

Paris Trip Notes **December 23-January 4, 2009**

- Christmas and New Year's in a favorite city.
- Apartment living in the Madeleine area.
- Cold, cold, cold!
- Photography focused on Christmas lights and window displays.
- Collected Brasserie eating experiences.

We love Paris! But at each of the last few trips we've agreed that the prices are too hefty, if not silly and that would be the last trip And then comes along another temptation with the pictures of a lovely apartment for a nice price in a new neighborhood. You might guess which one of us comes up with the apartment? For the last few trips we've 'lived' in a new neighborhood so as to investigate, shop, and feel a part of the culture. This year we are just behind the Madeleine in the 8th district.

May I suggest that you first get in the Parisian mood by clicking on this site? And if you've seen it before, I suspect you'll like the background music while you're reading. This is a 360 degree photograph of Paris by Night so be sure to move it along by clicking, holding and moving the cursor at the bottom to the right. <http://framboise78.free.fr/Paris.htm>

This particular 8th district location for our 'new' adventure turns out to be somewhat amusing: During our first nights walk, we recognized the Waldorf Madeline, a hotel we'd stayed in a few years back, and it wasn't very far away. It was however a hotel and not an apartment and we're just enough farther out to see new things. For those who know Paris, we are near to St. Augustine and St. Lazare between Boulevards Haussman and Malesherbes.

The first three days were spent a bit lazy and wandering our old favorite sites. We shopped and filled up on cash and provisions using the little roller grocery cart supplied by the apartment. We also filled up on their famous café crème (wonder if that's the reason my body didn't adjust to the new time zone and I stayed up all night?) Our legs walked about every square meter of the neighborhood to include the huge St. Augustine Church and adjoining park. We traversed the opposite and farthest away direction of Boulevard Malesherbes going into the Arc de Triomphe from the back side via Avenue Wagram. Or as they say

"Some of my best adventures have been while I was lost." -- Ellen

"Not all who wander are lost." -- J.R.R. Tolkien

It was on the way home that we remembered having lived so near to the apartment over a Thanksgiving visit. (Don't laugh, you might not know that we lived for 5 years within a couple hours of Paris and have made too many trips to count.)

One never fails to gasp in delight at the site of the Arch de Triumph and the Avenue des Champs Elysees but never as much so as when it's dressed to the hilt in Christmas lights. All trees are in white-pale blue lights with a new addition of a brighter and longer 'dropping' light interspersed. Added to the scene was the sudden arrival of a swarm of police driven white motorcycles and within the dozen or so motorcycles was one with a side car carrying Santa Claus up and down the Avenue. On the far end of the Avenue resides a huge Ferris wheel lit equally brightly in flashing white lights. While it's surely not as large as that of the Chicago World's Fair of late 1800s with the first ever Ferris wheel whose cabins held 60 people, this one must be near the next record with cabins that hold several people. It sits at Place de Concorde just before entering the Tuileries Garden, where we also

walked and then on into the Louvre complex. Sometimes we enjoy seeing it but much of the time we think it's incongruous with the older and lovely architecture of the area. (And yet the Ferris wheel was developed in the late 1800s.)

Our walking also took us over the Pont Neuf Bridge and into the Latin Quarter, St Michelle and St Germaine des Pres, along the Rue Rivoli's famous shops running by the Seine, with a view of Notre Dame, and of course more Christmas decorations. I like to pop into any and all hotels to check out their decorations. This season I've toured the holiday decorations in San Antonio, Baltimore's Hunt Valley, Chicago, Charlotte, New York City and now Paris. I should have added Red Bank, NJ!

We didn't do all this walking in one fell swoop. I'm not sure I could. Tom did very well and just keeps going -- I think his adrenaline pumps extra in Paris. We diverted down Avenue Charles V and into the famous George V Hotel, now taken over by the Four Seasons chain but still a legend of Paris. It too was dressed to the hilt for Christmas, a small orchestra was playing, and we walked through the halls and classy boutique shop displays to see the oldest section. Our walk resulted in the discovery of a private dining room (one we'd never have been invited to I'm sure), left open and ready for a dinner party of about 20, with the lights low, the holiday decorations glowing, and the fireplace lit. We ended our visit by watching the Rolls Royce and other special cars coming and going. The entire neighborhood is worth discovery, but then, where in Paris is not?

Through our old favorite www.paris-walks.com we took the "Hemingway Walk" Friday morning, starting at Cardinal Lemoine square. Hemingway's Paris belongs in the Latin Quarter, where we explored this charming district with the old houses of the Mouffetard market street. This is just outside of where the Paris medieval city wall once stood, some of it placed over what would have been a moat, and where some of the wall remains. It's apparently an oddity that the wall was never removed totally and now some buildings utilize the remnants of the wall, with one having their terrace atop. There is a high class fresh produce market and neighborhood shops though not as ritzy as our last year's Rue Cler market. The guide was Peter the owner of the tour company who is a Brit though he's been in Paris over 25 years and running the walking tour business for the last 7 years. He had the gate security code to take us into a 'secret' courtyard where one could think they were a hundred miles away from Paris, with a place for cars, trees, and lovely apartments lining the center square. It was where James Joyce borrowed an apartment so he could have some quiet and write. We saw where Hemingway once lived with his first wife, where he and other artists drank and dined and we heard stories of olden days, saw pictures of what the neighborhood looked like then, and heard added stories about Orwell, Balzac, and Verlaine who all were of the time when the district was immortalized by Hemingway in "A Moveable Feast." Our tour ended at a corner café recommended by the guide across the square from the lovely historic church of St Etienne-du-Mont. The church recommendation was probably better than the meal.

