



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.

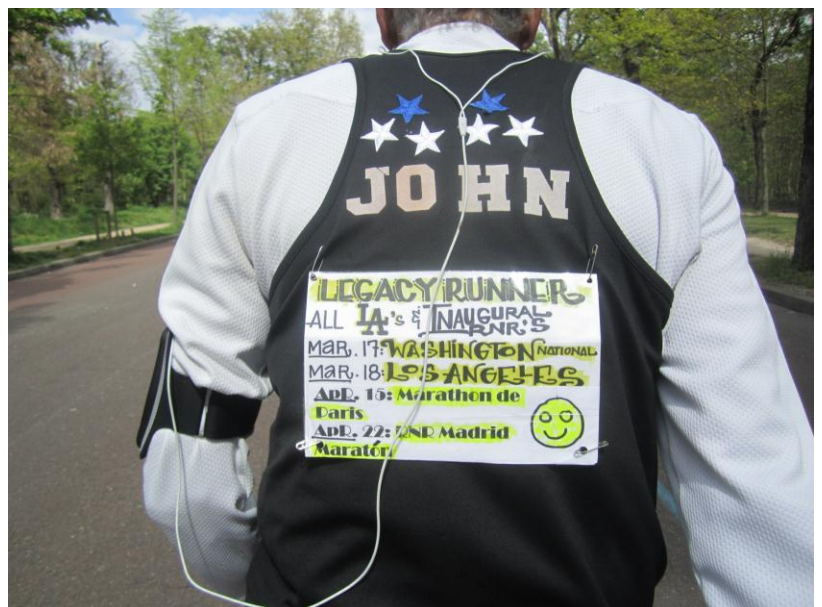


Forty thousand runners

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.

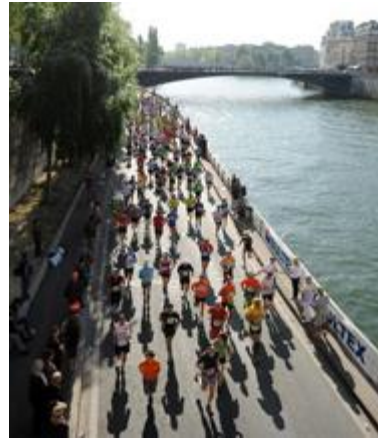
John rightly got after me for all my walking and kept me going and it is with due thanks to him that I finished in 5:42. He finished at 5:40 and had I not stopped at another porta potty around mile 25 (plus

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

And Trust Me! Again! – There was more here than supplied by those wallet-squeezers Rock 'n Roll.



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.



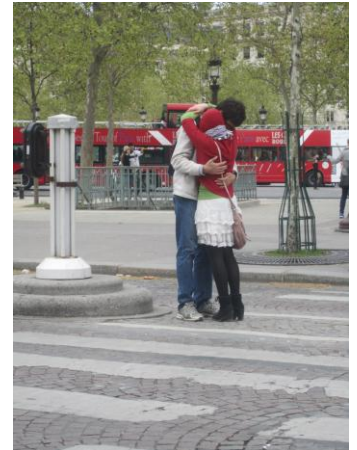
Yes! We had roving entertainment too and these guys in the middle stayed with us for a mile or two. The colorful gals numbered at least a dozen.



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

Do NOT purchase cancellation insurance! (about: 2011)

I purchased the 11 euro cancellation insurance and tried to use it due to a knee injury. I completed all required paper work (doctor's signature) and provided all necessary banking information. After more than 15 email messages and 7 months I have received no reimbursement and have stopped getting replies from the race organization or the bank in charge of reimbursement (Aon Hewitt).

Too many runners for the course!!! (about: 2011)

I ran Paris in 1995 and 1996 - very nice. I ran it in 2011; NEVER AGAIN. I have run 68 marathons. I have never been pushed, shoved and crowded like this. NEVER AGAIN! Great course but too small with many "bottlenecks." NEVER AGAIN!

