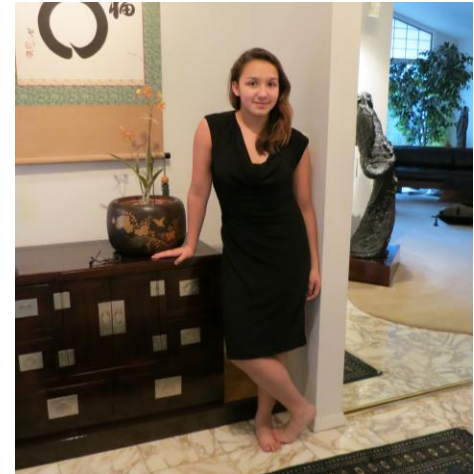




Paris with Marie Trip Notes March 7-18, 2013

When Marie took so well to traveling Vienna and since our own kids don't care to travel (smile) Tom had another brainstorm to take Marie to Paris for her spring break. Was it as a way to educate Marie or just another excuse to visit Paris? No matter it was delightful for all of us.

From Marie: *My first trip to Paris, my second trip to Europe, is probably the best trip yet. We saw many things like the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Museum d'Orsay, and Norte Dame. We ate many different kinds of foods where I had tried escargot, and the famous Parisian cheeses and croissants. But I wouldn't touch that beef tartar but sometimes I wish I did. I was then inspired to read the "Da Vinci Code" after Paris and by the end of my flight home I had already finished 44% of the book. Overall Paris gets an A-grade and I used to only dream of things like this but because of two extremely special people in my life I thank you for doing such kind things for me.*



Picture: *Marie pre-trip in the dress Ouida custom made for Marie's concerts. Then the Three of Us in our only group picture taken in a mirror at Musee d'Orsay.*



Why we do it?

By the looks of her paragraph about the trip, she is well placed to pursue a career in public relations. She's a sweetheart. This trip report will be more about seeing Paris through Marie's eyes since we've reported on Paris on many occasions.

Photos

I won't add many tourist photos since they are available on www.TomsKoi.com Photo Shows or direct link <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/SA5Eg7gG>.

Also because tourist photos are memorialized on past trip reports, two of which I'll attach to the end of this report.

Our apartment was in the St Germain des Pres area

I had been sorry to miss the Palais Royal apartment as a replay but this one was a good substitute and in a very nice area. Marie had her own quarters and bathroom. The renting agency is one of the best.



Description from rental agency: *Saint Germain, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, with elevator, 110 square meters / 1184 square feet. Sleeps 4-6. Metro Saint Sulpice. Located just behind the famous Place Saint Sulpice, moments from the Jardin du Luxembourg and the heart of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, this impressive two bedroom two bathroom apartment offers the height of luxury in the most perfect neighborhood. Completely renovated and decorated to exacting standards, this apartment is ideal for a family or two couples traveling together who want to experience life in an authentic and truly chic Parisian neighborhood. With high ceilings, full height windows, unique and ornate fire surround and lovely herringbone parquet floors, the apartment unites perfectly the classical and the contemporary bringing you all the modern comforts in traditional French style. In sophisticated tones with beautiful furnishings and fabrics, Italian marble and light fittings, this gracious apartment is one of our most luxurious. The apartment has two big bedrooms with king beds, two full bathrooms, an elegant living room and modern kitchen with dining area. The apartment is equipped with a flat screen, wall mounted color TV with cable in the living room, DVD/CD player, a phone, and laptop with high-speed Internet connection (WIFI). The fully equipped kitchen has a large refrigerator, dishwasher, separate Miele washer and dryer, oven, juice maker, coffee maker, toaster, iron and all utensils necessary for cooking and eating. The apartment is fully air conditioned and heated for your comfort.*

Contemporary Living in Classical Parisian Style: An elevator takes you up one flight of stairs of this classic building to your luxury apartment. The entrance hall with writing bureau and computer opens onto the living room overlooking quiet rue Honoré Chevalier with its attractive typical stone buildings. This naturally light and elegant room has two full height windows, antique lights, a large wall mounted flat screen television, a green velvet sofa for three people, and two further generous armchairs arranged around the beautiful and unique fireplace to create a refined and comfortable living room. From your kitchen and dining room across the hallway, look out onto the trees in the private courtyard. This room, with dining table and chairs for up to 6 people, combines a classic black and beige marble floor with contemporary purpose made cabinetry, all modern fixtures and top of the line appliances, including dishwasher, washing machine and separate dryer. A hallway leads down to two very welcoming and spacious bedrooms, both with king beds, air conditioning, and attractively designed and built wardrobes. Each room has been tastefully and carefully decorated with luxury fabrics. There are two luxurious full bathrooms, one en suite and one separated from its bedroom across the entrance hall. Both bathrooms have gorgeous faucets and are tiled in beautiful Italian marble with an antiqued silver motif, one in sophisticated black, the other in elegant white. In the en suite black bathroom there is a large bathtub with big American shower above, whilst the white bathroom has an extra large made to measure custom built shower. Both bathrooms have windows onto the courtyard, and we supply bathrobes, fluffy towels, liquid soap and hair dryers in each.

Food is a Priority

Put Tom and Marie together and there's going to be gourmet eating and always in a gorgeous restaurant. It's hard to remember



the time when we met Marie about four years ago and her diet was limited to chicken fingers and plain spaghetti and yes I have mixed emotions about feeding two adults delicacies like Fois Gras and Escargot.

Picture: *That's Marie and Diana in the mirror of an obviously beautiful old brasserie.*



A true French breakfast of croissant, juice and baguette with delicious coffee all consumed our first morning in Paris. The first dinner was at Paris' oldest café where escargot, coq au vin, flan caramel and profiteroles were tasted and then readily consumed much to our delight.



These food pictures are all from Marie's camera. You might notice that the French Onion Soup was nearly gone before the camera was remembered. At Le Grand Corbet a beef briquette was the hit before a macaroon in raspberry sauce took precedence.



This is a chocolate shop featuring among other things a chocolate cow that was filled with candies. The caramel flan was so good that a second one was ordered. See that little plate of dessert samples? It was called gourmet coffee.



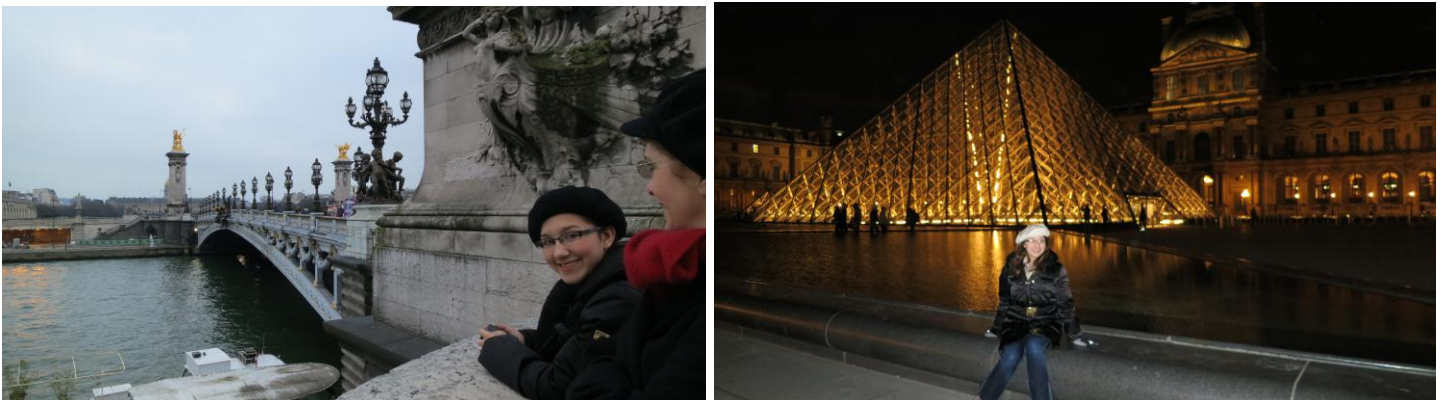
I just don't remember all the dishes but one of these is a Croque Madame with an egg on top and one is a pasta dish with shrimp. Certainly we all remember the Steak Tartar that Marie now wishes she had tasted but instead she had a dish of macaroni and multiple types of cheeses with prosciutto on top. The parfait below is really a Shirley Temple type drink at the famous Charles V (now a Four Seasons) and those drinks cost more than a dinner but set in a memorable location complete with a piano player and tid-bits of snacks.



After the big-deal parfait-looking drink, it was over to the Tour Eiffel and a sample of the Americanized snack of crepes with Nutella spread. Some coffees were 6 Euros (\$8.50) but the coffee machine was only 1.5 Euros; we found it just before the Bateau Mouche river cruise. It was Marie's idea to take the www.Paris-walks.com eating tour and this was likely one of the shops we entered and tasted from.

