



Trip Notes for Paris, Bruges and Brussels from September 10-25, 2010

“Nous ne sont arrivés tôt ce matin et qui souffrent du décalage horaire un peu.” That’s Tom practicing his French and being grateful to be in Paris despite some jet lag.

This is me worrying about what to do with his eating Foie Gras for every meal: “Rapide, appeler une ambulance, mon mari a mangé trop de foie gras.” To which friend Loujeanne says to simply give him more wine.



We eat and drink our way around Europe.

We don’t have all that many pictures from this portion of the trip. Paris! Every time we go to take one the comment erupts that “Gee, we have quite a few good shots of xxxx.” We have been routinely coming to Paris since the early 70s when we lived about 2 hours north in Belgium and while we do find new things at each trip, the main portions of Paris remain similar and are well familiar to us. Thus I’ll add the website to a couple of our past photo shows and possibly a new one too. I think we renewed acquaintances with all our old haunts.

If you want to see Tom’s recent photo show of Paris, here’s the link:

<http://www.photoshow.com/watch/xQ6zP5xG>

And of course you could find any and all of his photo shows at www.TomsKoi.com and then click on photo shows.

We have stayed in most of the arrondissements (districts), sometimes in hotels but more recently in rental apartments so that we can learn the neighborhood, markets, shops and little alleyways of the real Paris. We feel very blessed that we can see Paris this way and have for years strongly recommended this idea of seeing an area thoroughly. When we lived in Europe in the 70s we realized there were many ways to travel. Not one right or one wrong, but for us we made the decision that if we were going to GO, we’d go to see the area well before we’d indulge in a fly-by, shot-gun method of traveling. To our view, there’s nothing like seeing a historical site well and from your feet power versus out a bus window.

From the sky

This trip we had quite an enjoyable and amusing visit to the top of the Charles de Gaulle Etoile at the end of the Champs d'Elysee. Yes, it's that Arch de Triomphe on the circle where twelve streets come together.



Wikipedia's panorama picture from atop the Arch.

Try driving that! We have, many times – thrilling! This time we went to the top towards the end of the day, staying for sunset, and enjoyed figuring out where we'd lived, where tourist sites and major buildings were positioned and generally engaging in a "remember when" game. A sunset through the clouds was an added benefit.



The Arch from below and two directions from above.

From the hill – still up in the sky

Montmartre always calls us: for a walk up the many steps, for a view from the top of the hill from Sacre Coeur church, for a walk among the artists and the tourists, for a meal and always a drink, and sometimes even for a bit of shopping.



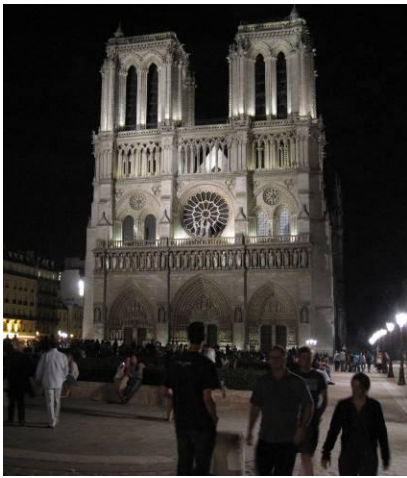
***A street on the walk up when we first glimpse the towers of Sacre Coeur. The mountain in full view.
A look at the top after having climbed over 300 steps to look down.***

Or as friend Ellen says, and I love the idea: "This church looks like a wedding cake on the hill, doesn't it?!" Ellen has visited Paris and stayed the entire time up in Montmartre which sounds delightful and something we've considered. Once we were near putting a deposit on a large terraced apartment in Montmartre that had a huge skylight that looked onto Sacre Coeur. Something like the

time we had a skylight that gave us the Eiffel Tower which was magical at night when they have the twinkling lights going.



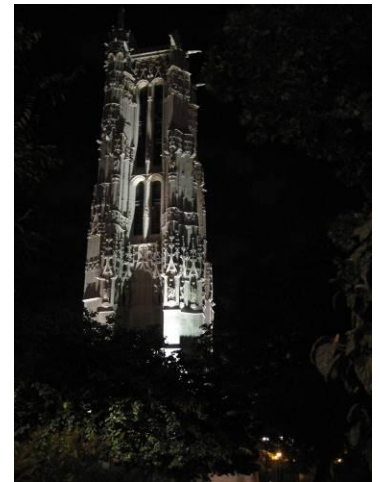
Here are a couple of street entertainers in Montmartre. Then Diana's new "*Defence d' Afficher*" shirt purchased in Montmartre's shopping area and which you'll see that I wore like a uniform since Tom's not too hot on my marathon shirts and after all, what else is there? Smile. I had another one of these shirts of the same type a few years ago. Then here's a favorite colorful little restaurant that is just picture perfect but simply too small to eat in. We ate in the same area however.



