

Crossings: for competitive rates on crossings, insurance and stopover hotels, search the web or contact **Chez Nous** on 01484 684075 (reference n° X 3701 for 2009).

Insurance: we strongly advise holiday insurance (including cancellation cover) for both people and cars. You may have to cancel your entire holiday, or your car might break down, which apart from the inconvenience, can be expensive to transport it and you home. Policies from ferry companies, AA, RAC, holiday operators, insurance brokers, etc.. Cover and premiums vary. For a car and two adults abroad for 2 weeks Chez Nous Travel Service (phone 01484 684075) quote about £60 with Europ Assistance.

Health: From 1 January 2006 the E111 form has been replaced by the European Health Insurance Card available from Post Offices, in case you need to visit a doctor.

Useful maps which are available in the UK:

Michelin 989 FRANCE 1cm:10km Carte Routière et Touristique, red cover.

Michelin 911 FRANCE, blue cover; driving times, distances, routes + useful info.

Michelin 237 Ile-de-France, yellow cover; handy near Paris.

Michelin 239 Auvergne, yellow cover; our area.

The best local maps are the TOP 25 series published by IGN

2432 ET Massif du Sancy covers the area north of here

2434 OT Riom-ès-Montagnes/Bort-les-Orgues covers Condat and to the west

2534 OT Monts du Cezallier covers La Borie, Condat and to the east

2435 OT Monts du Cantal covers the area south of here.

For walkers dreaming, IGN 903 (Grande Randonnée) shows France's superb network of long distance footpaths - a fascinating map with no British equivalent.

Driving from Le Havre is 430 miles by the autoroutes, 6½ hours behind the wheel. Calais is 490 miles (about 8 hours driving, depending on traffic). Shorter in miles, the cross country route from Le Havre takes 10 hours or more.

Winter visitors: roads are cleared of snow with impressive efficiency, however while it is snowing and just afterwards, **snow chains** can be helpful *and are sometimes compulsory* on the high pass between here and Clermont and to go up to the ski slopes. Between Christmas and March, we recommend you buy chains or hire them from the AA, etc.. You can get them in France, but it may not be wise to leave it until Besse in case dozens of other people have too! Ring us for a weather report of you're travelling between October and April - you should also bring **sun screen**, even in winter.

Petrol is similar in price to the UK, **diesel** is less. Cheapest in supermarkets, dearest on autoroutes, the difference can be £5 a tank-full. Newer card-operated pumps now take foreign cards.

Péage tolls are about £8 Caen-Paris and £20 Paris-Clermont; signs before the barriers tell you the toll (unless you have a ticket). The right change to throw in the automatic machine makes you look like an expert and can be a lot quicker than a manned booth. You can also pay by card & no not have to enter a PIN number.

Motorway services: the *Aire des Volcans d'Auvergne* is a good service area, selling a wide and interesting range of local produce. There is also a cash machine (ATM).

Shopping: things shut from 12 to 2 for lunch. Big supermarkets (Hypermarchés) may stay open and are signposted at the outskirts of towns (Leclerc, Auchan, Carrefour, Continent, Intermarché). Supermarkets rarely open on a Sunday. The Simply supermarket (an Auchan subsidiary) before the 2nd roundabout at Besse is very handy; fuel, good wine selection, all you're likely to need.

Weekends: Food shops in **Condat** are open to 7 p.m. on a Saturday and to midday on **Sunday**.

Apart from motorway services, virtually no shops are open on a **Sunday** afternoon.

Drink prices, especially for wine, can be more on the ferries than in supermarkets but on-board spirits are stronger (e.g. branded gin in the UK is 33%, in France 37%, duty free 47%).

Mobile phones work more widely than before but cover in the mountains remains patchy. All our houses have traditional phones. For phone numbers, see our web site.