

2015 IFEAT STUDY TOUR TWO IMPORTANT REGIONS OF FRANCE

By Peter Greenhalgh, IFEAT Study Tour Coordinator



Peter Greenhalgh with Romina Garay (left) and Beatrice Torrente

IFEAT Study Tours go from strength to strength. They are proving to be a great learning experience – in the company of other industry specialists, who might be competitors but become good friends. This facilitates the growth of the international IFEAT family. While each Study Tour follows a similar format they remain very different, predominantly because of the country and companies visited as well as different participants.

The Study Tour to France – the spiritual home of the fragrance and flavour industry - was longer and larger than the previous seven Tours. It took place from July 5th to 15th and some 48 people participated – with 22 different nationalities – a true United Nations of the F&F ingredients sector. The Tour was centred on two locations in southern France, namely the Provence, Alpes and Côte d'Azur (PACA) region in the south-east and Aquitaine in the south-west.

Thanks to imaginative planning and persistence, particularly by **Thierry Duclos** of Quimdis (Chair of the Local Organising Committee and with an intimate knowledge of the sector), participants were able to visit a range of organisations involved in the F&F ingredients supply chain. These included producers, processors, cooperatives, traders, compounders, manufacturers and research organisations – from small farmers to large multinational companies with annual turnovers in excess of €1 billion.

The Tour began with a Welcome Reception on Sunday evening in Avignon, close to the Mediterranean, and finished 11 days later at Biarritz on the Atlantic coast. Over 10 days participants saw the production and processing of essential oils and aroma chemicals produced and imported into these two important production and processing areas of France, including lavender, lavandin, clary sage, pine derivatives as well as many small speciality items. The tour was timed to match the cropping and processing of the lavender, lavandin and clary sage crops – and delegates were not disappointed. For three days we saw the spectacular colours and the harvesting on the Plateaus de Albion and Valensole – and these images will stay in the memories of delegates for

many years to come. Delegates visited the lavender/lavandin and clary sage production and processing operations of **Bontoux, Cassan, Fournel, Burcheri, Aubry** and **SCA3P**, and learnt about new planting and processing techniques and other research activities of **CRIEPPAM** and **CENSO**. In addition, there was a long visit to **L'Occitane's** headquarters at Manosque, where delegates obtained detailed insights into the operations of this global, natural and organic ingredients based cosmetics and well-being product manufacturer and retailer.

Then followed three days in the Grasse area, home of the world's perfume industry. Excellent visits were made to two of **Mane's** state-of-the-art technical, scientific and creative operations, as well as the **Payan Bertrand** and **Robertet** processing plants. These were followed by a guided tour of the **International Museum of Perfumery**. The visits illustrated the region's considerable know-how and innovation in the transformation of aromatic raw materials and how important it remains for our industry.

On Sunday afternoon, while visiting St Honorat Island off Cannes, we learnt that our evening flight from Nice to Bordeaux was cancelled. By some miracle, **Beatrice Torrente** of the Emphase tour agency



who accompanied us throughout the Tour, managed to arrange a 550 km detour via Paris for the group, involving an additional flight, but remarkably arriving in Bordeaux only an hour behind schedule on one of the busiest travel weekends of the year in France! In the Landes area we visited **Biolandes** operations at Le Sen and then on July 14th – the most important national holiday in France – **DRT** arranged a visit around their large plant at Vielle-Saint-Girons. The day ended with a Gala Farewell Dinner at the Café de Paris in Biarritz, where everyone received a red



Basque Beret and watched a spectacular firework display to celebrate Bastille Day. The visits and quality of information dispensed by the hosts varied. Most companies provided excellent introductions or videos to explain their operations, and it was obvious that each company had put in a lot of effort to provide detailed analysis of their production and processing operations, enabling delegates to become much wiser regarding the specifics, as well as learn about new innovative techniques in all areas of the supply chain. Moreover, several of the companies sponsored superb meals and provided gifts as mementoes of the visits. The group was able to present each company with a copy of the Delegate Pack, containing detailed briefing notes on the companies and delegates, as well as various essential oils and articles on the French F&F industry.

The innovation on the China Study Tour of "Bus Lectures" continued and knowledgeable and experienced specialists from around the world were able to both explain in greater detail what we had seen as well as put it into context. The wide range of expertise and knowledge on hand made it remarkably useful and informative.

The Tour provided a lasting impression of the French F&F ingredients sector as well as the kindness and hospitality of our hosts and the French "art de vivre". In addition, the coach journeys revealed



some beautiful scenery, particularly Les Gorges du Verdon, and there were many cultural insights, including the Palais des Papes, Château Smith Haut Lafitte and St Paul de Vence. Yet again, the study tour achieved its objectives of seeing at first hand the production and processing of various F&F ingredients and obtaining a much clearer understanding of the various processes, capabilities and set-up of different facilities and an appreciation of



the broad spectrum of F&F products that France can offer. Delegates were able to meet up with some of the key figures within our industry. Finally, participants were able to get to know the other delegates and their expertise, and share some unique cultural experiences. Thus, it proved to be another superb tour; thanks to the support, excellent hospitality and commitment of the French companies that were visited – nearly all of which are IFEAT members – as well as the efforts of Thierry Duclos and Beatrice Torrente.



Sponsors of the 2015 Study Tour



Jean Mane (left) being presented with the Delegate Pack and certificate by Thierry Duclos

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IFEAT is pleased to announce that the 2016 Study Tour will take place in the USA from 13th to 21st August visiting the states of Texas, Washington, Michigan and Indiana. Participants will visit essential oil and oleoresin producers, processors, distributors and users. More information will be available at the Sri Lanka Conference.