Speaking of Churches – here's Notre Dame – plus

No trip is complete without walking on the Island, both Notre Dame's and Ile St Louis, which must be done both during the day and in the nighttime.

The newly refurbished Tour St Jacques after many years of being under cover. It dates back earlier than much of anything else in Paris.

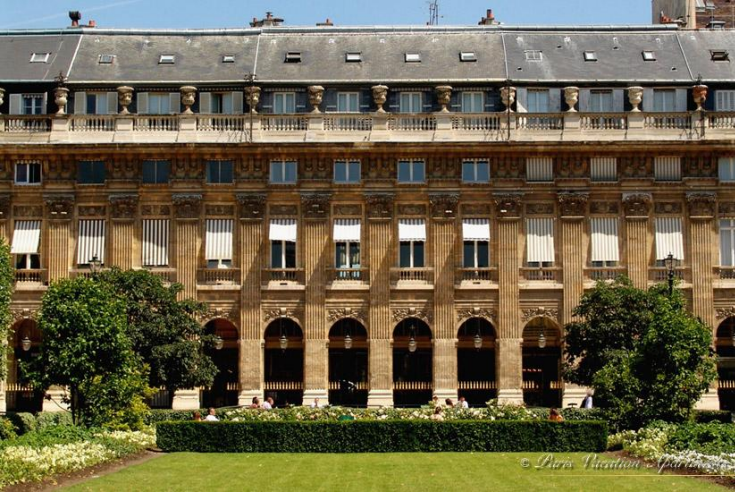


Our apartment was within this complex – the Palais Royal



A big and new excitement this trip is finding that our apartment really is all that it was said to be, plus more, than we could ever have expected. It was right in the heart of Paris in the Palais Royal, just across from the Louvre. Inside Richelieu's old palace we had a perfect two bedroom and two bath luxury apartment overlooking the gardens with its dozens of lime trees. Here's the building and here's the passage we look over. We especially look for residences that give us the Parisian flair while also allowing for modernization. The above picture from the web was taken from the street and

shows that the building is now used by the state department. The pictures below show the inner courtyard and come from the website www.parisvacationapartments.com.



From the rental agency website:

• *Elegance, Warmth and Charm at The Palais Royal*

This beautiful, traditional French 2 bedroom-2 bathroom elegant apartment is situated in the heart of central Paris, directly on the gardens of historic Palais Royal and a short walk across the beautiful gardens from the Louvre Museum. It is the ideal spot for families, friends, or couples traveling together who want to experience real Parisian living.

The apartment has kept its traditional French architecture with several entrances to the apartment, a long hall separates the king bedroom and large shower bathroom from the rest of the apartment. There are large rounded floor-level windows in each room and typical French low ceilings which enhance the elegance, warmth and charm of the French/Italian decor with original paintings and antiques.

The building elevator takes you directly to the 1st floor. There are two entrances to the apartment: one is in the kitchen and the other in the long hallway. The cozy living room overlooks the historic Palais Royal. Please note that you are under the arcade of the Palais Royal but with a direct view onto the gardens. There is a dining table (will seat 6), comfortable chairs and two couches which can be used as single beds for children. The TV and music equipment are in the living room.

The fully equipped kitchen opens onto the living room. It has a large refrigerator, dishwasher, separate washer and dryer, oven, juice maker, coffee maker, toaster, iron and all utensils necessary for cooking and eating.

There are two bedrooms: the king bedroom overlooks the Palais Royal Gardens. The queen bedroom overlooks the rue Montpensier, a quiet narrow street. There are 2 full bathrooms next to each bedroom with American showers but no bathtub. The king bedroom shower is equipped for disabled people. This two bedroom apartment is on the 1st floor (US second floor) of an elegant old Parisian building that is part of the original Palais Royal, built in the 17th century. The French/ Italian decor is relaxing and inviting. Everything in the apartment has been modernized to give maximum comfort and convenience while maintaining old-world charm. To ensure your comfort the apartment has central heating and air conditioning for the summer.

