

BY KATE MCNEE



L'ECURIE DU PAYS D'AUGE

KATE MCNEE, OWNER OF LE GRENIER IN SYDNEY, SHARES A SECRET FAVOURITE PLACE, DISCOVERED ON HER ANTIQUE BUYING TRIPS IN FRANCE.

If, like me, you were hooked by the pictures, read on. Beware, or be excited. That's how I came to be meeting the lovely Didier and equally charming Monique at their beautiful home in Normandy, just south of the Côte Fleurie and Honfleur basin, whilst sipping on their divine pommeau (less dangerous, and more delicious than calvados) in their even

more divine maison de maitre, a few minutes walk from our gite.

Our last visit to France took a deliberate detour to stay in this gorgeous former stable. Whilst being technically a 'gîte' "l'Ecurie du Pré des Colombiers" in the Pays d'Auge of Normandy goes far beyond the expectations of most of us who favour self-catering holiday rentals

over hotels, or even B and Bs. The warmth of this beautiful place is now more like your imagined best French friend's family hunting lodge, restored with recycled wood and decorated in natural hues of linen, hemp, stone, and antler.

In the line of duty and work, I had come across an article about the

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restoration of this former stable in a French magazine when last in France and, as the French say, had a “coup de coeur”, which is basically ‘love at first sight’. The combinations of huge stone open wood fire (but also with Wi-Fi), stone sinks (but also with spa), natural linens, exposed beams and other recycled materials used with exquisite taste, all cast its spell on me. Not to mention the practicalities of having a (divine) bathroom per couple! Imagine the comforts of dishwashers etc, but hidden behind antique cabinetry. My idea of perfection!

Didier is an avid flea market and antique hunter, with an eye for the original, unique and charming. The result of his hard work is a collection of gites to rival the Fermes de Marie in Mégève, which we also adore, but at a far more approachable tariff.

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Didier’s workmanship is also evident in the ‘mud’ rendered walls, hand-made furniture, floors, cupboards, etc, all from recycled timbers and all sourced from old Norman barns. His talent for finding incredible original pieces is also apparent in the former church gate used across the entry and the 18th century stone used in the vast cheminee, not to mention the enviable collection of antique paintings.

Despite the cosy hunting lodge feel, by day, the main living room is filled with light as the large window overlooking the fields is reflected by the opposite outscale mirror. At night, close the solid linen and wool curtains and curl up with a tarte aux pommes, plus the kindly provided bottle of cider whilst reclining on cow skin rugs by the fire. 🇫🇷



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