In the same area is the huge Institute du Monde Arab with its 1,600 high tech metal screens covering the building. These screens filter the light entering the building and each screen contains 21 irises which are controlled electronically, opening and closing in response to the amount of sunlight falling on photosensitive screens. The screen's design is based on carved screens found in Morocco's buildings. With such an institute in the area, it should not have been a surprise to find a huge 1920s Moorish mosque complex. We were to tour the inside courtyard but found that Friday is the big religious day and tours are not allowed. This is the home of the Grand Imam and contains a complex of many huge buildings, with a 100' minaret, surrounded by domes, including Turkish baths.

Though we've been in this area before, in particular to visit the Jardin des Plantes which is a 1600s botanical garden, we'd walked right past the Arenes de Lutèce and had no idea it was there. The remains of this vast Roman arena (Lutetia was the Roman name for Paris) date from the late 2nd century. Its destruction began at the end of the 3rd century in the hands of the Barbarians, and parts

of it were used to build the walls of the Ile de La Cite. The arena was then gradually buried and its exact location preserved only in old documents until it was rediscovered in the mid-1800s. In the 19th century writers such as Victor Hugo campaigned for its restoration. With a seating capacity of 15,000, arranged in 35 tiers, the original arena was used both for theatrical performances and as an amphitheatre for gladiator fights. Other similar arenas are found in Nimes and Arles. It's now a public park and I sure can't think how the seating on bare stone could be comfortable (do you suppose they brought cushions?).

Time difference is only 6 hours, but we didn't adjust as easily as usual and maybe that's because I'm in a 'retired' mode and we have about two weeks here so no rushing is needed. Late afternoon called for a nap a couple days and the middle of the night called for wandering the apartment wide awake. We arrived Christmas Eve morning and though I generally insist on staying up for the entire day, this time I'd not slept on the plane. Thus the body called for one night eating in and catching up on the computer. The other choice was a Vivaldi concert at the Madeleine.

In my defense there was some reason to be awake in the middle of the night. I left the states feeling rather guilty because my father was just out of the hospital following a fall, multiple stitches and what seemed to be complications from not eating. It was questionable whether he should be at home and yet we didn't think my mother should be alone either. Then as I was boarding the plane we learned that mother was rushed to the hospital because she couldn't breathe. Upon arriving in Paris we learned that she'd had a heart attack and they were performing surgery to install a stent. (She refused a by-pass 3 or 4 years ago.) She seems to have come through this now and I'm being kept updated via email. Next elder daughter (Beverly) was also out-of-pocket so TLC was left to the younger generation including grandson Joseph who was pressed into service the first day.

Our apartment is in the 8th district, almost next to the 16th century St. Augustine Church. Across the street there is a bakery for fresh bread, pastries, breakfast and espresso 7 days a week, and there are many good looking restaurants nearby. The apartment has a notebook of recommendations and comments by past guests. There is also a large Monoprix store for groceries and literally everything. (I remember when living in Belgium being stunned that you could buy shoes in a grocery store.) Within a 5 minute walk we can be in the Madeleine area (with many specialty and gourmet shops like Fouchons as well as many restaurant selections), the avenue Champs Elysee or avenue Faubourg Saint Honore (all with restaurants, clubs, movie theatres and high fashion shopping), the Parc Monceau in the other direction (where you can go jogging or relaxing in the park), the Saint Lazare Train Station (where you can take the trains and metros) or the big department stores (Galeries Lafayette or Printemps) facing the Opera. One might generally take a metro to the Louvre but we walked there.

You can see pictures of our apartment at <http://perfectlyparis.com/Luxurious%20Laborde.html>.



Amenities include most anything we'd have at home and is totally complete for cooking and living including a combo washing/dryer machine, a bookcase of four books, two plasma TVs, a DVD-CD surround system, iPod Player/Stereo, wireless and connection, all in two bedrooms and a bath and a half. Best of all, it is set back with a courtyard on a side street so its bustling during the day but very quiet and safe at night, made more so by a coded entry, a concierge and a courtyard. If the apartment sounds glorious and perfect, I confess that it is not. One day I tried the combination washer/dryer and you'd think having lived in a French village for 5 years and having some elementary use of French, that I could

figure this out, but after the second time through the washing cycle and never figuring out how to get the dryer to turn on, I gave up and used the clothes line in the bathroom. Then when the washer was on at the same time as the electric tea pot, the circuits blew and all was dark. Next is the usual problem with a flash heater – when the water pressure gets low, the water turns cold and it never fails to happen when there's shampoo on the head and suds on the bottom. Or the morning we woke up to firemen in the courtyard and could only guess it had to do with the strong smell of what we'd thought was kerosene the night before. It is however probably a near luxury apartment but the French haven't generally required the luxury that we Americans feel is our due. It is hard to complain however as I am in Paris for heaven sakes and I don't think I'm due any sympathies.

Exercise/running. It's nearly two weeks since I ran the Charlotte Marathon and who knows what's going to happen to my running ability with the total lack of running since. Not one step and only a couple workouts with Jeff the weight trainer. I found in the two weeks between the trail marathon and Charlotte's marathon when I didn't run that it probably cost me 10-15 minutes longer to finish the marathon. This relaxation might cost me the marathon! I just don't know how one can walk this many miles with resultant tired legs and hips and still run too so I'm just trying to not worry about it. But I do sort of miss the running. I am however grateful for the rest as it's very cold out there.

Weather. Though it's in the 30s, the wind chill makes it feel like it's in the low 20s. We did our walking tour anyway, dressed in many layers. At least there was no snow or rain until the 30th. Some snow and rain would be normal for this time of year. I do well remember however that one November we came to Paris and it rained the entire trip and at the end Tom said it was the best trip we'd ever had. . . . Later update: we left on Sunday and on Monday there was a snow storm throughout much of Europe.