• *Computer and Internet Access - WIFI is available and included in the rental of this apartment. We also provide a computer (PC) for your use, however, you are welcome to bring your own laptop and we will help you connect it.*

• *Ideal Location for Touring and Museums - This location is perfect for touring the sights of Paris, shopping and fine dining. The Louvre is around the corner and Place des Victoires, Place Vendome, the Seine, Place de la Concorde, Tuilerie Gardens and much more are all within easy walking distance of the apartment.*

There are wonderful restaurants and cafes in the surrounding neighborhood. You will also find a bakery, patisserie, cheese shop and a supermarket close by.

• *What We Offer Our Guests - We will be at hand to meet and settle you into the apartment, answer questions and help out in any way we can. We can make restaurant, theater and activity reservations and recommendations. As we live in Paris we will happily share our knowledge, insight and experience with our guests.*

The rental price is all inclusive, including fresh flowers, French wine and croissants upon arrival, maid service once if you are staying more than ten days, a computer with high-speed internet access, all electricity and heating charges, sheets, bathrobes, towels, liquid soap and staples in the kitchen (salt, pepper, bottled water, coffee, tea, sugar and more).

• *What's Nearby* - Within easy walking distance of the Louvre museum, the Left Bank, Place des Victoires, rue Montorgueil market, Place Vendome, the Seine, St. Germain des Pres, Place de la Concorde, Tuilerie Gardens. Metro Palais Royal, a two-minute walk from the apartment, will take you anywhere in central Paris within minutes. A bus stop and taxi stand are around the corner.

From both of us: "Il est tellement agréable d'être de nouveau à Paris."



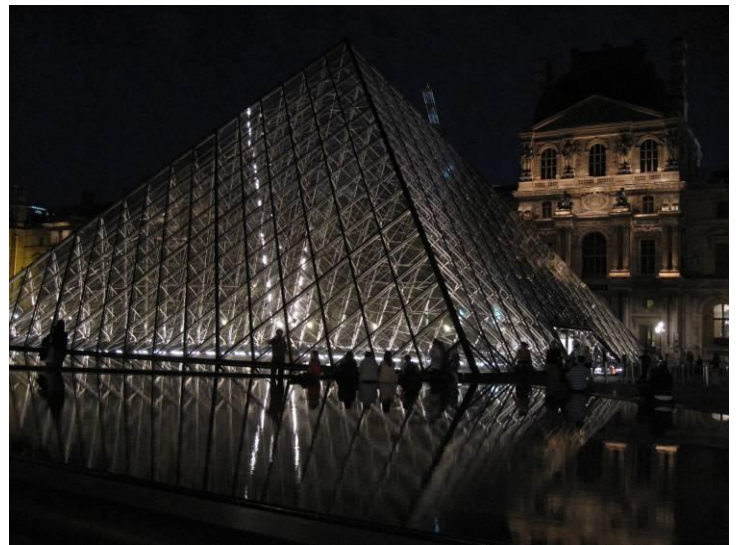
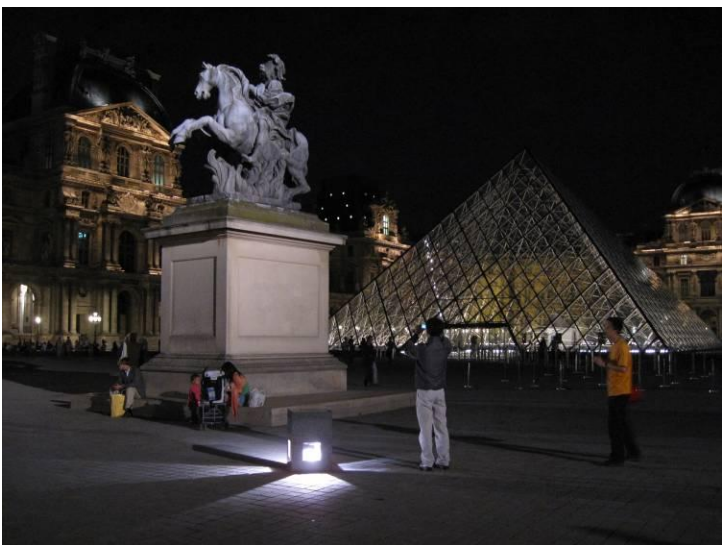
Here is our huge living and dining room that overlooks the gardens, with an eat-in kitchen with all modern appliances plus washer and dryer. There are two bathrooms and the main one has natural sunlight through a wall of windows, a walk in shower with seating, bidet and heated towel racks included. There's heating and air conditioning in each room (not always available in Paris).