Tours and touristy stuff

By the daily diary you'll see that we took multiple tours, both a mini-van tour and a few walking tours as well as a guided trip through the Louvre.



At the beautiful Alexander Bridge and then at The Louvre's Pyramid on one of our trips there.

Tour Eiffel was closed!

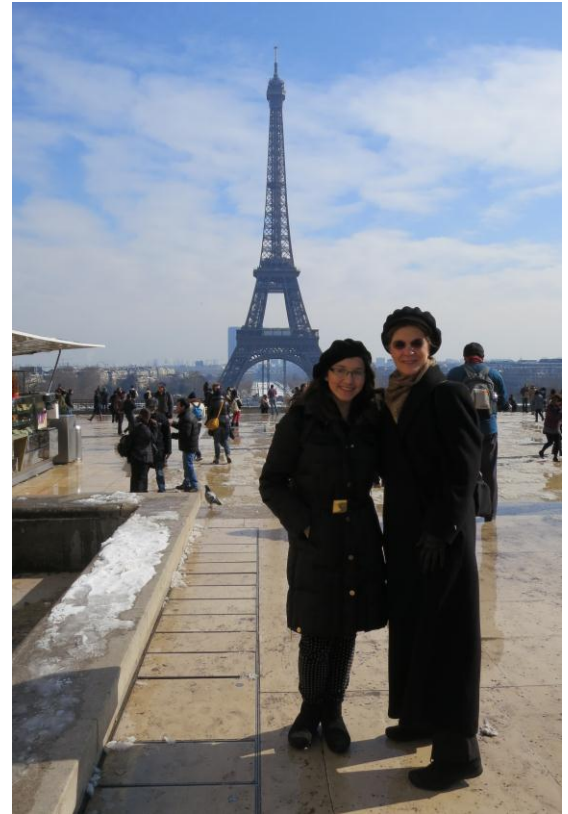
We had reserved and timed admission tickets in order to avoid the lines and imagine our surprise to find out that the Tour Eiffel was totally closed due to snow. That was a headline in itself and we have a few pictures of us in the snow standing immediately underneath the Tour Eiffel which has only been closed before for strikes. (Paris doesn't know how to deal with snow plus the metal of the Tour Eiffel couldn't handle any salt damage.)

Bateau Mouche river tour is necessary as after all Paris was built around the River Seine, now a UNESCO protected site.



Montmartre and Sacre Cour

I offered Marie a climb up to the top of the church's dome but I suppose she and Tom thought just walking up the steps to the church itself was sufficient. I didn't argue since the tiny circular stairs and my very long coat would have been a challenge and I'd done the climb the year before. We saw the gargoyles spitting icicles. See Marie's fingers holding the church?



While up at the top freezing cold we were surprised to see so many artists plying their trade no matter the temperatures. We visited one of my favorite shops, *Defense d'Affiche*, where I bought myself a replacement shirt plus a souvenir one for Marie. It looked better on her.

George V Hotel is probably the ritziest I have ever seen

We have, on a few occasions, gone inside for a drink and felt very extravagant. It seemed the right thing to do again. Last year we unable to land a table!



No Tour Eiffel but a walk on the top of the Arch de Triomphe

All of which made more sense to me anyway since one can see in all directions and not stand in a horrific line. Yet atop had portions closed for the snow pack.

The French we love to hate – see the tongue-in-cheek article at the end

For now, a temporary end

But despite a setback or two the overall experience was fantastic for all of us particularly because of seeing so many things through the eyes of the newcomer, Marie. Surely we will come back one day – all of us – and start again.

Daily Diaries for posterity sake

Sat March 9 – Day 1 and departure day

Our favorite limo driver Ron drove us to airport at 2:15pm and of course we talked about Paris and other foreign places the entire way. Ron had worked on the renovations of Monet's Giverny. The airport wasn't the best as there was a big mix-up about seating and overbooked flight and the seating we had booked last September and confirmed earlier in the day was lost. After begging and pleading and being cocky enough to remind them I am a 1K Platinum United member the seating was 'almost' recovered, but one row back.

Sun March 10 arrival – Day 2

Picked up at Charles de Gaulle airport by a car service we've liked before. I like the train but with three of us and being tired, a car made sense. We had to wait at least two minutes for a nice fellow to meet us at the apartment – Fred who wanted to show us everything and we just wanted to rest. When we use this apartment rental agency we are always happy as the places are somewhat better than they look. We'd wanted to rent a past place right within the Palais Royal but we'd gotten an okay too late to get that popular location; it all turned out okay as we are in a very nice section of St Germain des Pres near to St Sulpice Church. It didn't take us long to decide we were famished and Fred had told us about a local place for the best coffee and croissant breakfast. Coffee didn't keep us awake so it was a couple hours nap before getting out. We started by walking the Rue Rivoli through the Palais Royal and then the Louvre complex.

Dinner was in the Latin Quarter of St Germain des Pres at the oldest café in Paris, Le Procope, where famous writers hung out in the 1600s and where the revolution was likely thought up. We'd been here before and always happy with the menu, service and décor and this time we had an even nicer room. Coq au Vin was again on the menu but only after appetizers of escargot – all of which Marie took to just fine and even wanted to eat ALL the escargot instead of sharing them. How about profiteroles for dessert? Yes!



Picture: Marie in the oldest cafe in Paris, famous from 1686 and called Procope, in St Germaine des Pres area. Note the drink: I had my first taste test of absinthe, the liquor that's 68% alcohol and in old days made the artists and writers crazy. It tastes like licorice. It hits hard.

Per Marie: After landing in Paris from our delayed flight we had our taxi take us to the apartment we rented where once again we had to wait for someone to show up for us. After going to get some coffee and a croissant we went to the market. Once returning we took naps and I included a shower. After our nap we walked around and saw the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower and a few other buildings before going to dinner at one of Tom's favorite places for dinner where we all sampled each other's food and I at last had escargot. Then finally returning home we are ready to settle in and rest for tomorrow.

Monday March 11 – Day 3

It had been many years since Tom and I went through the basic sights so we were fine about booking a generalized guided tour. A small mini-van picked us up from the apartment. Our morning included time at Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower and then we asked the tour guide to drop us at the top of the Champs d'Elysses for walk some of it which included a big joke 'shopping trip' into Louis Vuitton. (Tom has a scarf from Hong Kong and Marie is always joking how she covets it.)

The weather was a shocker so we took a metro to the Louvre getting off inside at the Carousel so we had no more outside walking than we had to, but anybody who has been to Paris knows that the underground can give you a huge amount of kilometers to walk.

We love the restaurant in the Louvre; we'd met a lovely man and his teenage son there one year and later visited him in Mobile Alabama. Lunch consisted of quiche and salad for two of us and French onion soup for Marie. We'd booked a guided tour of the Louvre's masterpieces which was probably enough to see but we persisted and stayed in until about closing time before collapsing in a food court of the Carousel for snacks and drinks.



It wasn't a long walk to a famous brasserie that we've liked in the past: Le Grande Cobert near to Palais Royal. It holds ice memories and gave us some of our favorite meals of braised Fois Gras (which Marie ate and liked) plus some Country Pate and then main courses of braised beef. We met Karen and Allen from the DC area who were on their first European adventure.

Picture is in Le Grand Cobert which might look familiar to some since it was featured in the Bucket List movie. I hadn't known that but information came from Karen and Allen and confirmed by the waitress.

It's always nice to see real French waiters in action. They are professionals and train for something over 7 years and are decently paid and don't expect tips.

The biggest surprise was walking home in the really heavy snow fall which was starting to stick and by morning we had a pile.

Tuesday March 12th – Day 4

Marie maybe ate too much yesterday and we first slept in the morning and then waited for her stomach issues to resolve. I think she can get stomach issues easily which I suspect she'll grow out of. Tom cooked a big omelet breakfast which the two of us ate.

Headline: Snow halts Eurostar trains, shuts down Frankfurt airport

Eurostar has suspended train service after being forced to close sections of its high-speed line due to "severe weather conditions" in northern France and Belgium. Meanwhile, Frankfurt Airport, the third busiest airport in Europe, has been forced to shut down because of heavy snow.

In the snowfall we managed to find The Marais anyway and walked the end of Rue Rivoli which is St Antoine hunting one of our favorite museums, Carnavalet. It is in two huge old estates/mansions and

contains many pieces of art from Parisians history as well as room recreations. Nearby is the Swedish museum with a coffee shop we've often enjoyed. We'd stayed in The Marais once, and recently enjoyed a fashion walk in the area as well as two separate walking tours of different sides of The Marais including the Jewish quarter.

It was so cold that everyone voted to return home, via another grocery store (they are challenges) and Tom would fix us dinner where it was lovely, nice and warm. We had a big day planned for the following day and Marie's tummy needed repair.