Restaurants. I found a book on famous Parisian Brasseries of historical note and have a bit of a dream of covering them all in this trip. We've seen a number of them but have about a dozen more that I'd like to get into. Too bad we wasted last night on a small family run café on the Left Bank – it was a lot of food for the money but not one of the famous brasseries. Here we find bistros, brasseries, cafes, and then restaurants and maybe in that order for pricing. Brasseries however seem to run the gamut from inexpensive Brasserie Lorraine on our first night to the wildly overpriced and luxurious brasserie Café du Paix next to the Opera (their holiday decorations were far too understated!) The first known and developed brasserie was Boffinger near the Bastille. This lovely restaurant we found a few trips ago and has the most gorgeous and huge tiffany-inspired dome that would take anybody's breathe away. The food was pretty good too.

Day four deserves its own write up in part because we saw so much new and not in a tour book on this day. We'd signed up for the walking tour called "The Old Les Halles Market District" and it was much more than we could expect and we stayed over to see more of this area. It is not in any of our guide books and other than it being on the edge of the city, I don't know why. Les Halles used to be the old market district for distribution of ALL food stuff to restaurants and grocery stores. The new market place and distribution center has been moved to outside the City limits where it is open all night, when chefs have the time to shop. The Old Les Halles area continues to exist under the old laws and stays open all night. It is not far from Pompidou Center which is known to tourists.

Les Halles is now in an underground mall, wildly popular especially with the suburb folks who come in via train and spend the day underground and then think they shopped Paris for the day. Above ground, street level, is totally a park and has the Bourse, the old 18th century corn exchange in the round, to one side. One layer underneath the mall is the largest metro station of Paris called Chatelet – Les Halles. It has connections to most other metro and train lines.

The walking tour was set within the Rue Montorgueil neighborhood, the new part for us. It is a vibrant

pedestrian neighborhood said to contain some of the city's best produce, meat and fish markets. There is a Claude Monet painting that we all recognize of this busy street. It also has the oldest pastry shop in Paris, the renowned La Maison Stohrer. Who would have expected such a busy center which still reserves the look of a village. It's a picture of how Paris manages to be resolutely modern while preserving a rich heritage. It's a picture of the Paris we look for and meets our intention from the last few trips of living among the Parisian's.

This area contains some of the leftover architecture from before Haussman developed his plan, yet much of the good of Haussman shows up here too. It is only recently that Americans are trying some of these methods of building. Buildings must contain commercial space on the street level, the merchants live above, apartments in the 2 floors above that, and servants on the top floor, with no buildings over 6 stories high. (Elevators weren't developed then so it was rare that anyone wanted to walk steps more than 6 stories high, and when elevators came into being, Haussman had created his building plan.

Arcades were developed here and were narrow streets with a cover where a horse and buggy might pull up to one side, the shoppers get out and walk through the arcade, and exit to the horse and buggy and driver on the other end. Many of these original arcades remain in Paris with these showing not only commercial but tradesmen too.

Here we saw examples of historic houses decorated with elaborate ironwork, and some remain with painted facades. Here were many historic theatre troops. Here is also a street of sex shops, the only one we've seen in Paris and said to allow women of the night.

We started at metro Etienne Marcel (also the name of a major boulevard) then walked home via Palais Royal and passed by the major department stores.) On this street was a medieval era tower called Jean-Sans-Peur which was Paris's only fortified tower (XV century). I might have liked to climb it had we not had so many other things to do. Fearless Jean aka the Duke of Burgundy had assassinated his cousin the Duke of Orleans (next in line to be King) and then been fearful of being shot himself so he built an 88 foot tower where his bedroom was on the 4th and top floor with 104 steps to get there and then entered through a trap door where the poor fellow stayed the rest of his life in frightened isolation.

Our tour guide Peter was full of stories of marketeers and merchants. He showed us streets that date back to the 11th century, and houses nearly as old which can be identified by the leaning due to the construction method. We saw one of the oldest bistros serving onion soup and went back there later as it was one of the brasseries on our list. Paris' oldest and said to be the most prestigious patisserie (I guess Fouchons doesn't count?) almost had a customer in me until I remembered our box of Lindt truffles back at the apartment and my lack of running. This pastry shop created the original 'Baba Rum and dates to 1730. They have cream puffs fashioned to look like a nun.

There were a great number of stores selling cooking equipment and tableware, wholesale and retail. Peter amused us by explaining how and why we must purchase our own Peugeot pepper grinder, which required taking your sales slip to the back for a stamp and authorization, back to the sales counter to pay for it and get another stamp, back to another location to have it retrieved from the warehouse requiring yet another stamp, then wait while it's carefully and beautifully wrapped and tied, and then the receipt stamped again before exiting the store. He suggested that after all these many stops and efforts that we then untie and unwrap our package to be sure it really contains the pepper grinder. A true French story. Peter is British, can you guess?

One stop was the Saint Eustache Cathedral, unknown to us, but it shouldn't have been for it is the second largest cathedral in Paris. It is thought to be one of Paris's most beautiful and is modeled

after Notre Dame but in a heavier and more massive form. Many famous people were either buried there (Moliere) or baptized there (Madame Pompadour, Cardinal Richelieu and one of the King Louie's. This church along with Madeleine feature concerts in the evening which I sort of want to see and hear but wasn't too hot on paying 30 Euros each especially knowing that I can never manage to sit still through a whole concert. Here's why, from Ellen, we went to this church, as it truly is one of a kind:

"This is one that just takes my breath away. (It's) not far from the Sorbonne. This church is full of dazzling white marble lace work. The rood screen (that separates the peasants from the choir) is all marble lace (if you can imagine marble lace). The interior of this church reminds me of a wedding cake."

