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Forêt Investissement watches the start of a hunt with hounds in the Tronçais forest

Alongside Antoine de Soultrait, forestry consultant, a large part of the ForÃªt Investissement team set out to visit the TronÃ§ais forest and were lucky enough to watch the start of the last hunt with hounds of the season. Accompanied by Julien Moreau, a forestry consultant from Quebec, Guillaume Toussaint and Arnaud Filhol from France Valley and Denys de Soultrait, Jean-Philippe Roux, Adrien SÃ©bastiao and Simon Coudon, along with ForÃªt Investissementâ €™s copywriter, StÃ©phanie Bonnet, spent some time on the traces of a red deer full of the joys of spring!

THE FOREST OF TRONÃ§AIS Â€“ AN EMBLEMATIC SITE

The Forest of TronÃ§ais has undergone many changes and served many roles over the centuries. Today it is reputed for the quality of its sessile oaks (it has been described as the finest oak forest in Europe) and is the site of a wide range of activities. Logging operations are managed by the ONF (French forestry board). A big wood sale is held in CÃ©rilly every fall, attended by coopers looking for raw material for casks that will hold fine wines. The wood is also highly appreciated for joinery and parquet flooring; it has a fine texture and is pinkish in color, with a good chemical composition. ForÃªt Investissement regularly attends these sales to stay up-to-date with wood prices.

An array of outdoor leisure pursuits are also enjoyed every season in the TronÃ§ais forest. Yet the forest is best-known for the opportunities it provides for hunting with hounds, from September to late March depending on the animal hunted â€“ wild boar, roe deer or red deer.

HUNTING WITH HOUNDS: AN AGE-OLD TRADITION

Hunting with hounds and shooting account for one third of the revenues generated in the TronÃ§ais forest, which is far from insignificant.
Venery is an age-old practice that originated in England, enjoyed since horses were domesticated and which continues to gain in popularity today. It is a very much a living tradition, upheld by a number of hunts throughout the year.
In Allier, there are several hunts, two of which go out regularly in the TronÃ§ais forest (the Rallye de lâ€™Aumance and the Vautrait de Banassat). On Wednesday 29 March, the ForÃªt Investissement team followed the Rallye de lâ€™Aumance, led by hunt master Pascale dâ€™Ormesson.

A look at the final hunt of the season in the Forest of TronÃ§ais

The last hunt of the season (out of a total 49) celebrates the spring. Fortunately, the scent of flowers doesnâ€™t put off the 40 hounds in the pack or they would lose the trace of the red deer being hunted!
Once on the trail of an animall, the scenthound handlers report back to the hunt master, who will decide on which line of broken branches to follow.

What happens on a hunt with hounds

Once a path has been chosen, the huntsmen mount their horses and the horns sound to mark the start of the hunt. The hounds are raring to go! There is a different trumpet sound for each moment in the hunt (such as the start, moving off, the sighting, releasing the hounds, calling the hounds out of a covert, or the â€˜bat lâ€™eauâ€™ when the animal chased plunges into water, etc.).

The horseback-riders then follow the dogs after the deer, drawing on their knowledge and their respect for the hunted animal. The dogs are trained very young and start hunting at the age of two. The kennel huntsman (or piqueur) is in charge of the kennel all year round (depending on packs, there may be one or two piqueurs, at least one of whom rides a horse). The Rallye de lâ€™Aumanceâ€™s hounds are French Tricolor Hounds.

A small number of young dogs are first taken out on the hunt with the other pack hounds, who are already well familiar with the deerâ€™s habits.

Sticking to a well-defined hunting plan, the huntsmen with the horns and whips or those chasing the animal must all hold a hunting license.

A love of hunting with hounds is often passed on from one generation to another. It is popular among both men and women (the latter often start hunting after learning to ride) and people from every social background.

Hunting with hounds in the Forest of TronÃ§ais is strictly regulated, as is the case all over France. There are around 15 packs in Allier and close to 400 in France. People who hunt with hounds are keen to uphold tradition in outstanding sites such as TronÃ§ais. ForÃªt Investissement was very privileged to share this moment.

> ***We would like to thank Madame dâ€™Ormesson and the leaders of the Rallye de lâ€™Aumance for their welcome and the knowledge they shared.***

Written by **Stéphanie Bonnet**