Wednesday March 13 – Day 5

We got ourselves to the Opera area and a walk around before the morning opera tour, starting with croissants and tour at Galleries Lafayette and if you know about their décor and dome ceiling you'll know this was worth the visit. We love Opera tours and this one is a top choice though we are spoiled to have seen Vienna's recently. Followed up by a fast run to the Eiffel Tower area for our tour time but first a fast but full meal at the Museum of Man's cafeteria in the Trocadero. Then darned if the Eiffel Tower wasn't totally closed down for the snow. No tour. No nothing. Has it ever closed? Much of Europe was snowed in so our tickets to the top were of no use.



Picture: Marie at the closed Eiffel Tower within a mush of snow.

Tom to Pat: *I had gone on line to make a reservation to go up in the Eiffel Tower while still in NJ, to avoid lines as we've seen them terribly long. We had the big snow yesterday with lots of slush and ice on the sidewalks and streets (which they're not used to). Well, it was pretty treacherous walking as there is no tread on my Mephisto shoes but we got where we needed to go, grabbed a quick bite at a cafe in the Museum of Man in Trocadero then got to the tower at our appointed 3 o'clock reservation only to find the whole tower had been closed because of the weather. What a bummer! Now to try to get our money back. Anyway, we went for a river cruise which was fine, then walked back toward the Champs on Avenue George V and stopped in for a drink at the famous hotel of the same name (now a Four Seasons hotel). Our three drinks cost more than our 68 Euro dinner later. Our second time to do that but a first and lifetime experience for Marie. Then back by Metro to our neighborhood to a simple restaurant I had researched and found before coming. I had steak tartar which Marie couldn't believe I'd eat (which was delicious I might add) but she had a few of my fries as dessert to her Mac and Parmesan with a very thin cured French ham (like they're prosciutto). Anyway, nice simple meal and we're home and all on email now. Tomorrow a guided walking tour of Saint Germain des Pres. Plenty cold here and apparently the weather caused major troubles in Europe generally. Nice apartment and we're all getting along well and enjoying each other.*

Darned local restaurant cost us a long walk finding it, then an even longer walk finding our way home via a very circuitous route. What's new?

About snow closing down everything and hundreds of truckers unable to come into France, airports closed – and even the Eiffel Tower closed!

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/snow-ties-european-planes-trains-roads-article-1.1286043?localLinksEnabled=false>

Thursday March 14 – Day 6

Up early again, damn, but for an excellent walking tour with www.paris-walks.com for their St Germain des Pres tour which is our neighborhood. It remains cold but not as bad as a day ago and the wind wasn't so brutal but still it was in the 20s when we started.

From tour company: *This tour captures the essence of Paris on the Left Bank: the old abbey church of St Germain, the city's oldest church, charming streets lined with bookstores and literary cafés. Old squares, artists' studios, the famous Paris Fine Arts School, Hemingway's favorite restaurant, the hotel where Oscar Wilde died, the beautiful St Sulpice church, and the truth behind the mysterious gnomon and rose line mentioned in the Da Vinci Code.*

What did we see? Many artists homes to include the Picasso flat, where Balzac died at an early age of 51 from too much coffee and alcohol, the apartment of Catherine Deneuve (the day before we saw a Bateau Mouche named after her too). We saw the insides of two churches: St Germain des Pres the oldest in Paris and St Sulpice also old and the center of some of the Da Vinci Code story. We learned that the St Germain des Pres neighborhood is the most expensive neighborhood in Paris but we should have known that by the elevated cost of our apartment, and we learned about street signs from olden days when people couldn't read. Some street corners have as many as three signs on them, some engraved and some with anything religious carved out by the revolutionary forces.

After a quick snack and \$8.50 coffees and \$8.50 cola (yes – that is for each one!) in view of Notre Dame, we walked some of the wee streets of the Latin Quarter, before going to the Champs again and the Arch for a trip to the top. Tom had decided that we'd best do it while the clouds were at bay and there was some blue sky. We could see a long distance and I realized the edges of Paris are much more built up than I'd seen. For instance, Defense has multiple skyscrapers now but Paris itself has never allowed a building taller than four stories since the mistake of Montparnasse.

One always has to walk the Champs when there's a chance but it was quickly into the Metro to stay warm before heading to the Museum d'Orsay – Paris's old converted train station now a magnificent art and sculpture museum featuring French artists. We spent the rest of the day there which was plenty of time since they stay open until 10pm. We'd wanted to eat in their lovely restaurant but were ready to eat during their closing/break time but managed fine in the café with specialties such as Croque Monsieur, Pad Thai and a Shrimp and pasta dish.

The walk home took us via the Tuilleries Gardens and into the Louvre complex so Marie could get a night time picture of the pyramid. How the day went so fast I don't know but I was doing laundry at midnight.



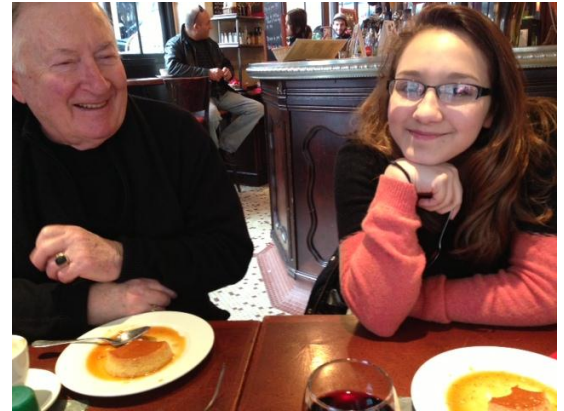
Friday March 15 – Day 7

Another Paris-Walks but this time I's called Hemmingway's Paris and in the old Latin Quarter.

From tour company: *Hemingway's Paris 10.30am Explore this charming district in the Latin Quarter with the old houses of the Mouffetard market street, a hidden fragment of the medieval city wall, and the lovely historic church of St Etienne-du-Mont. It is associated with many writers who lived or set their stories here: James Joyce, Orwell, Balzac, Victor Hugo, the disreputable Verlaine and immortalized by Hemingway in 'A Moveable Feast' and by Woody Allen in 'Midnight in Paris'.*

Picture: 1) This kid has learned to eat – taken after our morning tour. 2) The 'twins' having double dessert called crème caramel after our walk up and down the hills of Montmartre.

From Marie: *Today in Paris we had taken a walking tour around the Latin quarter where we saw part of the wall that used to surround the city of Paris, the courtyard of an apartment complex the author Hemmingway stayed in for a week, and a few other things. We ended at a cafe where we had lunch and I had a Croque Monsieur, Diana had a salad, and Tom had a casserole of some kind. After that we took the metro to Montmartre and saw the Sacre Coeur and walked around the shops. Diana and I bought matching shirts from Defense D'afficher as a memento of Paris. We stopped in another cafe where Tom had coffee and we both had Flan. After taking the metro home we returned early so we can once again wake up early for a tour in our last day of Paris.*



Saturday March 16 – Day 8

Oh foey, another morning having to get up. I'm getting tired! This need to get up at 7:30am and not in until 10 or midnight is a lot for retirees. Marie finally confessed to being tired too. Tom we don't worry about because he sleeps anywhere: in the metro, standing up, and this evening even during the middle of my sentence while sitting in a café

So here we go again anyway and this time the addition of a morning tour is Marie's idea. Good sign. Incidentally, or maybe this isn't incidental at all – she says she LOVES Paris. So do we.

Morning tour from the walking tour company web site: Taste of Paris Tour -- Explore the famous Les Halles market district and visit some excellent specialty shops, including Paris' oldest patisserie, to taste a variety of sweet and savory seasonal produce: cheese, pastries, fruit, chocolate plus more.

Afternoon tour from the walking tour company web site: Paris during the Occupation and Liberation - Hear how the Parisians survived the dark years of the Occupation from 1940-44 on this walk in the area of the Champs Elysées, with stories of daily life, the Gestapo, the Resistance and the Liberation.

Before we walked the elegant St Honore shopping area; in between we walked the old market area and ended up in the famous Au Chien qui Fou (the dog that smokes) and that's a true story. We'd been there before and it's in the book of famous brasseries of olden days. After the second tour we found the café in the Petit Palais then wandered the lovely art work and admired the glorious building, coming home with various food stuff from our morning tour from chocolates to foie gras.

From Marie: *Today in our last day we took 2 tours. We had the one in the morning where we tasted dishes in Paris. We had seasonal fruit of pears and prunes and went on tasting cheese and chocolate before ending*

with fois gras and goose liver paté. After that we had a drink in a restaurant Tom likes and went on to our second tour about Paris while it was in occupation by the Germans. After ending that tour we went into a cafe to get Tom a coffee and then going to a grocery store to get him his scotch :) before retiring to our apartment for the night early to wake up at 4 to leave tomorrow. (I'm not sure if she was pulling his leg here which she did plenty of during the trip.)

