

Post



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Amsterdam to Paris - May 7, 2022

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Today we get up early. It's a big day. Our last day in Amsterdam, and our first day in Paris! We pack and get ready to go, but first we head out for breakfast. We walk to a restaurant highly recommended by a friend of Karen's in Austin. It's called Greenwoods. There are two in Amsterdam. The one we go to is Greenwoods Single which is about a half mile from our hotel. The "Single" part of the name comes from the name of the canal (the gracht, in Dutch) which is "Single".

Very intentionally we get to the restaurant 15 minutes before it opens. There's already a line as we were told there would be. We read the menu to shorten our time in the restaurant. We're little nervous about all that needs to happen before we're on the high speed train to Paris.

The line outside quickly fills the restaurant. Greenwood's lives up to the hype. The food is inventive and delicious, though it's only breakfast. We get eggs Benedict Florentine, scrambled eggs with sautéed mushrooms, and smoked salmon something-or-other. We happily eat and pay.

It's a short, bittersweet hike back to the hotel. We check out and take our final tram ride, with lots of luggage, back to the central station. There we try to turn our unused transport cards back into cash, as we'd been told we could.

Whoops, we're told, we have too much money on each card (>40€). Rather than giving us cash, she must send the money back to our credit card. She has to see our train tickets and passports. They're both on our phone, we just have to connect to the internet and locate them.

The service lady's initial amusement at our attempts to do that soon turns to irritation and eventually pity. She knows local thieves are more capable and intelligent than we're exhibiting. As such, she decides to just send the monies back to our credit cards. As she finishes we find our tickets and passports. At this point all she wishes to see is our backsides.

We get to the platform, figure out exactly where we should stand, and wait. A short while later an announcement, in Dutch, suggests to Mike that our train has been 'reconfigured'. Damn, his Dutch is good. He checks and then schleps our mountain of luggage to our new boarding spot.

As we've come to expect there isn't enough luggage space on the train. Apparently the designers thought people traveling between Amsterdam and Paris would be traveling with little, if any, luggage. Settled into our premium seats we can tell that everything is exactly as it was the last time we traveled on this line, twenty years prior. It seems nothing has been maintained or upgraded. Still, it's comfortable enough for our three hour trip.

We'd read that we get a free meal on this route at the time we're traveling, and we've read it's pretty good! I ask the lady behind the dated counter about that and am told we're just in Premium, and not in Super Premium Plus, or some such class. They get free meals, we have to buy whatever we want. In any case, she continues, the equipment isn't working. Quel surprise.

In Paris we try to arrange an Uber pickup but all streets anywhere near the station are labeled "Taxi only!!" We give up and start to get into the queue for taxis. There are two big, burly security guards ensuring no one cuts in line. Suddenly an eagle-eyed driver, way back in the line of taxis, notices us. "Are you a party of four??" He yells in astonishment. Apparently such a thing has never been seen before. His van taxi is huge (by European standards) and might even fit us four and our obscene amount of luggage.

The driver instructs us to cut in front of the line and suddenly we are Kim and Kanye to the guys guarding the line. We climb in and Mario Andretti, our driver, puzzles our luggage into what little remaining space there is. Mario says this is a "Special Fixed Fare" that doesn't involve the meter, Okay?? 75€ since it's on the other side of the Seine. Cash... Whatever.

He steps on the gas and cuts off the first of many pedestrians, bikes and cars. We'd see that much of the city's intersections are closed. It's a protest of the yellow vests. Cutting off more buses and motor scooters he tries to get through intersections before the police could seal them off for the protester march. At one point a cyclist cuts us off, we miss a light, and the gendarmes seal off a good route.

Mario is pissed. He zooms down street after street only to find the cross streets we want are sealed off for the protest march. At one street Mario sees the parade has already passed. In his mind the police tape no longer applies. He creeps the van under the tape. All goes well til the short antenna at the back of the van which snaps the tape. Whoops! Oh well. C'est la vie!

He zooms on. At red lights bikes and drivers of cars and buses yell at our driver or tap on the windows to complain. He tells them to bug off.

Eventually we get to our VRBO, shockingly in one piece. We schlep ourselves and our luggage into the entryway of our building. Our instructions say to call "5 gauche" (left). We tap into a keypad for a while with no luck. It turns out to be a lock box. On the other wall is an intercom. We tap the up/down button for a while. We get to where the screen says "5 gauche". We click the asterisk to call the apartment. Eventually the host comes in from the street. She never was in 5 Gauche. She'd been delayed.

The elevator is able to accommodate one bag at a time. We have one person on the ground floor and one on the fifth floor (sixth floor, American way of counting). One by one we send up the luggage. Halfway through some smartly dressed twenty something girl with fresh flowers comes in from the street and says she'll wait. We eventually insist she jump in line. Finally we're in and briefed on everything in the apartment. It's nice.

Mike and Liz try to decipher the washing machine. They add clothes and a soap pod. Ninety minutes later, after much spinning, they removed the same clothes and the same soap pod, intact. They had apparently pressed the button for just 'spin to dry as much as possible'. They'll try another day.

We walk together to the Bon Marché grocery, the nicest and most complete in Paris. We shop, overwhelmed. It's as mind blowing as ever. We buy olives, bread and butter.

We walk some more. We walk along the quai (along the Seine). It's Saturday and the weather is great. Lots of people are out. We get water, a bottle of Italian white wine, and two small bags of chips. We quickly consume them on a picnic table in the gorgeous weather looking at the boats float by on the Seine.

We walk through the Tuileries, through the Louvre, through the Palais Royal. We find Willi's wine bar. It's been there forever and is still great fun.

Full, depleted of energy and money we head home and to bed.

Photos







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