I know the logic of not spending a lot of one's budget on accommodations and we've lived through both types of travel. But our current line of thinking is that we should live as well or better on vacation and that accommodations are important to us. We spend quite a bit of time in them to include a meal or two. I'd go less often if I needed to in order to go in style. This felt like very nice style to us!

Touring – where to start?

It was hard to decide where to renew acquaintances first but the Louvre Gardens won out. Here's Tom's favorite picture of the day, or should I say, of the night.

Still in the same area, I choose the second picture as my favorite. The anticipation of walking through the gates once again and remembering what I'd see, and then remembering how worried I was that the I.M. Pei pyramid just wouldn't work but then growing fond of it, these are both fond memory sights.



I have so many lovely pictures and memories from this Paris trip but as most of them are either on Tom's photo show or on past Paris photo shows, I'll move on. That and the fact that I'm now a couple trips down with trip reports only started (smile).

Museum d'Orsay

This museum evaded us during last trip since we were in Paris over the Christmas holidays and it was simply too crowded to enjoy, so it became a focus of this trip. Even with donating a day to the visit, it wasn't sufficient time and we look forward to another visit.

This is a museum in an old train station built for a World's Fair of 1900. A station almost lost and with a history that's quite unusual. It sits in the centre of Paris on the banks of the Seine, opposite the Tuileries Gardens. The building itself is seen as the first "work of art" well before seeing the famous collection of art from the mid 1800s to 1914. It's most fascinating and you can see pictures at



www.musee-orsay.fr.

During our last visit we took many pictures but they weren't allowed this time. The top picture is from the web. Below is an authorized picture from the dining room; however we were not served on the collector's plate shown next.



Bomb threats?

While we were in Paris there were at least two metro closures for threats and just an hour or so after leaving the Eiffel Tower area it was totally shut down and evacuated for a threat. The government of France was clear that they were on the next to highest alert level and I don't know if it was for the strikes by union workers or the Muslim anger over the banning of the burqa or true terrorist threats. We hadn't been home long until the terrorist alert by our government warning Americans to be on the lookout for suspicious activity. While in Belgium we learned more about the threat specifically to American travelers too. (My friend Bethany – more on her later – chose to travel on her Belgium passport rather than risk using her American documents.)

Onto Belgium! Bruges and then Brussels both were so special that they deserve their own Photo Show. You can see it at this link: <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/jp6NX3hl>

From Paris to the "Venice of the North" truly! – Bruges



Bruges is not new to us. When we lived in Belgium and were attached to SHAPE/NATO headquarters, we lived close enough that we'd made many trips. Every time someone would visit we'd bring them there. And we had a lot of visitors those five years as living in the center of Europe was almost as attractive to our traveling friends as when we lived in Miami. The above picture is from

the web of course, and the aerial shot obviously is too. (Bruges is also spelled as Brugge most often by the natives.)



Bruges is only one square mile in space and it would remind you in many ways of Venice except that it's cleaner and there are real locals who really live there whereas Venice has mostly lost the local flair. The entire village of Bruges, like Venice, is protected as it was added to the UNESCO Heritage Sites in 2002. Bruges had once been one of Europe's largest towns and very wealthy but a combination of the river silting up and the big shots from Burgundy dying out collectively caused Bruges to be a ghost town for many centuries. That neglect, or one writer called it pickling, allowed Bruges to remain original and in due course it was realized that Bruges could exist for the tourists.

Lace making is a large tourist call and in the nunnery one can still watch the tedious making of lace and everywhere one can purchase both very expensive hand-made lace and even mediocre machine-made product (probably from China.) Food and drink abounds and the opportunity to cross over canals and find a glorious view at every turn is absolutely mind blowing. Why Bruges isn't on every European itinerary is difficult to understand but I'm grateful it is not at least for our renewal of the little city.



Think about it: it had to have been over 30 years ago that we were last in Bruges. And darned, I'm getting to that stage in life where I find artifacts in museums that I grew up with. All of which reminds me that time flies when you're having fun. But Bruges remains the same.