Tom's update to friends: *"Everything going just as it should - no rush, walking miles and miles, many pictures, good food, wonderful cafe crème (aka cafe au lait), using the really good Paris-Walks.com (Brit owner and wife and six other guides we've used several times before and really like), and taking on a new hobby of visiting historic Brasseries for the Belle Epoch atmosphere. The apartment is working out well, very quiet, good location and well equipped. The only slight downer is the very cold temps (feels like mid to low 20s because of a bit of wind) but we brought clothes for it and we can stop in a church or shop to warm up a bit as need be. Clear and sunny the last two days so looks wonderful and one can never tire of the fabulous architecture."*

"Christmas Eve ate early in a noted Brasserie (French Onion Soup and Quiche Lorraine - Diana had Alsatian kraut with several types of pork and wurst). Then walked to the arch and down the Champs Elysee to see the Christmas lights, through the Tuileries Garden, past the huge Ferris wheel, Louvre, then walked all the way home too. Stopped along the way at Hotel George V and Crillon to see their decorations. Wait'll you see the shots I got at the Louvre. What a life!"

Brasseries. On the fourth day we ticked off two on our Brasseries-A-Go-Go goal. Saw one and ate at another. This list, which I'll start here and probably come back to update later, came from "The Brasseries of Paris" by Francois Thomazeau. You don't care what night we ate there or in what sequence, so here's our wish list with an update as we tick them off. Of course it will be helpful when you come to Paris too Food notes by Tom (naturally).

Nickel knowledge: *Brasser* means *brew* but it also means *to mix*. Brasseries are a Parisian institution or a safe haven for tradition. A *Brasserie menu* is a lighter version of the bigger, bolder and pricier dishes served in 'real' restaurants. It's food and fast but never "fast food." Dining rooms are always Art Nouveau or Art Deco. Expect stained glass, flower-motif images of women in flowing robes, big and shiny and always awe inspiring with waiters in black uniforms and white aprons.

Terminus Nord, 23 Rue du Dunkerque (Gare de Nord metro). We ate here years ago while chaperoning fourth graders and the Parisian teacher knew of it. Not visited again because we had too many new ones to explore.

Bofinger Brasserie, 3 rue de la Bastille, (Bastille metro). At our first visit, it was impossible to get in so we wandered, took pictures and vowed to come back. It's the first of its kind with a Tiffany glass domed ceiling and surrounding mirrors giving an atmosphere to die for. This brasserie is tucked into a nook of the Bastille area and has a mini simpler Petit Bofinger across the street. (Something like Maxim's has their Minim?) Everyone who drinks a glass of draft beer in Paris owes a nod to Frederic Bofinger who was the first in the city to serve beer on tap in 1870. Beautiful Belle Epoch décor with some of it remaining from its original 1880 decor, great service (as in all Brasseries it seems) and food was first rate. Tom gave it #8 out of 10 as I recall, which is pretty high on his scale

Brasserie des L'Ile St Louis, 55 Quai de Bourbon (Pont Marie or Chatelet or Hotel de Ville metros). On the very tip of the Isle St Louis, we suspected it would be good when we found it packed and we were seated at a table for about 8 and packed in like sardines (normal for Brasseries and Bistros). We didn't mind and found the atmosphere and food very good and reasonable. Owned and operated by a family, they are said to have a clientele of regulars. Liz Taylor and Natalie Wood have dined here with Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole. Brigitte Bardot felt so at home that she gave the proprietor's wife a little dog named Baby. Didn't go back this time. Food a #7 Tom says.

Le Café de La Paix, 2 Rue Scribe (Opera metro). The price was extravagant but on our last trip we took coffee and dessert there no matter (about \$35-40). Adjoining to The Grand Hotel and known for the writers to include Hemingway who invited a dignitary and then didn't have funds to pay. During this visit the holiday decorations were okay but nothing to write home about. We probably won't splurge for dinner in this high rent district. We should have however because we ate across the street from the Opera on the other side and had the quintessential ugly French waiter experience that we'd heard about but never before or since experienced (Tom speaks pretty good restaurant French which may account for our good luck).

Le Procope, 13 Rue de L'Ancienne Comedie (Odeon metro). Said to be one of the very oldest brasseries in the St Germaine/Latin quarter and operating for 320 years it was home to many would be and famous writers. The Revolutionaries conspired here. It used to be next to the Comedie-Francaise and is famous for introducing to French cuisine the *garçon de café* (café waiter.) We chose not to eat there as it really looks ancient. It's on a tiny alleyway.

Le Train Bleu, in the Gare de Lyon. Gorgeous Belle Epoch, full of history, worthy of a long trip, and we never miss going in for something to eat or drink and this visit wasn't an exception. Some claim this to be the most beautiful in all of Paris but certainly the most extravagant in design. See description below. It is said that Salvadore Dali was able to live out one of his Surrealist fantasies here: to take a pee while watching trains pull out of a station.

Brasserie Lipp, 151 Boulevard St. Germaine (St Germaine des Pres metro). Very touristy, and expensive and near to the famous Deux Maggot but so very trendy that we've only looked in and never eaten there. If the current famous eat there, we'd not recognize them anyway yet the list of *Who's Who* keeps it forefront. Supposedly it's been frequented by Jacques Chirac, Francois Mitterand, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, George Pompidou as well as the nobility of the literati: Proust, Gide, Saint-Exupery, Hemingway, Camus, etc.

