

Howzat!

If the prospect of a fast approaching summer conjures up fond memories of long, hot days played out to a soundtrack of leather on willow, then you're clearly suffering from 'Cricket Withdrawal'. Fortunately you can now do something about it right here in France, by going to watch a match, or better still, joining a club – and if you can't find one within easy reach, then you might even consider setting one up.

The same thought occurred to a small but enthusiastic group of players who founded a club in Angoulême in 2005. Four years later it moved a little further north to its present home in the small market town of Mansle, which offered a ground surrounded by trees within the eastern bend of a racecourse, and next to the neatly landscaped municipal campsite on the banks of the River Charente. As Club President Joe Larter explains: "We're still the only club in Charente, with players from various backgrounds, all sharing a common love for cricket. Our team is a mix of English and Pakistani expats, along with French-born younger players of British, Irish, Australian or Pakistani extraction. With the help of the Mansle Council and our Sénateur Mme. Bonnefoy, we've installed a good quality artificial pitch, erected nets and we hold regular training sessions. Now we have a growing group of youngsters in the 10-15 age group – and since cricket is a game enjoyed by both sexes, we welcome girls and women, who can play at all levels alongside the men and boys."

The club can provide all equipment.




Team Mansle



And, if you're stuck for something to do on a Sunday afternoon, why not head to Mansle to watch a cricket match yourself? "We play in the South-West Championship with teams from the Dordogne and Bordeaux regions, participate in the Siddalls 35 Overs and ACCSO T20 Cups, and host visiting teams from England. Some years ago we won the Northern Pool of our league. We've also been cup finalists. Last year we had 17 licensed players, and hope to do better this season." The license, an obligatory requirement in France for all sports, costs 50€ for adults (less for youngsters) and includes insurance.

Joe is also delighted to see the social side of the club continuing to develop: "This year we plan to hold several fund-raising events, including a barbecue, an open-day and six-a-side tournament. We're also looking to improve facilities at the ground – not just for visiting teams, but also for spectators, who are always more than welcome at our home matches. We even have a local shirt sponsor – the Colibri Bar/Tabac in Mansle!"

The club is always on the lookout for new players, the lifeblood of any sport: "We're a friendly, family-oriented club, so why don't your readers get in touch and come along to one of our net sessions? They can also get involved at other levels – umpire, scorer, trainer... in cricket there's something for everyone." 

Life is good here in France, but some things have a habit of gnawing away in the background, ready to hit the nostalgia button just when we least expect it.

FIND OUT MORE

CRICKET CLUB DE MANSLE CHARENTE:

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www.mansle-cricket.com

Facebook: Mansle Cricket Club (En) and Cricket Club de Mansle Charente (Fr).

There are at present no clubs in Vienne, or Haute-Vienne – the Cricket Club de Mansle can help you start one.

OTHER CLUBS IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE...

Ile de Ré Cricket Club (17) - www.iledere-cricketclub.com

St. Aulaye CC (24) -

www.st-aulaye-cricket.org

Eymet CC (24) -

www.eymetcricket.com

La Roche sur Yon CC (85) -

www.lrsycc.org/fr

Maillé CC (85) - www.maillecricketclub.yolasite.com

Association des Cricket Clubs du Sud Ouest (ACCSO) -

www.cricket-sw-france.org

The Association Française du Cricket website contains listings of clubs throughout France, established teams and much more: www.francecricket.com