They were building a green oasis on the market square and we saw part of it developed. Here's a video showing how gorgeous it eventually became the day after we departed.

http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/mediatheek_en/1.870769

Our apartment in the heart of Bruges had been worrisome to me. I'm the family cynic or disbeliever and it was simply far too inexpensive to believe. Yet it not only turned out well, it was wonderful, and to top it off the caretaker had filled the refrigerator and wine bar for us, supplied the special espresso machine and given us a bottle of champagne. I didn't even tell them this was a 40th wedding anniversary. (Well, we're in that time frame anyway: We celebrated in June my moving-in 40 years ago, in August our 42nd year of meeting, and early October will be our legal 40 years.)



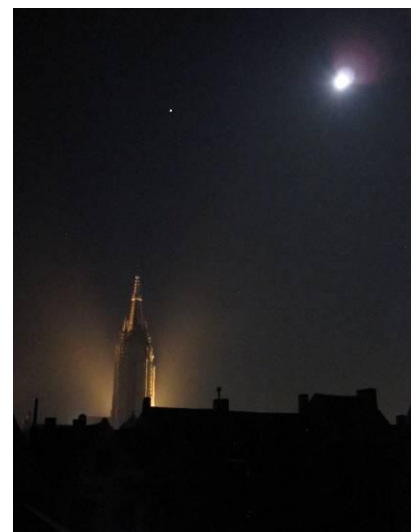
From the website: *Location: Bruges (Bruges), Belgium, Europe (In the Very Heart of Bruges!) - Accommodations: Apartment, 2 Bedrooms, 1.5 Baths (Sleeps 4)- One of the city's finest lodgings, a new standard in the vacation rental market, situated in a quiet street in the very heart of the old town at 150 meters from the main square and Belfry tower. This apartment offers an A-list level get-away, away from the crowds but within walking distance of all major sites and museums. The property measuring 1451 sq. feet was created in a contemporary new design building, nestled in an attractive architect-planned environment. Elevator and own private entrance. A remote controlled glass-separated fireplace adds to the romance. The home-theatre surround audio-video installation includes a PHILIPS Pixel-plus widescreen TV and a high-end sound-system with MORDAUNT-SHORT bass-reflex speakers. A choice of DVD's and CD's is provided. The open and spacious living room has been tastefully designed and includes LEOLUX leather seats, modern Italian furniture, and floor lighting. The adjacent 'OUTDOOR PRIVATE TERRACE' offers beautiful views onto the city roofs and medieval buildings. The design stainless steel garden furniture, decorative plants, and built-in wall-lights are top-notch.*

The separate kitchen is designed for amateur-cooks with full-size ceramic cooking-plates, MIELE microwave/grill combo oven, steam oven, chef-knives, large side-by-side refrigerator/freezer, dishwasher and coffee-maker. There is an EXTRA separate espresso machine in the living-room, with a variety of coffees. The master bedroom has Queen-size bedding with separated mattresses and high-quality bed linen. It's own 'Sharp' LCD TV, a 'Teac' tuner-CD player, and matching B&W speakers. The connecting fully equipped bathroom has a lit shower with multi-jet nozzles and a Grohe "Rain-dance" top, a wash bowl table, a bidet and a second wc. A separate toilet space with small wash bowl, large mirror, electric outlet, wc and automatic ventilation is located in the hall on the same level. The upstairs mezzanine has two one-person beds, Leolux design seats, an 'Additional Television' and X-BOX game console with games.

The Coffee Maker!

Yes, that's an espresso maker in the living room and it was so treasured during our stay that one of our own was purchased as soon as we returned to the U.S. We will be getting very wired with caffeine.

From our balcony – Here's the sight from our balcony to include a full moon. This trip has been about heights and views!



Bruges's canals – see more on Tom's Photo Show and especially the night shots on the canal.



Shopping

We don't shop much and oftentimes the only things we return home with are tourist picture books. This time we outdid ourselves. I think Tom wasn't too hot on my wearing marathon t-shirts (smile) and encouraged me to a couple outfits and I now realize that his good taste came through again – my bigger expenditure was at a rather famous new Belge designer shop (Olivier Strelli) though it was a name we didn't know at the time. I also bought Mephisto shoes; we were stunned to find them nearly 1/2 the price of that in the U.S.

About the shopping pictures below: One of these I bought, one I didn't, though I do need a costume for Bay to Breakers 100th anniversary run coming up in May in San Francisco

Chocolate comes in all sorts of forms – good, x-rated and colorful – whatever your heart's or stomach's desire. Belgium is the Chocolate Capital of the World.



