of the area, providing warm but high-quality facilities and service, to the less-sophisticated but equally attractive chambres d'hôtes (guest-houses), none more than 15 minutes drive from Les Écuries. This split between meeting location and accommodation has been arranged to allow a «breath of fresh air» and a view of the countryside, rather than being isolated in the same building for two or three days. In addition to transport between Les Écuries and the hotel, transport can also be arranged to and from airports and train stations, restaurants etc.

Les Écuries offers team-building exercises, entertainments and excursions. Some examples:

- **Wine-tasting**
- **Visits to Cathar castles**
- **Mountain biking**
- **Boules tournaments**
- **Gourmet events**
- **Golf**
- **Tennis**
- **Visits to olive mill / marble quarry**
- **Grape / olive picking (in season!)**

## Our Facilities

The conference building at Les Écuries is a converted stables, where the ancient structure has been retained as far as possible. The seminar room is located on the upper floor and is equipped with the latest in multimedia presentation equipment, computer-generated or overhead slide projection, DVD and video players, state-of-the-art sound system.

Seating and tables are modular and arrangements are flexible. If required, break-out areas are available. The ambiance is minimalist and designed to focus the minds of the participants on the task at hand. The space benefits from natural light with a view across the extensive garden to the hillside beyond. The ground floor is reserved for serving refreshments and lunch, or holding receptions. Original features and a stone floor add a rustic feel - a more informal environment in contrast to the meeting room.

The entrance to Les Écuries is through a beautiful courtyard, which can also be used for receptions, lunches and refreshment breaks.



## Management

Les Écuries is owned and managed by Jacques and Liz Thompson who have many years' experience of corporate seminar requirements. Jacques spent his career working with large companies: ICI, BP Chemicals and The Dow Chemical Company, in a variety of functions and locations in Europe, which give him the «insider» view of what a company, large or small, demands when conducting focussed strategic and planning meetings.

Liz has worked in the fields of PR and marketing communications and has a broad experience in organising events, both when working within large companies and as a director of GTM International Communications and Thompson Communications.

## Associates:

Although you would normally have your own speakers and experts presenting at your meeting, we can also organise specialists and professionals, who are at your disposal for trainings, presentations and guest speaking, for example:

**Ken Rees** - Award winning journalist Ken Rees has held most jobs in a television newsroom. His reporting ranges from the Falklands War and the Gulf War to the loss of the Space Shuttle. He was honoured as Television Reporter of the Year in 1987 by the Royal Television Society. After a distinguished career with Britain's top network news show «News at Ten» he became Controller of News and Current Affairs for UK's HTV. Ken now works as a trainer and consultant, specifically in media and presentation skills training and Crisis Management, and is a fascinating and entertaining guest speaker.

**Ronnie Stronge** - Director of Transform People International - Ronnie is a founder of this highly successful training and consulting organisation, working globally with major corporations to deliver sustainable performance improvement through people and business transformation. He is also highly experienced in the facilitation of business planning and training meetings.



## **Courses**

Les Écuries offers the perfect location for combining a relaxing stay in the French countryside with the opportunity to learn more about a topic that interests you. We are in the process of developing a range of high quality enrichment courses. Here are just a few examples...

### **History**

The fascinating history of the Languedoc, including the infamous Second Crusade against the Cathar heretics, will be the subject of expert background talks and guided field trips to castles and other medieval sites.

### **Gourmet France**

The Romans were among the first to recognise the potential for wine growing in this region and they founded an industry that has continued to this day. Our introduction to the food and wine of the Minervois and St Chinian regions will include tutored wine tastings, visits to vineyards and food producers and feature meals in some of the superb local restaurants.

### **Speaking French**

Conversational French for beginners as well as those who already have a basic grounding in the language. This combines a mix of «classroom» based learning with the opportunity to hone your skills in local shops and markets.

### **Art Odyssey**

The wonderful light, unique scenery and historic buildings of the Languedoc have inspired artists for centuries. Whatever your current level of skill you can brush up your technique with an expert instructor on one of our courses.

### **The Mediterranean Garden**

The challenge of creating a beautiful garden in a hot climate has been taken up triumphantly by many Mediterranean gardeners. You can learn secrets and tips from our horticultural expert and enjoy a series of fascinating visits to gardens in the Languedoc Roussillon region and nearby Catalonia in Spain.

### **AND an important topic that many of us neglect:**

#### **Managing the Next Stage**

This course will cover all aspects of planning for your retirement and the transition into either another paid activity or alternatively into a way of life which allows you to do those many things that you were always too busy to enjoy. The course touches on financial planning, relocation, adjustment to a different life rhythm, health etc.



## To reach Les Écuries

**Airports:** 1½ hours from Toulouse, Montpellier and Perpignan International Airports. 2½ hours from Barcelona. 40 minutes from Carcassonne (flights from Stansted, UK, and from Charleroi, Belgium)

**Flights from Paris to:** Perpignan, Montpellier and Toulouse

**Train stations:** 45 minutes from Béziers and Narbonne stations - both serviced by the TGV.

**Road:** Autoroute to within 40 minutes of the location. Ample parking. Transport is arranged from the above airports or train stations.