La Lorraine Brasserie, 2 Place des Ternes (Ternes metro). This is an Alsatian restaurant like the name implies, and it's been totally redone and in some ways made to look modern which was a bone of contention by some Parisians. We liked it and it was our first meal of this trip. It occupies nearly a quarter of the total sidewalk of Place des Ternes and its outdoor shellfish take-away stall seems to be frequented by many, and also owned by the Blanc Brothers. I enjoyed their huge plate of Alsatian sour kraut with various pork variations with special mustards. Tom ate some really good onion soup and had a very good Quiche Lorraine. Overall a #7 ½.

Au Chien qui Fume, 33 Rue de Pont-Nerf (Les Halles metro). This is a humorously decorated brasserie on the edge of the market place, and yes, it does mean "the dog who smokes" and there are pictures of nude women with dog heads smoking among the dozens of other smoking dogs. Many of the pictures were given by painters who drew their portraits so they could be mounted on the walls of Au Chien, one of the oldest brasseries in Paris dating from

1740. Why a dog? One of the early owners kept a dog in the restaurant which is not uncommon even today in Parisian restaurants. This brasserie is so popular we couldn't get a table at lunchtime.

Au Pied de Cochon, 6 Rue Coquillier (Les Halles metro). This is where it all began for the Blanc Brothers, now owners of a large chain of eateries. A sister of an early Blanc brother is the famed Madame Ott who reigned over this restaurant for a half century. Famous for its onion soup, it used to be equally famous for Oscar the pig which Madame Ott would parade through the crowd. This general location is called "The Belly of Paris" as it's within the old market. They always specialized in pig's feet, stuffed and grilled, and plates of every single part of the pig. One unmentionable carefully called the "dainties." The food was pretty good if you don't mind the pork fat. The décor was worth the trip. Tom rated it about #6 for food.

Vagenende, 142 Boulevard St Germaine (Odeon or Mabilon metros). One of the more dramatic and oldy worldy authentic places we've found - Parisian in the extreme. We had a nice quiet lunch of pate de campagne for me and fish of the day for Tom with some white wine and then another café crème (aka café au lait). The atmosphere, décor and service was so nice we had our last meal of the trip there and for Tom, it was the best meal of the trip. He really splurged with a start of a two fish terrine followed by a marvelous Tornado Rosini – filet steak topped with a wonderful rich brown sauce AND! FOIS GRAS! It was outrageously expensive at 40 Euros for the plate and one of the most expensive plates ever (but an easy #9). Diana had the plate of the day (beef bourguignon) after a repeat of the pate from lunch the day before. A bit of red wine of course and topped off with profiteroles then café crème. (Wonderful finale to a very special/laid back and all encompassing trip. The next day we would be up at 5am, away by limo to the airport and homeward bound.)



La Fermette Marbeuf, 5 Rue Marbeuf, Alma-Marceau or Franklin D. Roosevelt metros. Don't be fooled by the numbers. One end of the street is #7 and then #12, but go to the other far end for #5 and you'll find both the décor and the food worth it. Don't go if you're in a hurry, but do if you want to enjoy French food, surroundings, and simply enjoy. This was a really beautiful place and food, ambience, service excellent. This restaurant owes its continuation to a stroke of luck of a pick-axe – during a scheduled demolition in 1978 – that unearthed the beauty of the original structure. Beneath the disbelieving eyes of the workers, a sublime interior of Art Nouveau ceramic and delicately ornate leaded glass bearing peacocks and sunflowers appeared, all in what had been used as a stockroom for a soulless restaurant. Four years later an art collector demanded to see the circa-1900 room and he recognized the décor of a winter garden he's seen at an auction in Maisons-Lafitte. The separated twins were reunited at the cost of exacting work: each facet of the windows created in 1898 was dismantled and reassembled on site, giving this jewel of the Blanc group its current luster. It's quite a masterpiece that failed to resist the cruelty of two wars, not to mention shifts in fashion. While sitting in a lovely little corner alcove, I had a braised veal dish and Tom had a good pate then a chicken dish, all with a bottle of good (and cheap at \$28) red. We tried to eat here early on New Year's Eve but chickened out at the 245 Euro menu (each) as compared to our 88 Euro (for two) two nights prior. Overall an easy #8.

Mollard, 15 Rue St Lazare, (St Lazare metro). In our neighborhood and one of the older establishments that was restored to its original beauty around the early 20th century. The owners Mollard purposely built the most grandiose and most "brasserie" of all brasseries, sparing no expense and hiring the best including the architect of the Negresco Hotel in Nice

and the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo. Opened in 1895, it contains Italian ceramics, marble columns prefiguring Art Deco, vast mirrors, rampant Orientalism and Mucha-influenced murals with Japanese accents. Our meal was excellent and I'm curious what Tom will rate it but I suspect more than #7. Its décor gets a firm #10. Tom says he agrees on a 10 for atmosphere, décor, service and an 8 for food (he had foie gras followed by steak tartar and I had a lovely Loup from the Mediterranean— aka sea bass if from the Atlantic).

Le Grand Café, 4 Boulevard des Capucines (Opera or Richeleiu-Drouout metros.) Set in a district of luxury and indulgence just steps from the Opera, this is another Blanc Brothers creation. The pictures of the second floor stained glass windows make this a choice to visit but one that had eluded us thus far. I had Sea Bream and Tom had mushroom soup (very good) and Beef Bourguignon. Overall about a 7 but the decoration was super.

L'Alsace, 39 Avenue des Champs-Elysees(Franklin D. Roosevelt metro.) We've been here a few times and always the line reaches out to the street. On New Year's Eve it was one of the few places offering a regular menu and the line might have been 50 people long, standing in 20 degree weather. This is another Blanc Brothers creation and is at the end of rue Marbeuf where it joins the Champs Elysees (same street for Le Fermette Marbeuf above). It also is known for prices matching its famous street location so maybe just as well we didn't get in.