If it's Tuesday it must be Belgium?

Not like we jump around to cities: We did have four nights in Bruges, and then we were off to the completion of our trip by having three nights in Brussels, capital of Belgium and capital of the European Union. We stayed downtown near to the famous Grand Place but far enough away to be on a quieter street. The Grand Place of both Bruges and Brussels makes one wonder why Belgium isn't on more travel itineraries. Here's a web shot of the Brussels' Grand Place in fisheye.



Brussels is a mixture -- maybe nearly as much as New York City. New York City has the U.N. and Brussels has the European Union. I'd be curious which one is the larger bureaucracy. (There are 60 huge buildings in the E.U. complex and one of them even houses 2,000 people. Is Washington D.C. that large? The joke has always been that a worker can sleep his career away at the E.U. plus we know they have a large number of holidays plus six weeks of vacation.) Brussels is huge and exciting and really has a big cultural and fashion city calling but it has grown so very fast that it's in full throes of needing some tidying. We thought of it as a mini-New York City before Giuliani cleaned it up, or Paris before the pooper scooper laws came into effect. It has the huge Palais of Justice on the hill (being cleaned up), a major opera house (I've collected opera house visits and saw a performance of Bejart ballet in this one), the Atomium from the 50s worlds fair, and many fashion streets. And why wouldn't it have everything with the richness of history and the richness of the E.U. payrolls? Gee, even first class got oversold out of Brussels.



Remember we lived just outside of Brussels in the 70s (attached to SHAPE/NATO Headquarters) so we had spent plenty of time to visit this area. Since the 70s a third ring road has been constructed. Since the 70s the E.U. has moved in with two huge complexes. Since the 70s the dissention or competition between the French Walloons and the Flemish Dutch speakers has accelerated but I suspect Belgium will remain one small state/country no matter as they are already so small as to be about the size of Maryland. Brussels has about 1 million inhabitants and it's important to realize that most of them are foreigners. The whole country's population is only about 10 million and nicely surprising are how many farms and open spaces remaining in the country. We renewed acquaintances this time on the train both from Paris into Brussels and then Bruges, and then back to Brussels from Bruges.

No hurry, no worry, be happy

Here we are again, in a comfortable tourist spot with no need to rush to see the tourist sites but rather to walk down memory lane. No matter the lateness or tiredness we had to walk the Grand Place and side streets the first night as it's truly an amazing site. Here's some of Tom's pictures and above is a fisheye from the web. Again, to see a selection of pictures from Belgium, go to www.TomsKoi.com for the Belgium photo show.

Moules - Off the Grand Place are small side streets full of tourists and locals together enjoying moules (mussels) and frites. Belgium developed the frites/French fries and they are served in a paper cone with a mayonnaise topper. Moules come with a mound of frites too. We headed over to the St Catherine Church area for our dinner and Tom enjoyed them in a creamy sauce with leeks. The method is to dip French bread into the remaining and very flavorful sauce.

Manneken Pis - Also off the Grand Place is an amusing tourist site called the Manneken Pis (translated to Little Man Piss). Yes, you read that right. It's basically been here since as early as 1388 in some form. And it's a wee little boy peeing in a fountain. As our tour guide recounted, he's a disappointment in that he's small, in every way. Dignitaries will visit Brussels and bring outfits and during this visit he appeared to be wearing a military costume – yet still peeing. I learn that down the street is a little anti-discrimination effort in the form of Yannekin Pis -- a little girl peeing. I couldn't find a picture on the web except one's that were censored so maybe I should have checked it out. Oh, wouldn't the runners of NYC who get disqualified for peeing in public love these statues for their city!



From a website: "*Manneken Pis*" in Brussels - *Manneken Pis* ("little man piss" in English), is a Brussels landmark. It is a small bronze fountain sculpture depicting a little boy urinating into the fountain's basin. Similar statues can be found in the towns of Geraardsbergen and Hasselt. There are several legends behind this statue, but the most famous is the one about Duke Godfried II of Brabant. In 1142, the troops of this two-year-old lord were battling against the troops of the Berthouts, the lords of Grimbergen, in Ransbeke (currently Neder-over-Heembeek). The troops put the infant lord in a basket and hung it in a tree, to encourage them. From there, he urinated on the troops of the Berthouts, who eventually lost the battle.