We were all pooped: from a few days of hard touring and many miles and from a double walking tour in one day. Fortunately Tom was willing to cook dinner despite our earlier wish for a big breathtaking gourmand farewell dinner at a place we've loved near to the George V. I'd say our being pooped was much more fiscally responsible.

Since I shortened the tourist portions, I'll include some past Paris trip reports



Paris Trip Notes April 8-18, 2012

Any excuse for a trip to Paris. As tourists we have never gotten enough of Paris. As a marathoner, it always seemed to me that Paris Marathon should have been a part of the Five Majors so despite the cut off being far too tight for me to expect to finish it, I decided it was better to start than not.

Paris 360 degrees

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 appreciate 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>. Tom's photo shows of Paris are at www.TomsKoi.com and the most recent one is at <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/mr2qs9AJ>.

The Best of the Best

- It's in Paris – what's more to need? They could do most anything wrong and still be forgiven. It is Paris after all!
- The goody bag(s) was two cinch packs, a rain poncho, a memento Buff Headgear, a wrist sweat band, a bag of California pistachios and other minor goodies.
- Expo was convenient and no long lines (on Thursday.) At Port of Versailles, a cheap metro ticket and about 20 minutes out of town center. (It's stupid that I can't get rid of this highlighting!)
- Official gear was by Asics and though limited plenty and decent priced. I bought one t-shirt thinking I'd never earn the finisher's shirt. It's a thin tech knit with a cute 42 km number on it. Here's a picture of the front and the back has the course diagram.
- Course is particularly scenic with some of the best of the best tourist sites covered. While under the Eiffel Tower I couldn't stop taking pictures; while along the River Seine I couldn't stop taking pictures. I can fall in love with Paris all over again and in many different ways.
- Despite expectation and the very tight early start, after a few kilometers, the course became roomy.
- Spectator support was excellent and while not quite NYC or Boston or Chicago, it was good to include costumes, offers of champagne, and "Allez" all the way. I got plenty of Salutes to my Liberty Lady. I gave plenty of "thank you" for giving American the Statue.





Spectators: Yes, that's a jute box brought out onto the street. Twice we were cheered by a group of 'Front Runners' said to be a gay group of guys. At Medoc I realized that only the French really knew how to let go and party so imagine a group of gay Frenchmen! Magnificent!

- Volunteers were as nice as anywhere and forget the old cliché about the French being aloof to the Americans. It just isn't true or it's left over from before we moved there in the early 70s. At the end a little old man took my picture and offered to email it to me (while another one stood on and said 'get her phone number too!') and later a couple offered to walk me home after I asked for directions.
- Costumes abound. Fortunately since I was in my 'headgear.' Don't forget that the Statue was a gift from France. Many of the spectators didn't forget.



- Bands and more bands. This is real Rock 'n Roll without the constant purse-grab like at Rock 'n Roll. (I'll add pictures of some of the bands later.)
- Marked well in both miles and kilometers.
- Reasonably fast course. There are few wee hills and mostly just going into tunnels or underpasses.
- Lots of food such as bananas, oranges, sugar cubes and raisins.

- Finish line gave another nice rain poncho with the Paris Marathon logo for warmth or rain.
- Towards the end there were runners on the course who seemed to be there to encourage and run us in. In French I had a cutie talking me in, insisting I keep running, and telling me the finish was near.
- T-shirt is by Asics and very nice design – given at the finish line so there's incentive to finish on time. A bright lemon yellow with a nice fit though I unusually took a size medium and immediately and then continuously got it picked. Remember that I hadn't expected to get one.



Just the Facts – maybe you like it and maybe you don't AKA nothing they can do about it

- Expo is way out of town but on an easy metro stop of about 20 minutes distance and plenty of room for exhibitors. It was at Port de Versailles – with nothing to do with the Chateau Versailles.
- French marathons require a medical certificate signed and sealed by a doctor.
- Weather can be one extreme to the other as evidenced by last year being very hot and this year very cold.
- Gave out small plastic water bottles which seemed crazy until you read that they were 100% recyclable. They were however a mess to get through and over. I've seen this at other European marathons and wondered why they'd use full bottles.
- If it were hot, one needs to carry their own fluids because fluid stations are only every 5K and some were empty for us back of packers.
- Food stuff on the course consists of bananas, oranges, raisins and sugar cubes (common in Europe.) I never found anyone to beg pretzels or solid carbs from so it was a good thing I carry my own.
- Finish line food appeared to have only the same foods as we were given on the course. But along the long walk out of the finish area to the Etoile there were vendors selling hot dog/sausage/hard roll sandwiches for 5 Euros. They were NOT very good but typical of my desperate need to eat at the finish, I inhaled the whole thing.
- Hindsight would suggest that I should have and could have started with a much faster coral as they didn't seem to be checking bibs; we came across some fatso types that somehow got way up front. That would help so as not have a lonely finish line.



What's YOUR favorite marathon? Over the years we've all contemplated such a question and sometimes think it's like asking 'who's your favorite child?' They are all special in their own way. But then came along Marathon du Medoc and it's now easy to claim that to be a Big Time/All Time Favorite. The word must be out because now there's a Beaujolais Marathon and an Alsace

Marathon, and who knows what other wine region. Here's Beaujolais at the starting line with their rolling wine keg and then Marathon du Medoc giving out wine on the course. They were just closing down so I missed it but stopped for pictures to include a picture of empty wine glasses along the street. (I'm so sorry to have skipped the picture of the old coot sitting on the edge of the road with his bottle of champagne offering runners a swig.)

Not so good

- Starting at 8:45, our "over 4:30 finish coral" didn't start until 9:36. That was a long time to stand and shiver.
- Some fluid stations were emptied by the time we back of the packers got there. As was the wine.
- Fluid stations on cobblestones with banana peels required a careful tippy toe movement through. I wasn't the only one spooked that we'd fall and many of us tried to move up to the sidewalk or grass to clean off our very slippery shoes.
- No PowerAde until mile 20-22. (I carry my own Gatorade anyway.)
- No Gel? I never saw any. (I don't use it anyway.)
- Cigarette smoke abounds. Body odors just as bad. Why don't Frenchmen use deodorant?
- Porta Potties towards the end were completely un-usable and so bad I can't possibly describe. I saw a few of them and they were just unbelievably awful. Take paper. Take pooper scoopers. Take Clorox. OMG! Humans can do this?
- Medal was nothing to write home about though it was a cute little yellow t-shirt design to match the finisher's shirt. The ribbon was junk but at least it was printed.

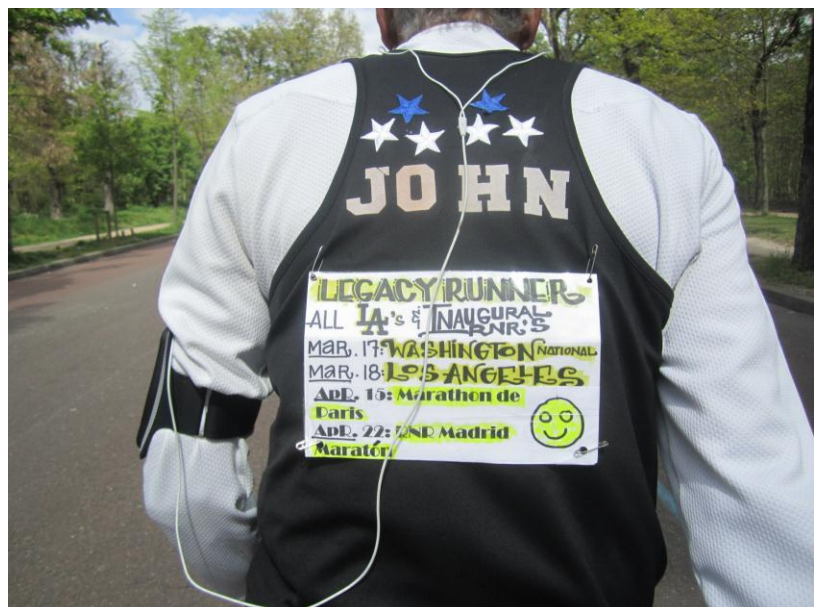


Forty thousand runners

Diane emailed me the morning of the marathon to tell me her friend Dr. John Bachman was in Paris too and to watch for him. I laughed out loud! Forty thousand runners and I would watch for – and find! – John! But as I entered the Champs Elysee from my little two block walk down rue Balzac, who should appear but John and Karen and a group I know! They were with Marathon Tours staying at what they say was a very wee tiny hotel room which reminded me to be grateful for my 2 bedroom, 2 ½ bath apartment that was just as close and far less money. (You'll see later that this apartment was the least special of any others we'd rented.)