Day five. I thought the list of brasseries was an ambitious list, from a special book on historically significant and long running brasseries, so I'm refusing to add any more places to our list. We have not eaten what's in our refrigerator and on our fifth day in Paris we ate two major meals! Well, we needed energy because we started very early with a guided tour of the Louvre and then spent the entire day there from opening until closing. From the Louvre we walked all the way down the Champs Elysees to Rue Marbeuf, off FDR, and then all the way home. I don't imagine we used up all the calories we took in. We were home by late night and pretty pooped but content.

Tom's second email report: *"Just in from a full day -- two and a half hours with a Paris-Walk guide in the Louvre (great) then a nice lunch at the Louvre's best restaurant, next table a young handsome, wealthy guy (he had a AMEX Black card which means unlimited credit - he could buy a Rolls Royce with that card - 45-50 maybe) with his just graduated from college son and they were from MOBILE, ALABAMA! Diana just happens to be going there for a marathon on the weekend we get back so they exchanged cards and hopefully he'll show Maricar and Diana around while there. Then we walked for about an hour and a half to a Brasserie we'd found in the book. Lovely place and atmosphere - opened in 1879 - very nice meal (an 8) and a bottle of wine, then a forced march half hour home because it was so cold. No complaints though. What a great city."*



The Louvre. Did you know that the Louvre sold its name to Abu Dhabi for a package worth \$900 million? That's on top of the state's subsidy of \$180 million a year? Still they do fund raisers and now allow evening events and dinners. I don't suppose they allow the kids sleepovers like our U.S. museums, but they have been very inventive and creative. Their new director has raised eyebrows with his fund raising schemes but it has allowed for expansion and globalization. We think the 8.3 million visitors it gets in a year were mostly there the day we were. Well, maybe the 30,000 plus a day average was well exceeded due to the

holidays and it being Sunday and the weather being super cold. Or maybe "Da Vinci Code" helped make them popular but the 645,900 SF of space seemed totally devoid of empty space.

The Louvre is certainly one of the largest and most important collections in the world and you can't

call it anything other than breathtaking. What you could also call it is exhausting. We've been here many times and each time we see something new. Last time we took a docent tour. This time much of what we saw was still new. It helps that they have new wings but not needed. It's said that you'd need a lifetime to see everything so some folks just skip it out of frustration and I'm afraid we've been there ourselves and by the end of the day we were saturated to the point of both suddenly admitting "Just get me out of here" but it was closing time anyway and we'd had the full day mostly on our feet. The only respite was a lovely meal in their excellent restaurant on the entry level.

Most people know that the Louvre was once part of the old wall's fortifications but not until recently did they excavate and now it's possible to go down underneath and see the walls and moat. (We would see the walls at various other places in the city too, from the Halles to Marais. Well, one of the walls (a larger outer ring was later built.) We generally know that Catherine de' Medicis, wife of Henri IV, built a large portion of it. What we have trouble figuring out is how these fat royals could totter around from room to room and still be so big and gross – it's like a 5K from one wing to the other.

When you get over the shock of seeing the 1989 I.M. Pei controversial pyramid entrance, it starts to grow on you. It blends with the water that's shaped like a laying-down pyramid and it doesn't take away from the long view through the small arch to the Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe to the huge new Arch of La Defense. As you come down the grand spiral staircase and feel a part of the pyramid and then stand underneath it to experience the total space, it feels right. (There's a robot to wash the 793 panes of glass rising up 71 feet in the sky.) Best of all, the new entrance is grand and light and anything else would have been dark and dreary. One can enter from the metro and the Carousel du Louvre, a huge underground complex with galleries, cloakrooms, shops, toilets, parking, and many restaurants.

Now days to help navigate through the Louvre confusion, there are little iPhone-looking devices to rent and tour with. Or if you're a reader, there are enough Louvre tour guide books to fill a normal bookshop. Or if you want to cop out, you hire a guide. Voila! A Brit who's lived in Paris for 25 years and is an art historian and been a guide for most of those 25 years will fill the bill. Last time here we had a little 4 ½ foot Ms. Einstein, an English speaking docent, complete with old style basketball sneakers, long skirt over pedal-pushers, and wild gray hair, who was an art historian too.

From the Louvre it's hard not to walk Rue Rivoli and Rue St Honore, both of which we have walked this trip multiple times. Place Vendome had some of the best Christmas lights other than the usual Galleries Lafayette and Printemps, each with strikingly unique lighting, inside decorations, the famous Galleries tree, and storytelling designed moving windows. We've made a particular effort to capture with the camera some of the special art windows as window shopping is a sport in itself. I rarely pass a hotel without going inside to check out their holiday decorations and most days we find a new and exciting one. The Grand Hyatt has a courtyard rooftop that replicates the feel of standing under the Eiffel Tower, a treat when it's decorated. The Eiffel Tower has sparking lights and spotlights but I'm not so sure that's not permanent as it sparked through our last apartment's skylight through much of the night. Francoise I Avenue was nearly as full of light-covered trees as the Champs Elysee.

Street people -- when we were here last time and walking across a bridge in back of Notre Dame, we came on a street musician playing an accordion. Tom asked him to play his favorite French song, something about the Paris skies. He played it for us earning a one Euro tip. Well, as we were walking in a Metro tunnel yesterday there was what Tom thought to be the same fellow and the song he chose to start with was the Paris sky one! What a coincidence. Even more coincidental, it is the background music to the 360 degree Paris at Night on line video we'd just sent around and listened to within the same day. Anyway, we had a big laugh at the coincidences, thought about how you just can't make up this stuff, so when we saw that he had CDs for sale, we bought one.