Another legend goes like this: in the 14th century, Brussels was under siege by a foreign power. The city had held their ground for quite some time. The attackers had thought of a plan to place explosive charges at the city walls. A little boy named Juliaanske from Brussels happened to be spying on them as they were preparing. He urinated on the burning fuse and thus saved the city.

There was already a similar statue made of stone in the middle of the 15th century, perhaps as early as 1388. The statue was stolen several times. In 1619 it was replaced by a bronze statue, created by Franco-Flemish Baroque sculptor Jérôme Duquesnoy.

On many occasions the statue is dressed in a costume. His wardrobe now consists of several hundred different costumes. According to an article posted in the History section of www.manneken-pis.com/intro.html, the statue was at one time

used to dispense liquor. The costumes are changed according to a schedule managed by the non-profit association *Les Amis de Manneken-Pis*, in ceremonies that are often accompanied by brass band music. When the boy's stream is turned on after dressing, the build-up of pressure after such a long abstinence can lead to bystanders being sprinkled, to general delight.

Belge friends

Is Bethany Belge? She has lived in Brussels for over 15 years, married to a Belge for many years though now single, but was born in the U.S. She grew up in New Hampshire and is now multi-lingual and travels to countries that I frankly can't even find on the globe without assistance. She recently ran the Fulbright Scholarship Program and is now with the European Commission which I think is perfect with its big time benefits and locality not to mention the six weeks of vacation but she probably has more in her and is seeking a bigger challenge. I met Bethany up on the top of Yosemite Falls last July (she was with Tara from VA who is now on her way to work in Iraq for a year) and have kept in touch with her and feel blessed that she's not only maintained that communication but encourages it and invited us to visit her in Brussels. She kindly invited us to stay at her flat in city center but I'm not a good housemate and didn't want to subject her. That's Bethany on the right and in black.



Bethany introduced us to Ethiopian food which was not only a super experience (eat with your hands?) but very special to spend time with her and friend Jean-Paul. (She'd lived in Ethiopia – and maybe that was her Peace Corps time.) She had just returned from Karkastan (or one of the 'stans countries that I have to find a world map to see where it is and how to spell it.) Her Russian helped in those travels as certainly she needed to hide her American citizenship to travel there. (She related having to pay a bribe to get out of the country.) She's a gorgeous gal, most entertaining, personable, and super smart, and really has the world by the tail. That translates to "I admire her greatly." If any of my single men friends have enough confidence in themselves

they should meet Bethany. Why she's still single I can only imagine that no men have been able to keep up with her.

Museums, Hills and More



Brussels has a Museum Hill with a multitude of old and new museums. The Musical Instruments Museum is housed in a most unique art deco building and at Bethany's suggestion we visited, ate on the 10th floor terrace, and came home with wee treasures from the gift shop for Marie.

Another hill was the Palace of Justice where we climbed the hill but took the street multi-storied elevator down. When it's renovated and fully cleaned it's going to be gorgeous. It was in scaffolding and yet with a super view and panorama of the city.

Still another (minor) hill was Sablon Square with the famous Chocolatier Wittamere and across the pedestrian street a famous spin-off pastry shop and down the street a frivolous shop with a goldfish necklace worthy of a picture as we might never see anything like it again.



We walked out past the Palais Royal and parks and the E.U. complexes to the arch and the history museum all within Cinquantenaire Park (below and obviously from the web). The Triumphal Arch was built for the National Exhibition of 1880 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the independent state of Belgium. It's the mainstay of this complex which contained AutoWorld (to the left), one of the most complete



historical museums of autos with a warehouse collection. This park was to have waterfalls and ponds but we only found fountains and homeless which were no surprise as there's plenty in Brussels as are there plenty of Roma. Maybe those being removed from France are going to Brussels?



Food in Europe aka how to not get fat

Tom loves food. He never met a sauce he didn't like and Escoffier the French chef who is famous for rich sauces is his hero. I however rather prefer eating something like a pb&j while standing up and on the go. This would be a problem except for the introduction of alcohol into my diet – a drink (or two) over dinner makes me much calmer and patient during the multi-course and always slow-to-arrive restaurant meals. I quite enjoy the décor of most European restaurants too, and researching them, and finding them -- unless we have to walk for hours interviewing menus.

