

## France Sauvage

St Tropez not your scene? Try one of WWF-France's 10 Gites Panda, or Panda Lodges, where binoculars, birdcall cassettes, and maps of the area's walks are standard guest amenities.

In 1992, WWF-France made a proposal to the Fédération des Parcs Naturels de France (FPNF), and the Fédération Nationale des Gites de France et du Tourisme Vert: why not use an existing lodge within central France's Brenne Regional Natural Park as an experiment for a nationwide ecolodging programme?

The Gites Panda concept: to protect local culture and nature and generate income in economically depressed areas of France through ecotourism.

The Brenne gite – in an area dotted with 1,000 ponds

and home to 130 bird species, wild boar, deer, and turtles – has been a hit. Now WWF-France and its partners are working on a network of about 150 rural inns. Many are inside natural parks, such as the Cévennes and the Haute Jura.

"Lodges meet Gites de France quality requirements and WWF guarantees that they are on or near land rich with animal and plant life, and are run in an environmentally friendly way," explains WWF-France's Jacques Trotignon.

"Gite Panda owners must commit themselves to leaving wetlands and wooded areas on their land intact and allow scientists to study the biodiversity," he adds.

For a Gite Panda guide, contact the Fédération Nationale des Gites de France et du Tourisme Vert at: 56 rue Saint-Lazare, 75009 Paris, France. Tel: +33 1 49 70 7575.  
*Carolyn Whelan*



Room with a view: A Panda Lodge (left) and Brenne Regional Natural Park