Beautiful course, bad organization (about: 2011)

This was my 4th Marathon de Paris, and it appears that they are never going to get some things right, despite every year asking for feedback. Negatives: this year I went to the expo on Saturday and it was a freaking zoo; on the big day there are not nearly enough toilets at the start to accommodate 35,000 people (is anyone surprised it's 90% men? I heard dozens of women say they would never come back); the pens are not well managed, so beware getting stuck in the wrong pack if you're not 2 hours early or have very sharp elbows; there are several places (Concorde, Bastille, Parc de Vincennes) where it gets too narrow for the crowd and you can lose upwards of 30 seconds just shuffling; the pacers are very popular, which creates these impenetrable walls of runners that can be frustrating when you're stuck behind them.

Positives: there are tons, but having the City of Paris to yourself is worth the price of admission. Sign up early and pay less - what a great formula.

Oh, and be prepared to suffer after the race simply getting out of the runners' area as it gets completely jammed with runners and awaiting friends/family. All in all, it's still a great marathon.

A must-do marathon! (about: 2011)

Mostly flat course with a few gentle hills:

Cons

- Give out small plastic water bottles instead of paper cups (insane!)
- I finished in 3:15 and there was plenty of water. A friend claimed they ran out of water by the 1st water stop (5K) for the 4:30-group.
- Didn't see a gel stop and I saw only 1 sports drink (PowerAde) stop. (I carried my own electrolytes.)
- Could smell cigarette smoke from spectators
- Boring medal
- No small finishers' shirts

Pros

- Very scenic course
- Despite the number of racers, the course felt roomy, with no bottlenecks
- Dense spectator support along entire course
- Marked in miles and KM
- Was not treated like a running ATM (ahem... Rock 'n' Roll). At the finish, I was immediately given water and food.
- My friends and I all PRed. (Good course for that.)

Sugary Sweet Delight plus an unexpected PB. (about: 2011)

The course is relatively flat, although there are a few dips under bridges in quick succession along the middle of the course. These do sap away some of your energy.

It's quite easy in fact to set off a bit too quickly at the start, but the final few miles are more or less downhill. The course ticks most boxes as to city sights visible while you run or walk.

It was quite hot this year although thankfully the mercury didn't climb as high as had been projected. Water in bottles, raisins, sugar cubes, half bananas and orange slices at each station, plus Powerade close to the end meant relief to many including myself.

I've only given three stars for the spectators because some runners may clamor for a total racket, à la London; but frankly, the Parisian crowd was absolutely great, without your eardrums being blown away. I was even urged on by a spectator when, with a few miles left, my overly quick start came back to me with knee pain and foot trouble. I did start running again at that point.

Much improved race organization (about: 2011)

I first ran Paris in 2009 and feel that the race organization is much improved since then.

The bag drop was very organized with a one way pedestrian system in and out of the area. There were many more toilets near the bag drop than what I recall from two years ago. I also was very surprised at the quantity of food offered at every water station; there were always loads of oranges, bananas and other items to choose from.

The course is amazing. Make sure you take time to look around and see the beautiful and historical Paris sights. I feel it is truly a "Paris" marathon - not just beginning and ending in the city but taking in the most significant sights throughout a vast area. The Eiffel Tower at mile 18 provides good motivation as it is in view from mile 15 onwards to keep you going. I also find the out-and-back course psychologically easier.

There are a good number of spectators along the majority of the route, and many shout out your name as it is printed on all bib numbers.

The biggest negative is the crowd of runners. I don't recall it being so bad last time I ran the race. It never thinned out the entire route. The majority of people around me were running the same pace as I was but I still had to spend a lot of effort getting around slower runners in my way. By the end of the marathon, this had caused me to run an additional half mile in distance and almost prevented me from obtaining a sub-4 hour finish.

The finish was also very well organized. One of the nicest marathon t-shirts I have received, and the medal is very pretty.

I Love Paris In The Springtime... (about: 2011)

My wife and I signed up for Paris for the opportunity to run the Paris and London marathons on back to back weekends. Consistently voted as two of the world's top marathons, this combo was too tempting to ignore.

