

## **ELAINE INTERVIEWS: JACQUELINE BERTHO ABOUT THE TOUR DE FRANCE COMING TO BRITTANY AGAIN IN 2025**

Elaine: Well, as many people are aware, the Tour de France will once again be passing through Mur de Bretagne and surrounding villages this July, July the 11th and I'm speaking to Jacqueline Bertho who is very familiar with the comings and goings of the Tour de France, having lived here for some years and is also now involved at the mairie. So Jacqueline, spill the beans about the Tour de France.

Jacqueline: Well of course it's a very very exciting thing to happen. Um, we're lucky enough in the administration to know that it's going to happen long before the population does. Um, things start happening in about July of the previous year, um and then when the course is announced in September the maire and the maire délégué de Saint-Guen go up, went up there in their yellow ties and it was all presented. There's a lot of hoo-haha and a lot of publicity about it and so of course it's a very exciting time that we look forward to because it does quite a lot for the village and of course we can all tell our friends that oh this is where we live and when we've got visitors, don't know whether you do the same, but we take them up the hill to see where they will see on the telly on the day.

Elaine: And this all started the Tour de France coming through here was it in 1938?

Jacqueline: Oh yes, a long long time ago you know when they were really on push bikes when they carried all their food and water for the whole route with them whereas now they don't. They get given things as they go along.

Elaine: As they stop, well they don't stop, they keep going, its just like thrown at them.

Jacqueline: Yeah, the musette, the little bag is called a musette, that they have their snack in.

Elaine: And so are there other people, obviously there are people involved in helping with it?

Jacqueline: Yeah, there are about 100. The commune organises lots of things and we ask people from all other associations as you probably know in France any organisation that organises anything has to be an association and it has to be um either um tied in with a federation if it's say football club or basketball club or the people that run the Tri de Guerledan which is a big running club that organises 2 big events every year. Or a small group like the group I'm president of which is the club for the elderly people of Saint-Guen and we run you know a small group that does walking, sewing, and card playing. So all the associations are invited to give some help and so it can be in the form of marshals for the parking or else we run bars and there are 5 associations at Saint-Guen and we're running an open bar, crepes etc from 11 o'clock in the morning at Saint-Guen and all the money that we

make from doing that will be shared out between the 5 associations so it helps out a little bit as the French say beurre to the epinard. A little bit of butter on your spinach.

Elaine: Excellent.

Jacqueline: So about 100,000 people give up their time. Of course it's a Friday this year, it's Friday the 11th of July so the younger people the non-retired people are perhaps going to have more difficulty. But I know at Saint-Guen, 2 of the younger people helping organise this they're taking their afternoons off so they won't be around in the morning so we'll set up everything in the afternoon they're taking the afternoon off because the Tour actually goes through the centre of our village and then comes onto Mur and then goes up the hill, round through the other villages like Saint-Mayeux and Saint-Gilles and then goes back through Mur and up the big hill of Mur so they have a double whammy.

Elaine: So when did it start this hill climbing as it were?

Jacqueline: I think that, It's always been known but in the sometime in this century. It isn't that old.

Elaine: 2011

Jacqueline: 2011, yeah that was the first time that it was made a big thing of. Um and I think in those, I think the Tour has passed by here 5 times

Elaine: 5 times, I think 5 times I was reading somewhere, 5 times in 14 years.

Jacqueline: Yeah that's right. This is the modern version of the Tour now. So being a village of an arrivé is very different to being a village étape where they leave from in the morning because when they arrive the runners if you're at the top of the hill the bikes go past you, there's the giving of the prizes and the giving of the jerseys and um, then they're all bundled, their bikes are taken off them by their team support, their bikes have gone by the time they are taken you know being massaged or whatever. When they get off the bikes after 5 hours of riding they often have to then sit on an exercise static bike and then they exercise

Elaine: To find their legs again I would think

Jacqueline: To come back down so they don't suddenly stop because you can imagine if you've been riding for that long, you suddenly stop, you sit down in a coach to be taken somewhere to the next starting place for the next day and you'll be as creaky as anything, wouldn't you. That's not what they want. So they sit them on exercise bikes and they wind them down as it were so which is very fascinating I think, if

you've been out on your bike, the last thing you want is to get back on another one. And they have massages and stuff like that, and then they're moved on, and each team cos all of them run in teams now, they're not like in the olden days where it was individual has a big coach or 2, They have a massive number of vehicles, the vehicles are just, it's immense to see the vehicles I mean it's immense anyway, you imagine 100,000 people descending on a village which normally has a maximum of 2 and a half thousand, 3 thousand residents. I don't know if you've been here on the night before but the atmosphere is unbelievable.