A word about John's mission

John is likely the only person to have run ALL Inaugural Rock 'n Roll marathons. Now why you'd want to do that I don't know (smile) but as a cardiologist he probably has lots of money to spare and that's the main complaint about Rock 'n Roll is that they are expensive and in your pocket all the time but



he's on an enviable tour to see them all and next up is Madrid (by way of Barcelona for touring.) You GO John. Here's his t-shirt with the mission.



You're wondering about my results?

I was too. Wondering. I really hadn't expected to finish in the allotted 5:40 hours with an absolute 6 hour time limit and then when last coral started 46 minutes later after the first starters, I was quite convinced I'd miss the finisher's t-shirt and medal -- so I took pictures along the way of my watch in front of the mile marker. I was so back of the pack that they were picking up fluid stations and/or OUT of stock. They were picking up cones and barriers, yet, if you wonder, yes there seemed to be a lot of folks behind me. (I would later see some 7 hour finishers getting credit on the results page.)

I started out with John and we got a bit ahead of the 5:30 pacer(s). The pacers eventually caught up after our potty stops. And after Cardiologist John checked on a downed boy who was glassy eyed and seemed to be having some kind of seizure. (The medics came right along.) The pacers didn't speak English but the one was a lot of fun and kept checking on me. I did my 30/30 seconds walk/run and kept with them until about mile 15 or 16 when I made my 2nd potty stop. They realized they were a bit fast at the half-way point and pulled over to stretch and waste some time while I went on. I appreciated the chance to walk more and was very surprised to see that I crossed the half at 2:38.



Remember I'd signed up for Paris assuming I'd not finish, and even more sure I'd not make the firm 2:42 cut off at Stockholm at the half but gee if I was ever going to do these marathons in this life, I had to give it a try. Better starting (even if not finishing) than doing nothing? I thought so. Well, all that is only partly true because in Tulsa with Marie Bartoletti pacing me I did the half in 2:42 and the full with the added Center of the Universe detour in 5:47 at which point I temporarily got cocky and signed up for these two marathons. Subsequent marathons were more humbling.

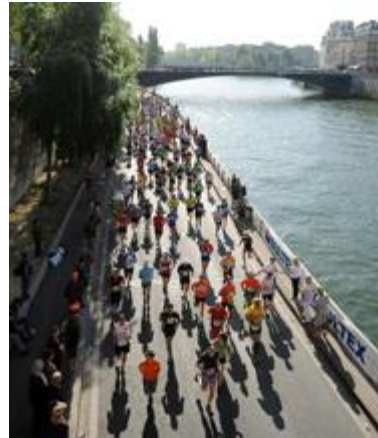
John rightly got after me for all my walking and kept me going and it is with due thanks to him that I finished in 5:42. He finished at 5:40 and had I not stopped at another porta potty around mile 25 (plus

a few on the way) I might have come in close to my Houston 2011 5:39. But I was happy to officially finish at all. In fact, I was VERY happy.

So maybe I'm cocky again about Stockholm? If don't do three potty stops, need to open the doors of at least ten just to find one to use, take 168 pictures, eat every chance I get, dance at entertainment stations, stop for a pose and talk so much, maybe I can bag Stockholm, my 100th and their 100th too.

Daily Enthusiasm Notes from Marathon

As though this were my only marathon (grin) I got daily notes for about the last month with helpful hints and enthusiastic reminders as well as some great little pictures of the marathon. I should go back and find them but Trust Me! They were good as were the training tips. Here are two.



Some entertainment on the course

There was more here than supplied by those wallet-squeezers Rock 'n Roll.

(Pictures available at www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com but removed from this repeat report.)

Well, I called it entertainment: look at these portable urinals that were within the corals. So the first two pictures were before we got out of the corals. (With 46 minutes after the start before we could move we had plenty of time to need entertainment.) The guy with the bike and beer keg appeared to have a bib so I guess he either walked or rode it. There was an Asian guy with a flag running the entire course backwards. (I bet he beat me!)

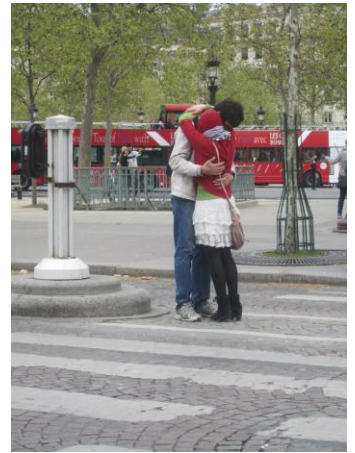
I've seen more 'drums' in European marathons and it's a super idea. I still remember the Taiko drummers getting us up that hill in Burlington VT. Berlin seemed to feature drums.

Yes! We had roving entertainment too and these guys in the middle stayed with us for a mile or two. The colorful gals numbered at least a dozen.



At the finish line and you could tell by my FINISH picture that it was rather empty, but there appeared to have been a Big Top Circus affair as part of the finish line that was breaking up.

And now for THE END of the marathon, I was on my way home, a bit disoriented and looking at the map to figure out the shortest route from Avenue Foch around the Etoile to my Avenue Hoch and here's a couple who couldn't wait to get home. The light changed any number of times before they disengaged. So French! (Don't you love it?)



All in all, I was ecstatic. For the overall experience, for finishing in time to get a medal and t-shirt, for the good company with John and basically just for being alive and feeling so very lucky to be able to be on a marathon course at all let alone that of PARIS!!!

Selected comments from www.MarathonGuide.com

These are removed for this 'repeat' but remain on the original to be found under 2012 of www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com

The Paris Apartment

This nearly comes under the category: win a few - lose a few. It wasn't bad but the management was atrocious and should never be used. The apartment had some good attributes, most of all 'location-location-location' being next to the marathon start and finish line and on the famous rue Faubourg St Honore that extends down to the Palais Royal and the Opera area where it's haute couture door after door. But there were a series of complications that we've never encountered before. And we have rented many apartments in Paris and around the country.

First – it did look good, modernized, and it did have two bedrooms and it did have two and one-half baths and it did have a superb location. It did have black out shutters and the bedrooms were on the quiet back side facing a courtyard. It did have a big screen TV and WiFi. End.

From the web: *This charming and very well located 95 square meters 2 Bedroom apartment is located on rue du Faubourg Saint Honore in the 8th arrondissement, on the 1st French floor of a 20th century building and it sleeps 4 people. This apartment is equipped with washer, dryer, dishwasher, cable, TV, unlimited high speed internet access, wifi, DVD. There are 3 toilets in the apartment, one in each bathroom and another one in the entrance hall. Also provided : Bed linens, Blankets, Pillows, Towels and Kitchen utensils. The 20th century building is equipped with elevator, intercom.*



The troubles? Far too many to ever stay again and certainly never under the same management company. We should have known when they required too much money up front plus a separate fee paid direct to the agency. Then we had to wire money direct to the owners making us wonder if this was a big scam, plus pay two wire fees on both our side and on their end.

Upon arrival we had to cough up an extra 50 Euros since it was a holiday. (What, do they have a boxing day the day after Easter?) Then upon departure since it was before 9am we pay another 50 Euros.

The dishwasher didn't drain, the clothes dryer appeared to be taped off with the notation "for owners use only" and the kitchen was so bone dry inventory-wise as to require excess grocery shopping. We've never seen a place with not a drop of soap or a scrap of any kind of paper(s). Many light bulbs either were or soon burned out; we were given (to make up ourselves) bed sheets that were all totally the wrong size; and only four bath towels (no hand towels, bathmats or washcloths.) Are you getting

the picture? We got the picture quickly when we realized most items were IKEA-like and looked hugely better in the pictures. The courtyard off the bedrooms? It did save us from the noise of the street but it wasn't anything to write home about; it just looked good in the pictures.

It gets better. The day before leaving we got an email saying "leave it in the condition you left it" prompting me to ask if there wasn't cleaning services and to find that no, we were expected to do full cleaning or pay 30 Euros an hour cleaning fee. I don't clean at home and I have never cleaned a rental apartment, but I know how so I did.

The worst? We had to deposit \$2200 for damages and worry about the extensive inventory for checking in and out – checking out at 6am was nervous making. Well, for one of us. One of us has a philosophy that repeats "It's only money." That's probably why I was willing to clean. Oh, and one more oddity: though we'd negotiated out of the trip cancellation insurance, we were told we had to have fire protection insurance. We didn't.