In the weeks leading up to the marathon, I was concerned it would be kind of cold for this race, but, instead, the race start temp was about 60 degrees and sunny, and would reach about 75 degrees.

It was a stunningly beautiful course, by default, of being in one of the most gorgeous cities in the world. The course and the spectators were 5 stars all the way. But, the race would be improved, in my opinion, if registration was capped at about 25,000 runners as it was congested the entire way... so congested that I couldn't help but wonder if being shoulder to shoulder with other runners for half the race did not add enough body heat to make it feel even a couple degrees warmer.

One thing that I cannot understand about the race is that electrolyte drink is not given out until about the 30K mark, while prior to then, it is only water/oranges/bananas every 5K.

I was aware of this going in, but it doesn't make it excusable for a marathon this size run on a reasonably warm day.

Other organizational issues for this race, though, were without a glitch, but it would be nice if the expo was held more in the central part of Paris than a bit away (took about 25 minutes by Metro from my hotel, which was just 2 blocks from the start line).

One other minor complaint was that it seemed like it was over a kilometer-long walk from the finish line to where runners actually exited. Who wants to walk another kilometer after running 42+, already?

This was the longest road marathon I recall doing, at 26.55 miles, but I am sure a lot of that can be explained with all the weaving in and out of the heavily congested course.

All in all, it was a great way to ring in my 40th birthday, run my 50th marathon, and pace my DW to a sub-5 marathon. However, it is not a race that I would put at the top of my list for repeating, although few far away races make that list for me.

Truly Paris! (about: 2008)

Paris is Paris! The course and crowd made the Paris Marathon just perfect for my first-marathon experience! The course goes through most of the touristy areas, like the Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, and Bastille, starting and finishing at the Arc de Triomphe!

The experience of running with 35,000 people is unique, and the crowd in the streets supporting the runners is something else. The course is almost flat, and the weather is perfectly cold for a marathon (42 F).

The only negative point is about the water stations, which are placed every 5K. They should be placed at almost every 3K. One other negative attribute is that the medal looks quite simple for this outstanding marathon.

Loved Every Minute (about: 2010)

I ran the 2010 edition and loved every minute of it. I would recommend the Paris Marathon to anyone without hesitation. The course is fantastic. It is really hard to think of a better running experience than running down the Champs Elysees from the Arc de Triomphe with 40,000 other people. The fan support was great. Your name is printed on your bib and the French spectators often shout out, "Allez (your name)" as you run by, which was greatly appreciated by the runners. I would recommend getting there early if you are expecting to finish in under 4 hours because they try to group the runners by predicted finishing time. I expected to finish in around 4 hours, but I got there late and the crowd was already so massive and condensed that I had no choice but to go to the back of the crowd with the 5-hour runners. There was just no way I could work my way through thousands of runners to get up to the 4-hour group. It was no big deal other than that I finished with a slower time due to running behind slower runners for the first few miles. The finishing area was well organized. The expo was fantastic, but everything was way overpriced. The medal was gorgeous too. Everyone should experience the Paris Marathon at least once and then enjoy the amazing city. I hope to run it again ASAP.

Paris - gotta love it!!! (about: 2010)

I ran this race for the first time, and it was a lot better organized than I expected from previous years' comments. The course is awesome; there was one stretch along the Seine that was in a long tunnel, which is the only negative. It was open as can be for 40,000 runners. I never had to walk or weave in and out to pass people due to runners bunching up.

There are some quirks with this race - water stops only every 5K, and for the first 2/3 or so of the race, they only served water (no sport drink). They did have banana pieces and orange slices at every stop, which worked well - other than the obstacle of running over the peels. The porta-let situation was better than I expected. But they could easily triple the number available. A friend reported he was in one at the start that was, yuck, full up to the seat. There are also open-air 3-way men's urinals (only in Europe I guess...).

