

## Desperately seeking IKEA



St Antonin Main Square

Looking for a sofa bed in the Tarn et Garonne region was proving difficult and Christophe and Philippe at the local café in St Antonin suggested a trip to a certain large Swedish furniture store situated on the outskirts of Toulouse. Philippe looked up the directions on the internet and printed them out for us. Taking a quick look at the directions I noticed that we needed to follow the signs to Lourdes.

I hoped that this wasn't an omen as the last time I had visited this store in the UK I had decided that if Dante were writing the Inferno now that this store would be Purgatory! I suggested to my friend Yvonne, who was going to be doing the driving, that perhaps we should visit Lourdes first before attempting to find said furniture store.

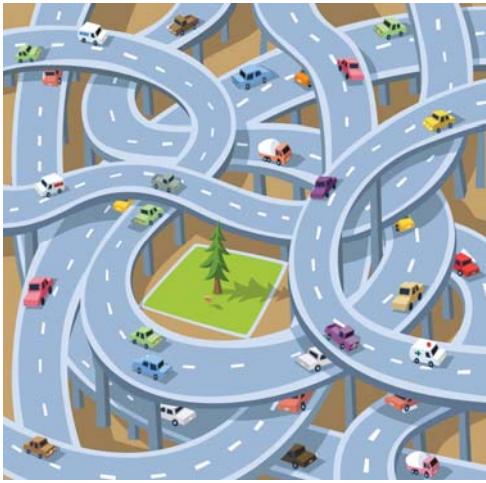
We set off enthusiastically following the signs to Lourdes and found the store fairly easily – or so we thought. We had actually found the depot where large pieces of furniture that have been purchased in the main store are collected. There were no signs to the actual store so we decided to pluck up our courage, muster our rusty French and ask in the depot.

The man at the collection point told us that the main shop was 'on the other side'. Thinking that sounded nearby we set off again in hot pursuit. After a few minutes we could actually see the building, all we had to do now was to work out how to get there. This was easier said than done. No matter how we tried, we just couldn't manage to work out how to reach the main shop.

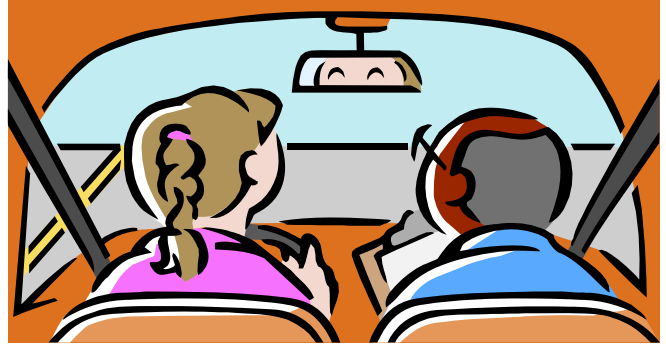
Some time later we were beginning to get tired, hungry and extremely frustrated. This drive was a real test of friendship. At one point Yvonne asked in despair which way she should go and I equally desperate had to admit that I just didn't have a clue. It didn't help that neither of us has any sense of direction and in fact we both have great difficulty in telling left from right. This makes giving and receiving directions interesting. We stopped for a break in a car park. I decided to try to programme the satnav in the hire car for which there didn't seem to be any instructions. This looked promising at first. However the voice of the satnav kept on taking us back to the location where I had first programmed it.



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Eventually we had taken every exit on every roundabout and there were an awful lot of them. Yvonne spotted a sign to IKEA but as soon as she tried to show it to me it had disappeared. It was on a billboard where various adverts flashed up momentarily. However this elusive sign did eventually lead us to our goal. It had taken us longer to get from the depot to the main store than it had from St Antonin to Toulouse.



To make things even worse, although we ended up with a full trolley load of goods, we didn't see any sofa beds that were suitable! On the way back to St Antonin, it took less than five minutes to get to the depot which really was just on the other side of the main store. Still it gave us plenty of excuse to head for the main square for a couple of kirs and several glasses of red wine when we eventually got back.

## Christeen George



Yvonne and some of our shopping