But it all turned out okay and as we were departing a very clean apartment with our \$2200 in hand, the kid mentioned that the maid would be there next

Observations on the Parisians

- They always wear scarves, men and women.
- Employers give them chits (coupons) to eat in restaurants.
- Smoking is everywhere but now they are outside. Cold or not, they are unfazed and apparently unwilling to give up cigarettes.
- Necking in the streets, in the crosswalks, at restaurants, wherever, is common. I wonder if they don't have their own homes?
- Life requires eating out and eating well. It's hard to find a restaurant that is not good. Chefs and waiter staff are professionals. It's respected and a tip is never expected.
- Generally very kind and helpful and courteous to tourists. We saw one waitress return 15 Euros to a tourist as not needed.
- Wee tiny cars are the norm and at about \$10.50 a gallon it's no wonder.
- Break-ins and thefts apparently are not unusual. We saw extensive door locks to include one that had cost \$20,000.
- Coffees are a treat but cost even more than a Four-Buck-Starbucks at 4 to 7 Euros (\$5.50 to \$10.)
- Metro system is still one of the easiest to use. RER is way way down low in the bowels of the earth with lower class folks using it.
- Books were seen often on the Metro. Just the opposite of in America I never saw a Kindle type reader.
- *Desole* sort of translates to "I'm so sorry" but not exact. It's such a perfect word that seems to explain so much more than I'm sorry.

Tourist

There's nothing that can spoil Paris – not even the constant wind and rain and cold - and though we've been tourists countless times and lived about 2 hours away in the 70s, we do many of the same things over and over again obviously because we love them and we miss them.

This time we had an especially jewel of a treat: We'd met Isidora on our Venice trip in October and she's absolutely the most down to earth and sweetest no-pretention Countess you could ever imagine and she treated us to a tour of her apartment (off avenue Kelber) and cooked for us. She owns museum pieces like we've never been so close to if ever even saw so it was not only entertaining but educational and we counted our blessings to have met her. You might remember that Isidora joined us a couple days in Budapest in December and I'd go anywhere to be around her.

Restaurants

One major attraction to Paris is frequenting the good eateries. Once we found and still treasure a book of old and historical brasseries. Here's from that trip and then hopefully Tom will add to it with our add-on collection. (This picture is from our current trip to Rouen where we renewed acquaintances with the oldest inn in France.)

.... our Brasseries-A-Go-Go This list 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'Île 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 if not all of France 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. The picture of me is in Le Procope this time. In a new model of my favorite Defense d’Affiche clothing found at Montmartre.



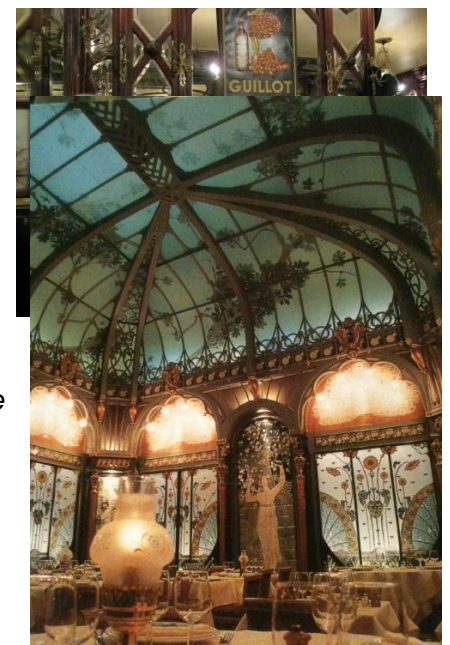
Le Train Bleu, in the Gare de Lyon. Gorgeous Belle Epoch, full of history, worthy of a long trip, and we never miss going in for something to eat or drink and this visit wasn't an exception. Some claim this to be the most beautiful in all of Paris but certainly the most extravagant in design. See description 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 campaign 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 Rosinni – 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 fois 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.

Here's Tom at the Rouen restaurant with four big chunks of foie gras. He managed to indulge most days in his favorite food. La Courronne is the 'most ancient inn in France' and it was even ancient for our history having been there in the early 70s.

A really special meal was a small family run restaurant near the Opera were our friend Isidora sent us. Le Persil Fleur on rue Boudreau. And that's saying a lot since this is the place that the waitress (owner's wife) spilled a large part of a bottle of wine in my lap. Yet it was very good and one of the best meals of the trip. But it was not as good as being treated to a meal at Isidora's home in her glorious apartment off rue Kelber. She loves to cook and it shows with her culinary skills. Isidora is the gal we met on the Venice trip and who visited us in Budapest. A countess without attitude!

www.Paris-walks.com

Since they started business in the mid-90s we have been taking these walking tours and repeated select tours. These had to be good since we shivered through them on this trip.

Pere Lachaise Cemetery with owner Peter (who publicly stated that he wanted to get in shape and do a marathon which was shocking to his fellow guides!) This is Paris' most famous and historic cemetery, an atmospheric mixture of cobbled pathways, shady tree-lined avenues and beautiful elaborate tombs (though nothing as opulent as Milan's.) Stories of many celebrities including Chopin (here is his grave marker), Balzac, Oscar Wilde (where lipstick markings were everywhere), Edith Piaf, Maria Callas, Jim Morrison (here's an adjoining tree stuck with gum in his honor) plus the ill-fated lovers Abelard and Heloise. Could there ever be more extreme characters all in one cemetery?



Chanel and the Rue St Honore Fashion Tour

Traditional chic to modern pizzazz in the rue Cambon, the famous rue St Honore, and place Vendome (with the now being renovated Ritz Hotel). Our fashion specialist gave the background to the famous fashion designers and we visited the showrooms of Chanel and Hermes and heard many stories of Coco Chanel.

The Village of Montmartre with history of the impressionists. Such a picturesque walk, to discover old winding streets, the vineyard, artists' studios (Renoir, Lautrec, Van Gogh) quiet gardens, historic cabarets, the place-du-Terre with its artists and the Sacre Coeur Basilica. Did you know it stays white due to its type of stone? While up on Montmartre I added to my collection of Defense d'Affiche clothing.

Paris of the Impressionists with owner Ariel was right out our backyard and offered the day we got in which I'm not so sure was a good idea to go without sleep, do a walking tour plus stay out late. Our first marathon of Paris. Ariel showed us more of the lovely Parc Monceau than we'd noticed

despite living in the area before. The fine town houses and grand 19th century boulevards surround the park, as was an antiques fair on the streets. She showed us where the painters lived, worked and painted many of their typical Parisian views: Manet, Monet, Degas and the site of Caillotte's painting "the Rainy Day." We learned more about their contemporaries: writers, art collectors and benefactors, and ended up over closer to the Station St Lazare and a nice little brasserie to get out of the rain. We would return to the edge of the Parc Monceau the next day to visit a museum with Japanese lacquerware.

All is not perfect in Utopia

We suffered or maybe I should say endured a few small problems this trip but again nothing was going to spoil our absolute delight at being in Paris. Disasters? NOT! Not perfect – absolutely.

Weather - It rained most days, the cold was brutal and the sometimes strong winds up to 25mph were bone chilling.

Metro – one evening as we stood at George V to go to Palais Royal the metro broke down. That was a first. We walked it instead which was 5-6 metrostops.

Highway – on our way home from Giverny and Rouen after midnight the highway A12 closed down. Totally closed causing miles of back up and then gingerly hunting our way through town to get home before our 24 hours of rental car was up.

Apartment – was not our usual perfect. It was not well managed and gave us plenty of worries.

Restaurant – our very best meal at a small family owned place near to the Opera the owner's wife spilled wine in my lap, on my coat, scarf and blouse. You'd sort of think they'd offer a dessert or some compensation for all my excess dry cleaning? She did not. It's still listed as an excellent meal.

Monet's Giverny

Hindsight suggests we should have taken the train despite it not going direct and despite the lack of flexibility but Tom is used to driving in Europe so we rented a car for the day. It turned into a very long day due to the A12 highway closing down on our way home after midnight; we were stuck on the highway forever and then took an extra couple hours weaving our way home. We started early and barely got the car back before morning came. I think we gave out at 4am. Guess who slept in?

The gardens were worth it. The famous collection of Japanese block prints were worth it. The little B&B bar restaurant was worth it. I'll save you the rest and let Tom's photo show at

www.TomsKoi.com tell you all about it. Or direct at <http://www.photoshow.com/watch/mr2qs9AJ>

From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japonism> - *Monet almost never left Europe, thus never traveled to Japan. But in his Giverny home, he surrounded himself with Japanese woodblock prints. He first collected Japanese prints in the 1860s, and this passion would last for over three decades. At the end of his life, he owned 231 Japanese engravings. Like many other artists, Monet considered Japanese culture as very artistic, shaped by the refined aesthetic tastes of its people. Many painters of the 19th Century were influenced by Japanese prints and paintings. As far as Monet is concerned, the way Japanese art shaped his style and the way he saw the world around him can be noticed in many of his canvases as early as the 1870s.*

A Taste for Japan - Who launched the frenzy for all things Japanese, called Japonism, in the 19th century? It is hard to say, however, the universal exhibition of London in 1862 and of Paris in 1878 introduced Japanese art in Europe.

Specialised merchants settled in Paris. It was an upheaval. The artists of the Far East had a completely new aesthetic approach, marking a break with Western painting convention.