Crowd support was great, with bands and percussion groups everywhere. It got a little sparse towards the end perhaps. The expo was fine, and the gear check was a bit of a hike before the start. They didn't run out of anything I needed and I am slow. The water stops provided small bottles, so if you wanted, you could carry it with you to the next stop. I would definitely run here again - it's a fine race.

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.



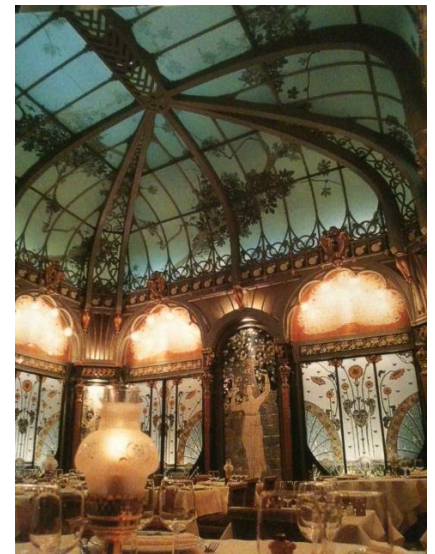
La Lorraine Brasserie, 2 Place des Ternes (Ternes metro). This is an Alsatian restaurant like the name implies, and it's been totally redone and in some ways made to look modern which was a bone of contention by some Parisians. We liked it and it was our first meal of this trip. It occupies nearly a 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 where 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-Tertre 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 Cailebotte'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.

Reports by others

Charlotte ran on Easter in this cute costume. And before then Mardi Gras, with Tara, who is missing her costume?



Diane ran Boston despite the heat and was able to keep out of the hospital. Here she is the day before with the Patriots. Cute? Pretty? Both! It's no wonder she can be seen in the movie called "Deadline."

Dave has had a lot of successes at meeting his BQ for each state and his reports have been added to the www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com site. Dave got done with Boston so early that the heat didn't cost him any extra time!

Itinerary

Sun Apr 8

9:20pm Depart Newark EWR via CO/United #54

Mon Apr 9

10:55am Arrive Paris CDG and met by car

1:00pm Meet Alexandre Picart 06 16 11 43 12 contact@ajflatservices
Apartment at 232 rue du Faubourg Saint Honore 75008 Paris
www.parisattitude.com/rent-apartment/arc-de-triomphe,Apartment,2-Bedroom,3624.aspx
through Paris Attitude Tele 33 (0)1 42 96 80 46 Ms Claude Schmitt
6, Rue du sentier 75002 Paris www.parisattitude.com #3624

Wed Apr 11

9:00am Avis Rental car pick up at #2 Paris Champs Elysees (Right Bank)
60 Rue de Ponthieu, 8th Paris, 75008 Tele 33 01 43 59 03 83

Tickets for Monet's home and garden in Giverny and continue onto Rouen for walking tour and dinner

Thu Apr 12

3:00pm Expo at Parc des Expositions de la Porte de Versailles, Hall n° 4-75015 Paris to 8pm
Parc des Expositions is at Metro Port de Versailles or Line #12 – take medical form

Fri Apr 13

10:00am Expo to 8pm
Dinner at Isidora's

Sat Apr 14

9:00am Expo to 8pm

Sun Apr 15

8:45am Marathon www.parismarathon.com
Starting UP Champs Elysees and finishing DOWN Avenue Foch - 5:40 hour cut off

From the website: On April 15, you will be among 40,000 participants at the start line on the Champs-Elysées. This year we are inaugurating a new system to increase the comfort and security of all. The last six sections will be divided in groups along the width of the course and opened one side at a time in a random manner to limit the amount of runners starting at the same time. With the new chronometric system integrated in the numbers, no one will be forgotten, all competitors will be timed from the moment they cross the start line.

Wed Apr 18

6:30am Car pick up

9:25am Depart Paris CDG via CO/United #57

12:00noon Arrive Newark EWR

Tourist items

From Ellen: I knelt at the grave of Admiral De Grasse in that little white church on Rue St. Honore (church of St. Roch) in Paris and said, "Thank you!"