



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

U. S. MARINE CORPS FORCES EUROPE

UNIT 30401, APO AE 09107-0401

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PEP

30 Apr 2012

From: Lieutenant Colonel J.D. Hicks, USMC XXX XX 2434/0302/0303/
8247/9701

To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (ATTN: PLU)
International Affairs Branch, Strategy and Plans Division,
Plans Policies and Operations Directorate, Headquarters United
States Marine Corps

Subj: **PEP Foreign Language Sustainment Training Trip Report**

Encl: (1) French Language Certification
(2) Crea-Langues Course Planning Booklet

1. **Purpose.** To provide an after-action report on official travel for foreign language sustainment training to Moustiers-Ste-Marie, France, from 15-21 April 2012.
2. **Background.** As an experience track FAO, I designed this trip to refresh my language skills in preparation for attending a formal French Military training course. I am currently projected to attend the *Stage de qualifications aux opérations amphibies de niveau 2* (Amphibious Operations Qualification Course - Level 2), on behalf of HQMC/PLU, in order to provide an evaluation of the course and recommendations on future USMC attendance.
3. **Discussion.** I chose to conduct a complete immersion package at the Crea-Langues school in order to gain maximum benefit from my limited time available. Crea-Langues was established in 1984 and caters to more mature clients with an already established minimum level of French language ability. It is a true immersion course with French usage required from breakfast to the final event of each day. The wide international mix of participants often makes French the only common language between students and staff.
 - a. **Staff.** The instructor cadre was exceptional. They were very adept at putting the students at ease and creating an effective instructional environment. They also provided a diverse mix of backgrounds and experiences, which further enhanced the experience.
 - b. **Room/Board.** The facility is a former monastery and the accommodation is basic but comfortable. Spacious single or double en suite rooms were available. The entire facility has free WiFi access, as well as fixed computers for student use. The catering staff was again outstanding. Meals were events

into themselves and were used as an introduction to French, and more specifically Provencal, culinary culture. The quality of the dishes served was excellent.

- c. Daily Routine. Each day began with a group breakfast attended by the instructor staff (all meals were taken in this manner). Mornings were generally small group sessions (4 students max). Group assignments were based on the inventory exam to ensure that all students in a group were of a similar level/capability. Afternoons included a choice of cultural visits and/or personal lessons/workshops. I participated in the visits as well as a daily one-on-one Professional French session. The Professional module covered diplomatic, political, business and educational situations. The overall instruction was well developed and presented, with good variety in both content and delivery. Each day concluded with an optional fun event after dinner (e.g. games, films, etc.). The instructor staff was at all times available and French usage was enforced throughout the day.

d. Itinerary / Schedule:

15 April 2012 (Sunday)

0930-1800: Eurostar/TGV (London to Aix-en-Provence via Paris)
1800-1930: Transfer from Aix-en-Provence TGV Station to
CREA-Langues
1930-2000: Reception for new students
2000-2100: Group Dinner

16 April 2012 (Monday)

0800-0900: Group Breakfast/Facilities Tour
0900-1015: Individual student presentations
1030-1145: Inventory Exam
1200-1230: Presentation of course program/choices
1300-1400: Group Lunch
1430-1830: Standard French Courses (small groups)
1930-2030: Group Dinner
2100-comp: Facilitated group activity

17-19 April 2012 (Tuesday-Thursday)

0800-0900: Group Breakfast
0900-1245: Standard French Courses (small groups)
1300-1400: Group Lunch
1430-1800: Facilitated Cultural/Area Visits
1800-1845: Professional French Module (1:1)
1930-2030: Group Dinner
2100-comp: Facilitated group activity

20 April 2012 (Friday)

0800-0900: Group Breakfast
0900-1245: Standard French Courses (small groups)
1300-1400: Group Lunch
1430-1830: Final Interviews / Certificate Level Review

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1930-2030: Group Dinner
2100-comp: Facilitated group activity

21 April 2012 (Saturday)

0730-0900: Transfer to Aix-en-Provence TGV Station
1015-1830: TGV/Eurostar return journey

- e. Upon completion of the course, each student was evaluated and given a 'Certificate of French' based on the Common European Language Reference Framework criteria. I achieved a level B2/Tier 3 in listening comprehension and a level B1/Tier 3 in speaking. The certificate and framework criteria are at Encl (1) for future reference.
4. **Summary.** I would highly recommend Crea-Langues to anyone seeking focused French language training facilitated by a professional and hospitable staff. The combination of the instructional and catering staffs, in addition to the overall cultural environment for an immersion course of this type, would be hard to beat. I would also recommend the two-week option wherever possible (vice one-week). I believe that this is a very cost effective model and location to further develop USMC FAO French language proficiency. Total costs for this training was \$3271, including travel and all room and board for five full days of fairly intensive French language utilization and instruction. I can be contacted for any follow-up questions at j.daniel.hicks@gmail.com or +44 799 065 2163.

//s//
J.D. HICKS

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