Elaine: Well I've been, yeah I've been living here and also before in summer since 2012 actually in the town, or the village as you call it, and it is, in fact I generally stay home because it's easier, you can't get anywhere near the actual course.

Jacqueline: Well quite often in the summer evenings anyway I go with friends and we swim in the lake and when you drive back I always like to I drive a 2 seater no roof car I don't know what you call it in English now

Elaine: A sports car

Jacqueline: A sports car, no it's not a sports car, its like a beach buggy type of thing and so I love driving through the village to see the people, to see the people enjoying themselves, and in fact a few years ago the passage of the Tour was on the 15th of July so we had Bastille Day celebrations the night before, so that was fantastic. And as with this year it doesn't stop after the Tour has gone through, um we've got free concerts taking place, we've got a big screen in the centre of Mur de Bretagne in Place Sainte-Suzanne, so anybody can go any time during the day and watch the big screen and see it and soak up the atmosphere. Bars and food trucks available

Elaine: Actually in terms of refreshments there's not a great deal.

Jacqueline: We don't have much in the village, of course the A Michelin starred restaurant, probably for people who are in the teams of the running of the Tour de France but no, not for us normal peasants. Um, and so there's food trucks, there's about 4 food trucks that pay to site themselves, there's a guy that sells lots of sweets and goodies and things for the kids that comes to the summer market here and then there's bars run by volunteers and organised by the commune and that's when the associations earn a bit of money by sending people to man the bars and things.

Elaine: I think before and after the peloton goes through aren't they're throwing sweets or .

Jacqueline: They're called the caravan. And that will come through here at around about between 1.30 and 2.30, They've not put a timed program on the Tour de France website yet but generally finishes around about 4.30, 5 the race so they come

through ahead so the caravan comes through so yeah there's a Skoda throw a lot of bob hats and stuff like that. We used to get a lot of saucisse um but I don't think they throw those so much now, but sweets and pens and stuff like that you know for a lot of people the caravan is the thing you need to

Elaine: It's the main event

Jacqueline: It's the main event. They go home and watch the final

Elaine: well they do race by very quickly

Jacqueline: Exactly, exactly. That's what we always say, so funny and in fact every year we've put banners up on the side of the road in Saint-Guen when they go through Saint-Guen, they don't always go through Saint-Guen, they always end at Mur when they're on this side of Brittany but they don't always go through Saint-Guen sometimes they come up from Pontivy and places like that or through Neulliac and Pontivy. But we've put signs and things, we've put JCBs out with big signs and big flags on, nothing, you don't even see them on the telly. Quite often we do watch it on TV there's a lot of villages put moving people create something that can be seen from the helicopter but it's almost not worth doing it here because we're so near the end that actually what the cameras concentrate on the riders, they don't bother with the panning out and showing you what people have done to make it look beautiful. It will look beautiful as long as it's sunny of course.

Elaine: Well I mean like today and everything's in bloom

Jacqueline: In July it starts going over doesn't it, it's not quite as nice as it is at the time of year in May and June, yeah

Elaine: So why is it so important for Mur to host once again this race?

Jacqueline: Well Mur doesn't have a lot of choice in it

Elaine: OK.