There are other street people here too (spelled homeless) and they aren't musicians. We learned that an organization has been supplying them with tents and that the city sometimes opens up the metros at night when the weather is very cold. It is not good and maybe the worst we've seen. Recession, you might say? Well you can't tell there's any recession from the department stores or restaurants that are full to the brim at all times.

More touring. One day we went off to Notre Dame and the Cite, renewing old memories. But the church was not the same. It was good that the scaffolding was off and the façade was new and clean. It was also good that the tourists were out for the holidays and enjoying a bit of culture in that the lines were blocks long to just get into Notre Dame. Everywhere we went in the tourists areas there were lines and restaurants were full. People were shoulder to shoulder in the squares. They didn't mind the rain, the light snow, or the cold. We had intended to go into Sainte Chapel again but glad we'd done it before because those lines were blocks long too. We headed off to the Isle instead, window shopped, had coffee and then walked a few hours along the river, rue Rivoli, rue St Honore still again, and the numerous neighborhoods with holiday lights and masses of consumers. We continue to have the impression that the recession is not being felt in the major cities but rather the smaller towns and areas but we can't understand why.

That same day we went as far as Gare de Austerlitz, back to Gare de Lyon, and as we do every visit, to Le Train Bleu restaurant inside the Gare. This railway station was built for the 1900 Paris Exhibition, as was the Grand Palais, the Petit Palais and the Bridge of Alexander III. It's very Belle Époque as nothing could be more so than the main restaurant with its ornate rooms, sculptures and gigantic paintings. The décor would be overwhelming were it not harmonious with every detail including the chairs, seats, coat racks all being very Belle Époque. These various rooms feature a collection of paintings built into walls and ceiling of the room that remind one of the bright and colorful sights of French destinations served from this train station. Food, drinks and snacks are a silly price but it's a way to feel a part of the historical Paris.

One day we took a walking tour through the Marais district. Marais translates to swamp. It was just outside the original Paris wall where many wealthy folks built their palaces after the land was reclaimed and the king moved out there. We were able to visit the mansion of "One Eyed Catherine" who was the Lady-in-Waiting who "initiated" Louis XVI who went on to father several children after failing for the first seven years of his marriage. (There were so many of them, you could just guess King Louis and generally be right.) It was critical that he know what to do to continue his lineage so she showed him how and he was so grateful he gave Catherine and her husband a huge mansion in the best area, built with stones intended for the first edition of Versailles. Much later when Versailles became the place of Louis and Marie Antoinette and it was much farther out of town, the royalty followers moved from the Marais to the Versailles region, leaving the Marais to rot. Even until sometime in the 1960s tour books would have advised tourists to not go to this seedy region, but now it's the Fashion District as well as one of the top real estate locations in Paris. We stayed "lived" in a hotel there on rue Turenne the year we bicycled the Loire Valley and it has increased in its Fashion District status considerably since then.

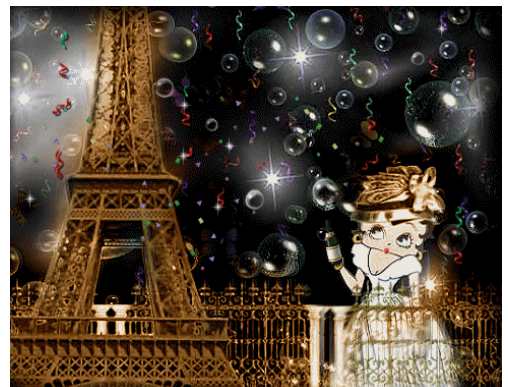
While in the Marais District we again took in the Musee Carnavalet known for its history of Paris. It's always a favorite and the subject of a lot of Tom's photography. There is a room full of shop signs depicting graphically what the artisan made which was a necessity before people could read. In this museum are recreated rooms of Madame de Sevigne, a ballroom of the Hotel de Wendel, the Fouquet Jewelry Boutique and various writers' rooms. The top floor is devoted to the revolution and gruesome things like Marie Antoinette's mementos and beheading. There are pictures of the firing of the Bastille (where we also walked by again to see the huge Colonne de Juliette in the center square.) All this is a vast museum occupying two adjoining mansions with the main one being the old Hotel Carnavalet from the 1500s which was transformed into a 17th century townhouse.

Just behind the Carnavalet is a Swiss cultural center where we like to have a coffee and sandwich but it was closed both times we visited. Across the street is a lovely small park full of ancient Roman stone pieces of early centuries. All along these streets are new fashion houses making their name and giving us entertainment with the wild latest fashions. A couple trips ago we were in the area during Fashion Week and took a walking tour. The area has grown considerably.

While in the area we also toured Saint-Paul Saint-Louis Church, founded in the 1500 and later taken over by the Jesuits. It was the forerunner of those in the Invalides and the Sorbonne. Its Delacroix masterpiece, *Christ in the Garden of Olives*, is its claim to fame. It's on the edge of a main road, but also at the start of one of the ancient passageways. (We walked down one of the oldest and narrowest, one that still has the set-backs so one could avoid the garbage and soils thrown out the windows at the times.) Did you know it was the Jesuits who brought music into the church? Their organ was one of the firsts in a church. Here there used to be sermons of three and four hours duration necessitating the ladies to use a device that, in my view, we all should have access to. Apparently these devices are on display at a museum but by the description I might have thought they were a gravy bowl. Ladies would relieve themselves hidden by their big hoop dresses then hide them under their large hoop skirts, store them under the pews, and their maids would come along later and empty them. (Maricar, you just thought we invented such a method for under our garbage bags at the start of a marathon.) This same church contained original pews with fold down seats. When in the up mode there was a very small ledge to rest one's bottom so as not to fall down during the many hours of standing. Under each seat was carved art work that must have been rather scandalous in this early time, and in fact during the revolution 'dainties' would have been carved off. One seat contained a carving of a man and women in a bath together, as an example, and his thing had been chiseled off as too scandalous for Christian women to see.