Monet, like many others, was carried away. He began collecting woodblocks by the greatest masters, Hokusai, Hiroshige, Utamaro... "Hiroshige is a wonderful impressionist, Camille Pissarro wrote to his son: "Me, Monet and Rodin are

enthusiastic about them." *The fancy for Japanese engravings seized also painters such as Vincent van Gogh, politician like Georges Clemenceau, writers like Edmond de Goncourt or Emile Zola.*

Starting Monet's Collection - There are several versions about the origin of Monet's collection of engravings. His friend and biograph Gustave Geffroy told: "Monet brought these marvels back from Holland. As he later related, he had found the first ones at a village's grocers, where they had been brought together with products from the islands and overseas territories."

HIROSHIGE Ando, Asakusa Rice Fields During the Festival of the Cock - Occident Art influenced Eastern art by bringing the perspective. Marc Elder is more precise, quoting Monet: "I had the good fortune to discover a batch of prints at a Dutch merchant's. It was in Amsterdam in a shop of Delft porcelain." Monet was haggling over an object without any success. "Suddenly I saw a dish filled with images below on a shelf. I stepped forward: Japanese woodblocks!" The merchant, not aware of the value of these prints, let him have them with the china jar.

This scene occurred in 1871, the year when Monet visited Holland for the first time when he returned from his exile in London during the war between France and Prussia.

Choices and rejections - Claude Monet kept supplementing his collection, which had 231 prints at the end of his life. He tastefully selected the Masters of 18th and 19th centuries. It was an eclectic collection (featuring 36 artists) focusing on the three majors, Hokusai, Hiroshige and Utamaro. Monet preferred landscapes views, with the representation of the elements. He liked the scenes with women surprised in their daily occupations, the animals, but he seldom selected flowers. He was interested in the representation of the Westerners by the Japanese, a topic not very much prized at that time in Europe. He rejects on the other hand the erotic scenes, and is hardly interested in the portraits of actors, so frequent in Japanese xylography. Monet's letters reveal how much he is impassioned for Japanese prints, both as an artist and as a collector. For instance he wishes to gather the complete series of the Large Flowers by Hokusai. "I thank you for thinking of me about the flowers by Hokusai," he wrote to Maurice Joyant. "You do not tell me about the poppies and it is what matters, because I have already the irises, the chrysanthemums, the peonies and the volubilis". The Irises of Hokusai later disappeared from his collection, perhaps because of a gift or of an exchange.

Monet eagerly waited for Japanese Art exhibitions in Paris, and he did not want to miss the opening. "The opening of the Japanese exhibition is not on Tuesday, he wrote to art-dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in 1883, but tomorrow, on Monday. Therefore I will come tomorrow."

The collection in situ - Monet's collection of Japanese prints survives to this day as it was, bequeathed in her entirety to the Institut des Beaux-Arts by his son Michel Monet. It was restored and entirely reframed. The Japanese prints hang close to each other in most of the rooms, just like Monet decided it: 56 engravings decorate the dining room! The collection overflows towards the entrance, the grocery, the blue living room, the staircase, the hall, the rooms, and even the bathrooms. The omnipresence of the ukiyo-e all over the house is haunting. There are not any prints in a few rooms only: the kitchen for obvious reasons, Monet's bedroom (it contained his large collection of canvases by his impressionist friends) and his living room-workshop, where he exhibited his own work. The visit of Monet's home and his exceptional collection of prints enables to become imbued with the painter's vision.

Influence - "Monet never made any japonism", said his friend Octave Mirbeau, and it is true: he never servilely recopied the Japanese engravings. But Monet carefully analyzed the prints, and he used the doors opened by the Eastern Masters to give a new start to his own painting. Art historians do not agree about this point: was Monet really under Japanese influence, or did he seek confirmations of his own research in Eastern art? However, an attentive eye can establish interesting connections. The influence of the prints on Monet's art can be noted in the subjects he chose, in the composition, in light... Like it is often the case with prints, nature is Monet's main source of inspiration, with its changing colors under rain, sun or snow. Like it is often the case with prints, Monet built his painting with an oblique line or a serpentine, balanced by a vertical line, the main subject being pushed back towards the side, sometimes even truncated. But Monet knew how to be inspired without borrowing. His painting diverge from the prints by many aspects. The Japanese artists liked to feature the anecdotic or dramatic moments, Monet concentrated on light, which was the very subject of the canvas, the object was no more than medium to convey the plays of light.

HOKUSAI Katsushika, Mount Fuji - The structure and the colors of this print inspired Monet for a canvas of the Grainstack series

KORIN Ogata (1658-1716) The cranes - Sobriety, linearity: this work of the 17th century strikes by its modernity "It looks like Japan"

Monet never visited Japan. However he was very impregnated by the images of his prints. When he travelled to Norway in 1895, he believed it looked like Japan: "I have delicious subjects here, he wrote to his daughter-in-law Blanche Hoschede, small islands level with the water, covered with snow and in the back a mountain. It looks like Japan, as it often does in

this country. I have on progress a sight of Sandviken which looks like a Japanese village, then I make a mountain that is to be seen everywhere here and who makes me think of the Fuji-Yama."

A floating world - "Images of a floating world", that is how Richard Lane defines Japanese Woodblocks. Which definition would apply better to Monet's ultimate obsession, rendering his Waterlily pond, where he could see a whole microcosm in the rafts of water lilies floating on the water?

Rouen

Just an hour or two farther is this town we remembered well and wanted to walk again. There had been a restaurant we both remembered from the early 70s but even in Europe surely it wouldn't exist again? It was off a square, it was old Tudor style on a corner, and it was ancient with two floors of excellent eating. Now what's the chance of finding that? We started to give up after the first square but asked a restaurateur giving her only those wee bits of facts and she sent us direct to it. At first we doubted it was the same place since it wasn't on a corner but out a window I realized it had been a corner until an old looking add-on building came about. We had a delightful meal and found that it was the oldest inn in France.

All good things come to an end

But we couldn't think of going home as not good too and we'd traveled comfortably with lie-flat seat/beds both directions and quite good food so one good adventure morphs into another good life in Middletown, NJ.



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.

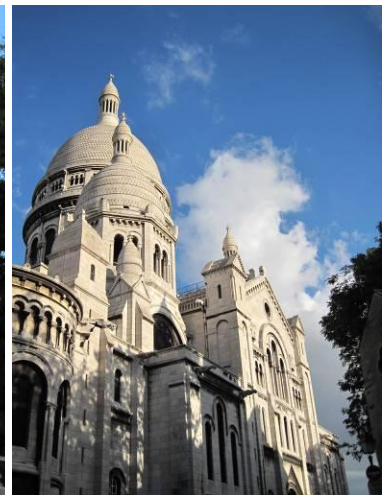
Try driving that! We have, many times – thrilling! This time we went to the top towards the end of the day, staying for sunset, and enjoyed figuring out where we'd lived, where tourist sites and major buildings were positioned and generally engaging in a "remember when" game. A sunset through the clouds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



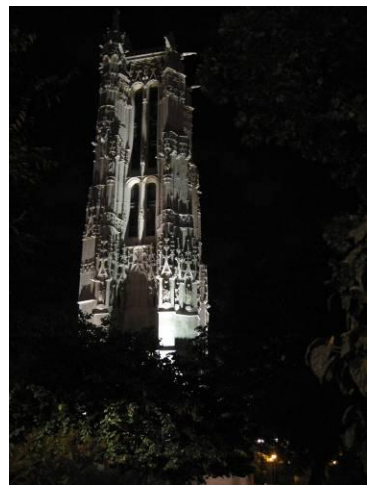
Here are a couple of street entertainers in Montmartre. Then Diana's new "*Defence d' Afficher*" shirt purchased in Montmartre's shopping area and which you'll see that I wore like a uniform since Tom's not too hot on my marathon shirts and after all, what else is there? Smile. I had another one of these 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.

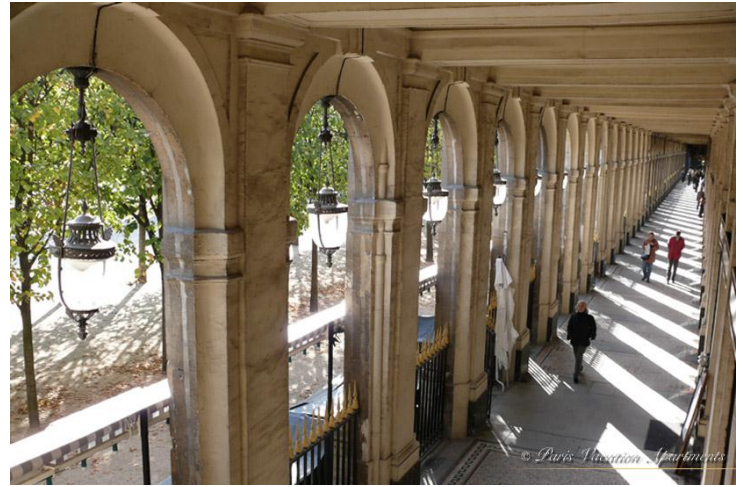


Our apartment was within this complex – the Palais Royal



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."



