

Post



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Monet's gardens at Giverny - May 10, 2022

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Each day we get up and say "Big day!" Which is to say that we're in Europe and every day is a big day. Today, however, we're going to see the gardens in Giverny that Claude Monet created. It is a big day!

We're up early. We check that the laundry we did yesterday is dry. Every apartment here seems to have a washing machine but just a drying rack. The laundry is dry. We prep and dress quickly and are out the door. We're due to be picked up at 7:30 at some hotel not too far away. It's a bit of a drive out to Giverny. Back in Monet's day it was probably a longer ride out there from Paris, but they did have a train, so who knows.

We grab a coffee and pastries on the way to our pickup point. They're French and are from a reputable bakery so they're divine.

Our van is nothing special, but it is black, and the driver is well dressed. We all have to wear masks, which is a bit of a bummer, but whatever. Already in the van are two Canadians, a mother and daughter team. We've met a number of these from different parts of the world. The formula seems to be the same. Daughter is just finishing up college and Mom's taking her here for a present before the next stage in her life.

While en route the driver pulls down a screen from the ceiling and pushes a button to start a video. The intro (playing up the media company who made the video) is hilariously long. Yes, you love yourselves, we get it.

The video was pretty good and introduced Monet, his life, his work, and his creation of Giverny. He had two wives, each of whom died. Not fun. He was understandably depressed for parts of his life. He created Giverny and wanted to make it like nature perfected. It seemed to us to be an oxymoron, but whatever.

The narrator was an English speaking young lady, but was French, we gather. She could be very scholarly, and addressed us from in front of a building or strolling through a field, etc. At each transition between two scenes she would dash off into the distance at top speed. And then she'd dash back into the next scene at top speed and stop abruptly to start the next part. We're sure that Jerry Lewis, and all French people, find it hilarious. We just look at each other.

At Giverny we're dropped at 10am and told we'll be picked up at 1pm. We're guided into the gardens and told in no uncertain terms (multiple times) that if we leave the gardens we can't get back in without buying another ticket. Cool.

We've been to Giverny many times before. As such I wasn't sure another visit would be worth it, but I was wrong. It seems they've doubled the number and variety of flowers. It was tremendous. We took so many pictures. There were lots of gardeners busily adding and replacing plants. Surprisingly some of the plants being added were fairly big trees. Thankfully there weren't too many people there (at first).

We tour all the plants and flowers and then tour the house. We use the facilities and check out the gift shop. Our last task (before exiting the gardens) is to go through the underground tunnel to the water lily gardens and Japanese footbridge on the other side of the ? road. They, too, are in amazing shape. By now it was crowded and everyone (including us) wanted a picture on the Japanese footbridge, ideally alone.

Done and hungry we go to the bar/tea house/restaurant right next door. It is surprisingly good. Beer/wine and salads and quiche. We start out with the drinks and then try to order lunch. We're at a table set for lunch and have the lunch menus, so we think that's OK. The waiter has already brought the bill for the drinks and sort of scolds us for not making clear that we'd be desiring food. Sorry! :-}

After lunch we go check out Monet's grave, make sure he's still there. That actually is a cause for potential concern... the French government wanted to dig him up and put him in the Parthenon with Voltaire, et. al.) The mayor of Giverny (and other dignitaries) felt it might impact their city's income and put the French kibosh on that idea.

Finally it's time for the long drive back to Paris. We have a delightful chat with the two Canadians. They were in Paris and had many days ahead of them, but really no plans. They mentioned that to Karen and she quickly documents an itinerary for them. They are thrilled. One thing we recommended highly was the Parc Floral at the eastern end of Paris. It turned out that is where the driver lives. He was sooo proud.

We have the driver drop us where he's dropping the girls, in the Marais, rather than back at our apartment. We're going walking anyway. We walk to the two islands where Paris started. We got ice cream at Berthillon's and Liz and Karen each bought some new sunglasses. Very chic.

We walk to Dehillerin by way of Stravinsky fountain, The Centre Georges Pompidou, and Les Halles. We shop at that famous cooking supply store for quite a while. Karen's good and buys nothing. Mike buys a chef's knife (intentionally NOT stainless, supposedly holds an edge better). We walk rue Montorgueil, a cool foodie street. Liz shops for cooler shirts, since she only brought clothes for cold weather. She finds/buys three.

For dinner we get very dolled up and eat at Alcazar. We have a reservation. You must. The service is impeccable and the food is OK, but not cheap. I guess you're not there for the food but more for the name. Sigh. They do seem to have an inexhaustible supply of wine. Whoops!

Photos

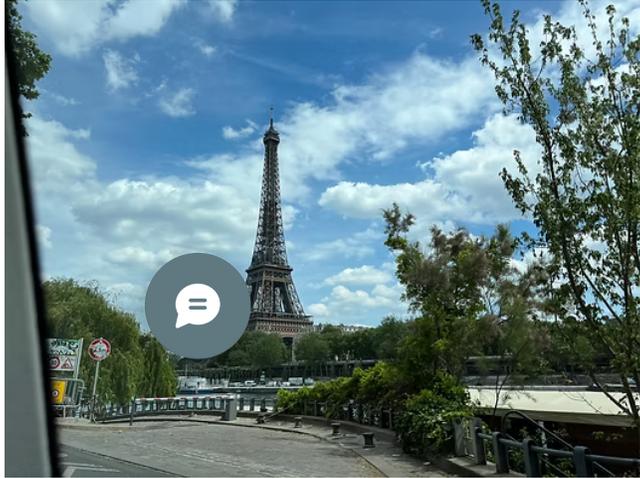






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