We walked through the old Hotel de Sens, a nice entry way into Place de Vosges by way of a park. It is under renovation, but one of the few medieval buildings left in Paris. The square or Place de Vosges is generally considered to be the most beautiful in the world. It has impressive symmetry with its 36 houses, nine on each side, all of brick and stone, with deep slate roofs and dormer windows over arcades. It is over 400 years old and has been the scene of many historic events over that time. Louis XIII married Anne of Austria here in 1615, which took 3 days for the celebrations. Madame de Sevigne was born here. Cardinal Richelieu lived here. We went through Victor Hugo's home where he lived for 16 years in the mid 1800s. It was here that he wrote "Les Miserables" and the home contains many of his drawings, books and mementos, including the Chinese chest he carved with the hidden initials of his mistress. I wonder if his wife knew?

On New Year's Eve we walked through the Trocadero area, the Museum of Man, and the gardens that were under renovations when we last were here and living in the Champs de Mars area nearby. We walked across the Seine from the Tour Eiffel, through the hoards of people. Across the Seine we walked under the Tour Eiffel and the swarms of people lined up to go to the top of this sparkling wonder. The lines were so long as to snake around for a half mile and we couldn't imagine how they would all be accommodated or why anyone would wait in such a long line. The hawkers selling lighted miniature Tour Eiffels and even lighted/blinking earrings, often surrounded us. We continued on through the Champs de Mars Park area, down shopping Avenue Saint Dominique, via Rue Cler the famous market street where we'd last rented, and through the Invalids Park, over the Seine again, and into the Champs Elysee area still again. It was there we had dinner at a bistro because restaurants were at a premium and our choice turned out to be



reservations only for the big New Years event.

We remembered back in the 70s when we'd come to Paris for New Years Eve and the last time we were stunned at the crowds and the amount of blacks from their various colonies. There were Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians, as I recall, which had passport rights from colonial days and used them during this time in mass numbers. It's said that one-third of France's immigrants come from these countries. But it would be many years before those blacks caused problems. The Parisians have always been known to be tolerant, some think in part due to their fond feelings towards American blacks at the end of the war. Nowadays the crowds on the Champs Elysee are even more varied in nationalities and we too are more tolerant and less surprised than we were in the mid-70s.

It was truly a Happy New Year Eve in Paris and we walked "home" from there in time for pates and cheeses and a full bottle of Tattinger champagne. Happy New Year to Everyone!

Where's the recession? I don't mean to make light of it, but for still another trip we encountered lines and more lines. We couldn't get through the hoards of people paying a pretty hefty entry price to Musee d'Orsay. I'd say there were hundreds of people in lines that snaked around the courtyard. It's the same thing in restaurants where the places are booked solid and lines wait outside. Yes, it's a holiday. Yes, it's a major city. But still it puzzles me that there are apparently so many extreme differences between areas. Before we came I'd read an article about French restaurants in many parts of France were going out of business but I really don't believe any in Paris will. There's some major disconnect here and it's sure not the first city where I've seen this phenomenon.

On buildings in Paris: I read that Mitterrand didn't want Paris to become just a historical city, or one big museum and thus he pushed many new buildings including La Defense and the Pyramid of the Louvre. Mitterrand was just one of a series of presidents continuing to build on Paris. To his credit includes the Institut du Monde Arabe and the Bastille Opera. His successor d'Estaing pushed for the renovation of the Musee d'Orsay. I have newfound respect for even the courage of Pompidou who had courage to build what was controversial in their time and now accepted and if nothing more, cleaned up a rough area. Mitterrand has a huge library complex named in his honor just outside of Gare d'Austerlitz which we were near and walked through a couple trips ago. If you want to see some of these buildings go to www.photoshow.net/tomskoi where past Paris trips featured more tourist sites than did this one.

Reminder! Did you watch the full 360 degree of Paris by Night as recommended above? And scroll it through its 360 degrees? You will like it! <http://framboise78.free.fr/Paris.htm>

More touring and more walking. Our last day included yet another unsuccessful effort to get into the Grand Palais due to long lines (again, where's the recession, it's not free!) but we were able to get into the Petit Palais across the street where we spent much of a delightful day as you'll see by the pictures. This gorgeous building has been recently restored and contains some of Paris's most valued art work, sculpture, and through today, a photography show. By photographer Patrick Demarchelier and at first seemingly oddly placed among the museum art. There were great pictures of dignitaries and movie stars. Series of Princess Diana and her family since Demarchelier was their official photographer. Eventually we learned the logic and appreciated the old and new being intermixed. For instance, among the portraits by famous artists of the 1800s were black and white photographs of movie stars, generally arranged in a collage. It's amazing that we've missed this jewel, even as much so because we could look out the palace upper window and see the famous Restaurant Lasserre next door where we'd had a most memorable 3-star Michelin meal (when there were only 13 of them in all of France) back in the 70s but where we wouldn't think of paying today's prices. The Petit Palais will be on our list for another visit some spring or fall. In fact, after walking

literally miles every single day and most of those days being in the 20s with sometimes light snow on the ground in the early morning, I'd say that I'll not return in the winter for another shiver-fest.

Itinerary

Tues Dec 23

6:40pm Depart EWR via CO#56

Wed Dec 24

7:55am Arrive Paris CDG

Hotel Apartment in 8th arrondissement (1)
32 rue de Laborde, 75008 Paris
Metro: St Augustin, line 9, St Lazare, lines 3, 12 or 13
Tele: 01 42 94 21 77 with voice mail and internet connectivity

Sun Jan 4

9:55am Depart Paris CDG via CO#57

12:15pm Arrive EWR