

Montrouant le 30 Octobre 2025

Dear friends, dear guests,

The season has barely ended, and we already have to think about the next one and start taking your reservations... This is unusual and a little strange for us (and perhaps for you too) because for many years, we only started our booking schedule in January. There are several reasons for this, and they are all related to the abrupt end of the collaboration that had bound us for over 20 years with our tour operator, Rent-a-Tent.

Many of you already know this, but I need to provide some brief information for those who haven't heard about the surprise our tour operator had in store for the 2025 season. A surprise we could have done without...

Rent-a-Tent encountered significant financial difficulties in 2024, linked, as far as we know, to a general decline in occupancy rates for their tents, lodges, and mobile homes, as well as to substantial and risky investments.

I won't elaborate further, but I know the situation is... complicated, to say the least. Emmanuelle and I are thinking especially of the people with whom we had the pleasure of working, we wish them luck and courage for the future.

For Montrouant, the period from January to June 2025 was difficult because the monthly payments we had been accustomed to for many years did not materialize. Last April, on the advice of our banker, we had to resort to asking for help from our apartment and lodge guests.

We asked them if it would be possible for them to pay most or all of their stay before arrival, as our standard practice for rentals until now has been 40% upon confirmation of the booking, with the remaining 60% due at the end of the stay.

I am writing this with a touch of emotion, as I recall all the messages of friendship and support that accompanied the bank transfers that everyone, without exception, made.

Emmanuelle and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your help and support.

So, we had to wait until the beginning of June, after threatening not to welcome the setup team (meaning no tents for the 2025 season), for 85% of the amount owed to finally be paid. The balance should have been paid at the beginning of July. But at the beginning of September, still nothing. Things were looking bad, but we had leverage because the tents and their equipment were, so to speak, in our possession, and Emmanuelle and I fully intended to use this to force Rent-a-Tent to pay its debt to us.

That's when we received a rather surprising proposal. Our tour operator offered to settle its debt by selling us the tents with their equipment, as well as all the replacement equipment stored in Montrouant.

We took some time to consider it, and embracing the adage "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," we accepted. We were going to sell part of the 9 tents we acquired and offer 4 or 5 tents for rent so that we could continue to welcome our camping friends who appreciate not having to tow a caravan or install equipment and who, for this purpose, book their holidays through a tour operator.

But we want to significantly improve the product. We're going to place the tent on a pleasant wooden deck, separate the bedrooms with wooden partitions, and to complete the natural feel, some of the furniture will also be made of wood. Comfort hasn't been overlooked; the beds will be equipped with high-quality mattresses. One bedroom will have a large double bed, and the other will have two single beds.

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We're already offering four of these "refurbished" tents. Rentals will be by the week, from Sunday to Sunday. The weekly price, which is still being finalized, will be significantly lower than Rent-a-Tent's during peak season but slightly higher during the off-season.

They will be located on pitches 2, 11, 27, and 34 (2025 campsite plan).

To complete the picture, two new lodges, similar to those we already have, should be added to our rental offerings for 2026. We are currently exploring financing options for these facilities. Leasing is one possibility, an advance booking agreement with a significant discount is another, and crowdfunding is a third...

This investment will be the main focus of the November 2025 newsletter.

I would now like to inform you of the changes that will affect our booking process.

As explained at the beginning of this letter, we need to address the lack of monthly payments, which, for over 20 years, have provided us with comfort and peace of mind in November and June.

To this end, Emmanuelle and I have made several decisions:

- 1) Your requests for rental accommodations or campsites can be submitted starting November 1st of each year.
- 2) Our priority for our long-standing guests, as a way of thanking them for their loyalty, remains unchanged. This priority applies to all our camping friends, regardless of whether their stay was booked through Emmanuelle or Rent-a-Tent.
- 3) This priority will only be in effect during the month of November each year. The method for allocating spaces and dates remains the same, but it has been brought forward and is valid for only one month instead of one and a half months.
- 4) The total amount for stays in tents, lodges, or apartments must be paid before your arrival. This can be done in 1, 2, or 3 installments on the dates agreed upon between you and Emmanuelle.
- 5) Regarding bare pitches, the amount of the deposit to be paid to make your reservation effective increases from 100 euros to 150 euros.

We know you won't find anything unusual or surprising about these changes, which are standard practice in most campsites.

We also know you'll support us in this change to our booking system, and we thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

Here's some less "professional" information about a few events from the end of the season and the last few weeks.

The grape harvest went well this year. Overall, the grapes were beautiful, with a bit of sorting as usual. The disappointment came from the Chapelle vineyard. We lost 80% of the harvest. It wasn't frost this year, nor hail, but predation by insects such as hornets, wasps, and flies. I must admit I've never experienced anything like it. In a very short time, about a week, a harvest we estimated at roughly thirty crates of grapes was reduced to just six! But there's wine in the vats, certainly not the best Burgundy, but undoubtedly one of the most natural...

And I want to thank once again my fantastic team of camper-harvesters, whose work ethic is matched only by their good humor and kindness.

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The pond was recently drained, as it is every year. The catch of small zander and small black-bass was meager, as I suspected. The crayfish, which have become increasingly numerous over the years, devoured the fish eggs. So I made the drastic decision to eat the largest ones (my friend Jef cooks them very well) and destroy the others.

I also need to find some breeding zander weighing 1 to 2 kg because a parasite called argula, commonly known as "fish louse," has decimated the zander population in the pond.

These parasites can affect all fish, most of which tolerate them quite well when their numbers aren't too high. But the zander is a fragile fish, and I imagine the stress and weakness caused by spawning and protecting the eggs from the relentless crayfish attacks have particularly weakened it. It couldn't, or didn't know how to rid itself (by rubbing against stones or branches) of all those little vampires that swarmed on the three or four dead zander I removed from the pond this summer.

Fishing will therefore be a "break-even" operation this year.

The money from selling the smaller fish will be used to buy breeding stock.

It's time to close this newsletter now. Another one will be sent to you at the end of November. Until then, take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Flu and Covid are on the rise in France, it is true that it is the time of year, it must be the same in our European neighbours.

Warmest regards to all,

Jean Mi