Unfortunately for this trip I had just stepped on the scales at the health club and found the magic figure that required wiring my jaws shut. Thus I had declared an intention of losing 4-5 pounds to return to a normal figure. Yeah, right, eat meals with Tom in Europe and lose weight? Double unfortunately it became a possibility when we ate something wrong and spent a miserable day and night pushing the limits of the two bathrooms. But the Parisian apartment's scale showed at least two kilos lost so Voila -- I could drink again.

A note on the use of rental apartments versus hotels

While we enjoy very much renting an apartment in town, and would miss not mixing with the locals and not being in the midst of things, there are downsides to apartment renting. I miss having a concierge and the convenience of having everything taken care of. Tom jokes that he is my concierge. Without Tom I might not be as hot about figuring out the appliances and heating/air conditioning systems and even which soaps to use in which machine. But I do like having the full kitchen as much because Tom's the cook, and having triple or more floor space, and I have gotten

very spoiled with having two bathrooms. We usually have patios or decks and elegance that only rather pricey accommodations can afford.

In Paris we've had a lot of experiences. One rental was in a bachelor's apartment in St Germaine des Pres area and he was a collector of odd antiques and old books but there was only one bathroom and it was small. His huge skylight was momentous; his collection was surprising that he had comfort renting it complete. One of my favorite places of all times was in the Champs de Mars (Eiffel Tower) with a loft upstairs with the desk and a giant skylight where the brilliance of the Eiffel Tower at night will always be remembered. But it too only had one bathroom.

In Italy we had a high-tech lovely apartment overlooking Lake Como and from the giant lakeside deck we could see the famous town of Bellagio, yet its high tech confused and frustrated me. It was one place that I was miffed that the entire kitchen had been so sterilized that there were no spices, oils or staples making for expensive cooking. In our Bruges apartment it was just the opposite with all paper products, kitchen needs and groceries supplied. Usually it's something in between but a renter must be ready for either scenario.

Shopping in a foreign grocery store can be either tedious or a fun challenge and we generally go from one extreme to the other. Having lived in Europe and on the local economy it's a wee bit easier for us but sometimes I just have to stop another customer and ask them to translate. In Paris we had a couple people who just couldn't do enough to try to help.



Random shots of enjoyment – at a public watering hole in Paris and in the famous Boffinger Brasserie.

It's hard to end this

Memories of European traveling are always and writing about our travels always feels good. I could write on and on but then again Tom's photo show will tell even more and I'm simply out of time. We returned in time for me to take off to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis – St Paul for a few days to include a marathon and now that I'm back for a day I'm shortly to be off to Hartford for another marathon. Then I'm home for one day until Tom and I head off to first Harbor Crest in Portsmouth area and then onto Mt Desert Island and Acadia National Park where I have a marathon October 17th. I'm then back a couple days before heading out to Athens Greece for the 2500th anniversary of the run by Pheidippedes from Marathon to Athens. He might have died when he reached Athens, or he might not have, and I'm in the same boat. I'm hoping my legs survive.

My enthusiasm for travel has never waned. May you be as blessed! Someone said it well:

Went looking for self. Found others.

Itinerary

Fri Sep 10

6:15pm Depart Newark (EWR) via CO#56

Sat Sep 11

7:45am Arrive Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG)

Train to town unless weather bad then taxi

Apartment Through www.parisvacationapartments.com and pva@wfi.fr
Tele: c/o Isis 0609 65 94 55 or Karina 06 42 00 82 07 or Alex 06 12 44 64 78
Palais Royal 2 bedroom 1st floor apartment
30 Rue de Montpensier, 75001 Paris, France - Tele: 01 49 27 9444

Sat Sep 18

12:25pm Depart via Train - Gare de Nord Paris to Brussels Coach #12, Seats 12 and 13

1:45pm Arrive Brussels Midi (same station in and out)

2:32pm Depart Brussels Midi, Train #1535

3:29pm Arrives Bruges

Apartment Zilverstratstraat, 13, 8000 Bruges - for 4 nights c/o Betsy.rem@telenet.be
<http://www.vrbo.com/34803>

Wed Sep 22

12:31pm Depart via Train #1512 from Bruges to Brussels

1:28pm Arrive Brussels Midi

Hotel Brussels Marriott Hotel – for 3 nights
Rue Auguste Orts 3-7/Grand Place, Brussels, 1000 Belgium - Tele 32 2 516 9090

Sat Sep 25

Am Train to airport

9:45am Depart Brussels (BRU) via CO#61

12:00noon Arrive Newark