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the magazine

MY FRENCH COUNTRY HOME

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A FLORAL MELODY GARDENS & INTERIORS



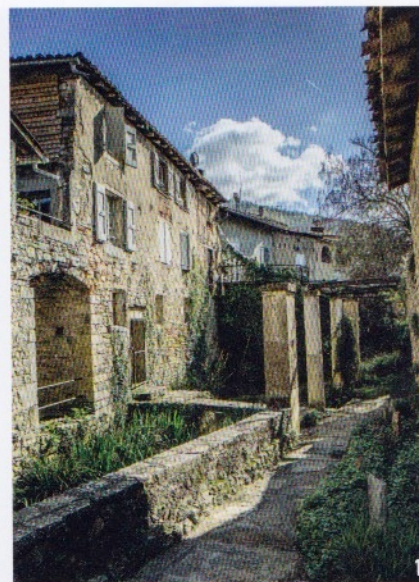
Life In A Small French Town

Photos & text by Corrina Tough

From the moment I arrived in Saint-Antonin, I became a point of fascination. As an Aussie woman who came to France to renovate a house mostly by myself — with two young kids in tow and a husband who was only able to return from his job in Australia every three months — I stood out in comparison to the rest of the community.

The locals would refer to me as *la courageuse* (“the courageous one”) and give me a daily *bonjour* or *bon courage!* (“good luck!”) as they watched me trudge from my rental apartment to my new house each day, covered in all manner of paint and dirt. However, I was welcomed with open arms into the

quaint little French town in the Tarn-et-Garonne department of Occitanie. About an hour from Toulouse, Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val is a medieval *cité* (“town”) that boasts the oldest town hall in France. Surrounded by cliffs, the Aveyron River and the Grésigne forest, it is idyllically nestled in nature. I love that my kids can



PICTURE-PERFECT

1. Follow the walkway towards the old tannery in Place du Bessarel.
2. The opposite side of the Aveyron River provides a great view of town.

walk, ride bikes, swim in the river and go kayaking or fishing with friends, only minutes from our front door.



The town's real draw is the Sunday market, which has always been the highlight of my week. Not just a place to buy food, it is an experience and a social event in itself and often ends in meeting up with friends at the Café de la Halle for a glass of wine, a *planche de charcuterie* ("cured meats board") and live music.

It is as picture-perfect as French towns come, with wooden shutters, cobblestone streets and tree-lined squares. The bevy of independent shops and family-run businesses, from *brocantes* to eateries, gives an authentic, neighborly vibe — everyone knows everyone here. There are little canals that run throughout the town, even under the houses, creating a Venetian atmosphere.



MARKET SPOILS

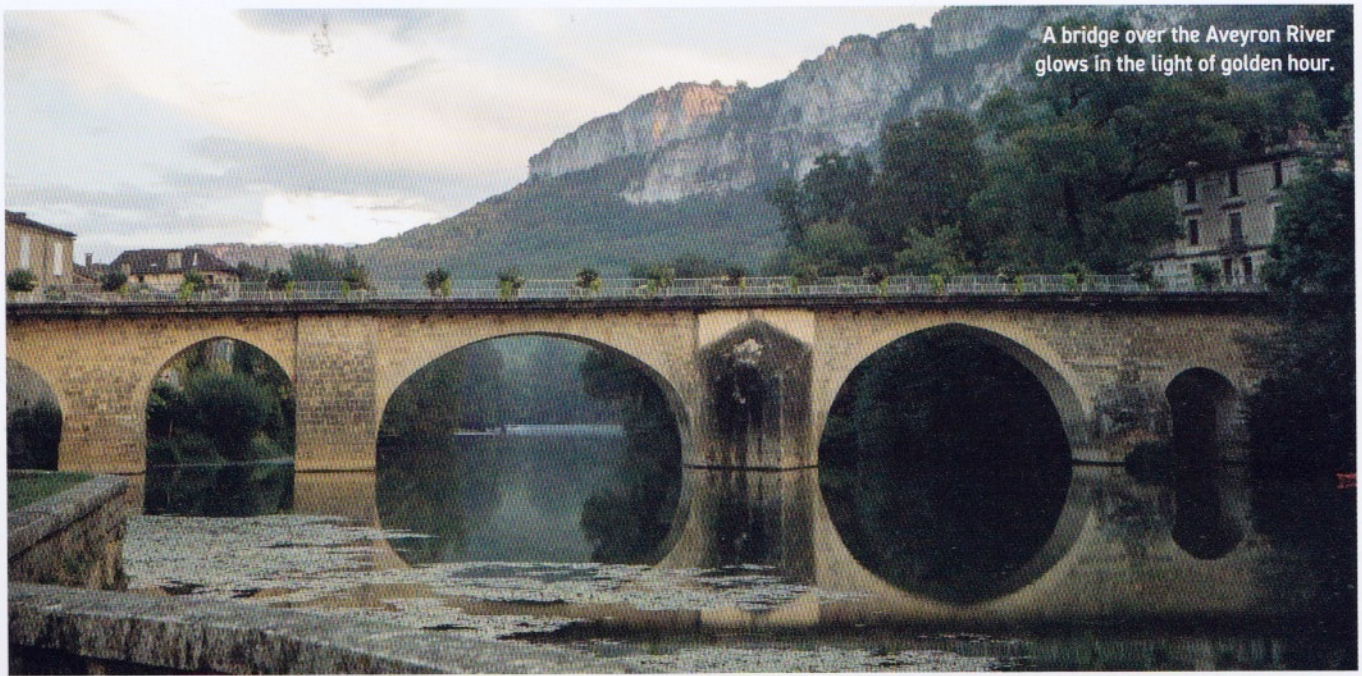
1. Plants are sold at this stall at the market, which is held every Sunday.
2. A la Table d'Antoine is a lovely local restaurant and *salon de thé* ("tea shop").
3. *Artichauts* ("artichokes") are on display at the Sunday market.

OPPOSITE
Café de la Halle
is a popular spot.





“ —————
... everyone knows
everyone here.
————— ”



A bridge over the Aveyron River glows in the light of golden hour.



A woman walks the medieval streets near the town center.



A menu board displays the choices of the day.

The *vide-greniers* (“rummage sales”), concerts and festivals of summer bring a vibrant bustle to Saint-Antonin. In winter, the tourists disperse, and it gets much quieter, but the locals love having their town back, and I count myself as one of them!

OPPOSITE
A bicycle strapped with fresh flowers is a common sight.