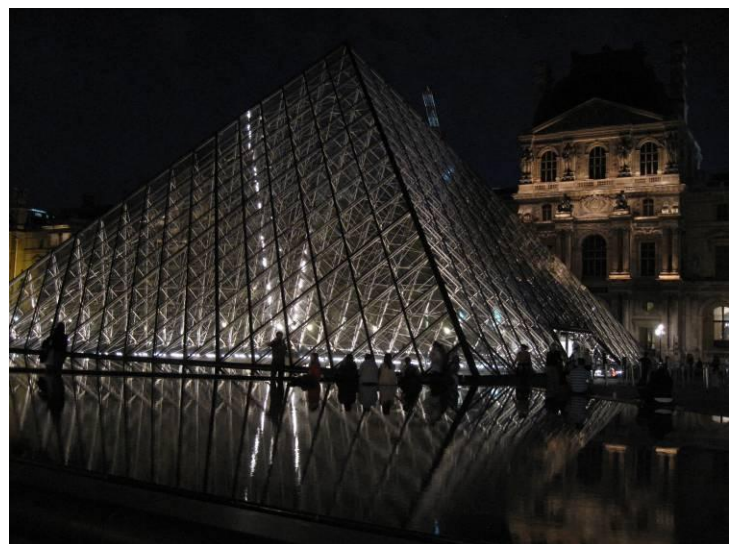
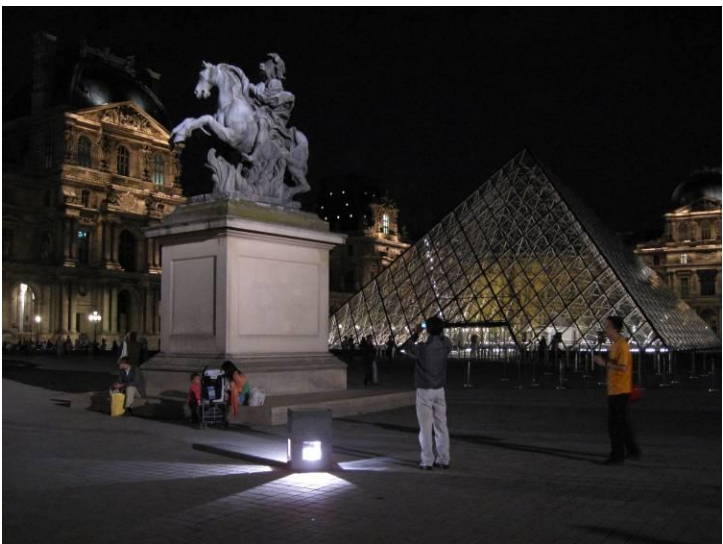
Here is our huge living and dining room that overlooks the gardens, with an eat-in kitchen with all modern appliances plus washer and dryer. There are two bathrooms and the main one has natural sunlight through a wall of windows, a walk in shower with seating, bidet and heated towel racks included. There's 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>

I've removed this portion from the trip report for the 'repeat' of Paris notes but it is available on www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com under 2010 European adventures.

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.

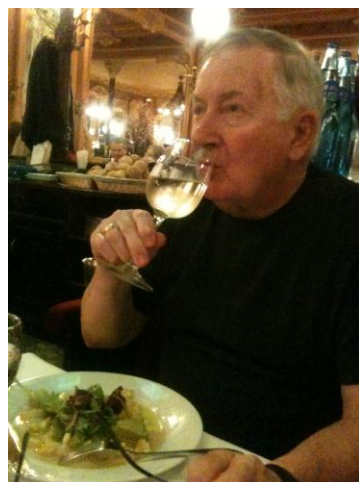
A note on the use of rental apartments versus hotels

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 Germain 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 waived. May you be as blessed! Someone said it well:

Went looking for self. Found others.

The French one loves to hate

The following advice for American travelers going to France was compiled from information provided by the U.S. State Department, the CIA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and some really, really expensive spy satellites that the French don't know about. It is intended as a guide for American travelers only.

**** General Overview**

France is a medium-sized foreign country situated in the continent of Europe. It is an important member of the world community, though not nearly as important as it thinks. It is bounded by Germany, Spain, Switzerland and some smaller nations of no particular importance and with no decent shops. France is a very old country with many treasures, such as the Louvre and Euro Disney. Among its contributions to western civilization are champagne, Camembert cheese and the guillotine. Although France likes to think of itself as a modern nation, air conditioning is little used and it is next to impossible for Americans to get decent Mexican food. One continuing exasperation for American visitors is that local people insist on speaking in French, though many WILL speak English, if shouted at.

**** People**

France has a population of 56 million people. 52 million of these drink and smoke (the other 4 million are small children). All French people drive like lunatics, are dangerously oversexed, and have no concept of standing patiently in a queue, or line. The French people are in general, gloomy, temperamental, proud, arrogant, aloof and undisciplined; and those are their good points. Most French citizens are Roman Catholic, though you would hardly guess it from their behavior. Many people are communists. Men sometimes have girls' names like Marie or Michel, and they kiss each other when they meet. American travelers are advised to travel in groups and wear baseball caps and colorful trousers for easier recognition.

**** Safety**

In general, France is a safe destination, although travelers must be aware that from time to time it is invaded by Germany. Traditionally, the French surrender immediately and, apart from a temporary shortage of Scotch whisky and the increased difficulty in getting baseball scores and stock market prices, life for the American visitor generally goes on much as before. A tunnel connecting France to Britain beneath the English channel has been opened in recent years to make it easier for the French government to flee to London during future German invasions.

**** History**

France's historical figures are Louis XIV, the Huguenots, Joan of Arc, Jacques Cousteau and Charles de Gaulle, who was President for many years and is now an airport.

**** Government**

The French form of government is democratic but noisy. Elections are held more or less continuously and always result in a draw. The French love administration so for governmental purposes, the country is divided into regions, departments, districts, municipalities, towns, communes, villages, cafes, and telephone kiosks. Each of these has its own government and elections. Parliament consists of two chambers, the Upper and Lower (though confusingly they are both on the ground floor), and whose members are either Gaullists or Communists, neither of whom should be trusted by the traveler. Parliament's principal occupation is setting off atomic bombs in the South Pacific and acting indignant and surprised when other countries complain. According to the most current American State Department intelligence, the President is now someone named Jacques. Further information is not available at this time.

**** Culture**

The French pride themselves on their culture, though it is not easy to see why. All their music sounds the same and they have never made a movie that you would want to watch for anything but the nude scenes.

**** Cuisine**

Let's face it, no matter how much garlic you put on it, a snail is just a slug with a shell on its back. Croissants

on the other hand, are excellent, although it is impossible for most Americans to pronounce this.

**** Economy**

France has a large and diversified economy, second only to Germany's in Europe, which is surprising because the French hardly work at all. If they are not spending four hours dawdling over lunch, they are on strike and blocking the roads with their trucks and tractors. France's principal exports, in order of importance to the economy, are wine, nuclear weapons, perfume, guided missiles, champagne, guns, grenade launchers, land mines, tanks, attack aircraft, miscellaneous armaments and cheese.

**** Public Holidays**

France has more holidays than any other nation in the world. Among its 361 national holidays are: 197 Saints' days, 37 National Liberation Days, 16 Declaration of Republic Days, 54 Return of Charles de Gaulle in triumph as if he won the war single-handed Days, 18 Napoleon sent into Exile Days, 17 Napoleon Called Back from Exile Days, and 2 France is Great and the Rest of the World is Rubbish Days.

**** Conclusion**

France enjoys a rich history, a picturesque and varied landscape, and a temperate climate. In short, it would be a very nice country if French people did not inhabit it. The best thing that can be said for France is that it is not Germany.

Itinerary

Thu Mar 7 - Marie

5:37pm Depart Kansas City MCI via UA#4181

9:22pm Arrive Newark EWR and pick up with same method as usual

Fri Mar 8

No school – in NJ

Sat Mar 9

5:45pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#830

Sun Mar 10

7:10am Arrive Paris CDG

Apartment 4 rue Honore Chevalier, 1st floor, 75006 Paris in Saint Germain des Pres

Tele at apt: 01 42 22 04 92

<http://www.parisvacationapartments.com/index.php/en/our-apartments-pva-paris/2-bedroom-paris-pva-paris.html>

Sun Mar 17

8:25am Depart Paris CDG via UA#829

11:50am Arrive Newark

Mon Mar 18 – Marie – only day out of school

2:56pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#4181

5:12pm Arrive Kansas City MCI