Jacqueline: It's the Tour de France that decide, but it is an important place for on the Tour de France if they're going to be in Brittany. For the last 2 years no part of the Tour de France has taken place in Brittany so we were due to have a return to Brittany. They do try to move it around, it gets in different areas every year though the things that never change um well of course last year for the first time ever it didn't finish in Paris because of the Olympics were going on at the same time, but they always do Alpe d'Huez and the Alps and the Pyrenees, fairly set pieces that they always do, but Mur we don't have a choice, but we can't say no either, it's a constraint for a council to run it because it does cost money, um and in previous



years things like the giant screen that we put up have been funded by the department of Cotes-d'Armor, because were in Cotes-d'Armor but that funding is slipping away because they can't afford to do spend money on those kind of things, so they're saying no which puts us in a difficult position because it means that the cost the commune to host it which is why this year we've setting up an enterprise village so it will be like a little fair where people companies, big companies big sponsors of the Tour de France are joining in so they pay a chunk of money to and we're talking about thousands not tens of thousands to put up a tent and have their representatives and it's all about advertising for Skoda, for Orangeina, for lots and lots of companies that would normally be advertised cos all the cars that are used by the teams and by the people running, Christian Prudhomme is always in a Skoda because Skoda sponsors the Tour de France, is one of the sponsors, Um So they're we've sold space for them to set up and hand out their bits and pieces. A few local businesses as well will join in, the bigger ones. So Agglo Alimentaire I think a couple of big companies will come. So we've sold space to try and raise money from sponsorship for ourselves as well.

Elaine: People are coming here from maybe from quite a distance even to be part of it, to see it happen particularly because of the hill climb. Then they will expect also

Jacqueline: Yes, but people who come for the hills climb you see we're not allowed there are strict rules not allowed to have a bar or a food truck within 50 meters of the course where they run. So people who are on the hill need to take their own picnics because there's nothing up there. For this year, this year I think for the first time they've allowed there is going to be a coffee bar or something selling soft drinks and coffees and things at the top of the hill. I'd have to confirm that but I think that's due to be the case for the first time ever because people have walked 3 or 4 kilometres to get up to the hill and get on the hill and of course the lower stretches of the hill there are no fields, it's ditches and the few places that you can park along there have been taken 4 or 5 days before by camping cars

Elaine: Well, I know I can look out from where I am here and see all the fields around are just covered with camping cars all over.

Jacqueline: Yes, well we expect at least 100,000 people and by the next morning there's probably 30 left, really it is unbelievable. Even in my village which is the next village on it's only 4 kilometres away but still part of Guerledan we wake up in the morning and there is a camping car in every space that you could possibly imagine and then by 5 o'clock in the evening they've all gone.

Elaine: It's amazing, isn't it, it's moving on

Jacqueline: It is a circus that moves on. There are people that are professional followers as it were because often retired people, often in camping cars. A lot of people say camping carists don't serve any community but in fact in general I find they do and if you're running a coffee shop or selling cider or kir or saussice galette near where people are in their camping cars they quite often come along and have a drink and a chat with the locals and things because after all they're moving onto the next place the next err

Elaine: Its incredible

Jacqueline: It is incredible.

Elaine: So how many days it's over several days isn't it? Is it 5 days?

Jacqueline: No, it's just the one day.

Elaine: The one day here

Jacqueline: One day here. Well, the Tour de France runs for almost a month

Elaine: OK, right.

Jacqueline: So it starts the first week of July and ends around just before the last week, around the 22nd, 23rd can't remember the dates off the top of my head.

Elaine: Never mind, we're focussing anyway on here, and putting Mur on the map

Jacqueline: One here. One day here, it's the beginning of a weekend and a long weekend because the Monday is Bastille Day so it's the Friday of a long weekend so a lot of people will have a very long weekend

Elaine: Right, well thank you very much Jackie, and remind us the actual date

Jacqueline: It's Friday the 11th of July and you can be in Guerledan from the morning until after midnight because there'll be animations and things going on all the time.

Elaine: I'm sure I'll be aware of it.

Jacqueline: You will definitely be aware of it. I'll be exhausted from serving galettes

Elaine: Well done you. Well thank you very much indeed

Jacqueline: You're welcome.

Elaine: For all your information on this and I'm sure it will always be attracting a large number of people.

Jacqueline: Yeah it will. Let's just hope that the weather is brilliant and

Elaine: We'll start doing sun dances.

Jacqueline: Yeh definitely sun dances.

Elaine: Thank you.

Jacqueline: Thank you