

Post



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# Paris: And then there were six - May 12, 2022

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Four of us have been in the Netherlands, and now Paris, for three weeks. Today we (briefly) become six people. Our friends Ron and Nancy fly into Paris today from Austin. And Mike and Liz, who have been with us from the start, leave Paris tomorrow to fly back home to Austin.

Ron and Nancy won't be showing up until around lunch time, so Mike and Liz head to the Café au Deux Magots for breakfast and Karen and I head to one of Paris' regular open air markets. This one, the Saxe-Breteuil market, is in the she-she 7th arrondissement and is known for it's view of the Eiffel Tower while you shop. We do not buy much, since we're leaving Paris soon. But, as always, we love to see the beautiful produce and flowers, to sniff the cheeses, and to marvel at everything else. We will be picnicking on the TGV high speed train from Paris to Bordeaux, so we buy some bamboo picnic utensils and small plates. Surprisingly, where we're staying, they do not have a peeler e.g. for carrots, and so we buy yet another one.

We walk home, seeing the beautiful Les Invalides in the distance. It's the national cathedral of the French military and is where Napoleon's tomb can be found. Back at our temporary Paris home we meet up with Ron and Nancy. They're tired from their flight over and the invariable jet lag that comes from such flights. But they're smiling and ready to go. Our group plan is to keep them awake and walking until dinner time. It's noon so we head out to find lunch. We end up at The Vielle Comptoir which is right by an entrance to a metro stop close to our apartment. For lunch we order croque madams, croque monsieurs, a burger and some salads. They're all tasty and most come with awesome french fries.

Fueled up, we start our walking. First stop is Luxembourg Gardens, where the French Senate meets. Someone asks what the Senate does in France. We say "about the same as in the US... nothing". We watch some impressive, older French gentlemen play boule (pétanque). The lead switches quickly as one boule come crashing down on another, supplanting the one that had been right next to the target ball. We push on and marvel at the espalier they have there. Apples, pears, cherries and other fruit trees have been trained into walls, cylinders, and other shapes.

It's a weekday but the lawns are loaded with people picnicking and relaxing, sleeping and wooing. We eventually exit the park and hike down to the two islands in the middle of the Seine where Paris began (and where Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral is today). Notre Dame is always busy, with tourists milling about taking pictures and pickpockets, presumably watching and making their plans. There's always been scaffolding on the enormous church but since the awful fire, back in 2019, much of the building is now completely obscured by the scaffolding.

We walk from one island to the other and contemplate more ice cream from Berthillon. We cross over the rest of the Seine and wander through the Marais. Our target is the beautiful Place Vendome. The King and Queen used to live there. Him on one side of the enormous square and she on the other. More convenient for spending time with the ones you really love. It's tree-lined and has a big grassy park in the middle. We let ourselves in and find an open patch of grass on which to sit. We brought some wine and cheese and crackers. We're not sure it's allowed, so we try to be discreet. All of a sudden an elderly man makes a bee-line towards Mike. He's saying something in French that we can't make out but we're sure we're in trouble. Eventually we're able to talk to him and understand the issue. The old man, with bad eye sight, had mistaken Mike for a friend of his and was coming over to say hello. He was chagrined, especially as he spoke zero English, and we were relieved not to be in trouble.

Wine and cheese gone, we head out again. Mike and Liz metro back to the apartment to pack and the rest of us continue our wandering. We try, unsuccessfully, to find the dead rats hanging in the window of a shop near Les Halles. It's a rodent extermination company that's been there forever and the shop was featured in the Disney movie Ratatouille. We wander on and see the big abandoned building that was taken over by artists to make a wild art museum on the Rue du Rivoli.

We had been planning to have dinner at 7:30 but between Ron and Nancy's jet lag and Mike and Liz's morning flight, we move dinner to 6:30. We get to Le Recamier on time and we're the only ones there. 6:30 is a pretty early time for Parisians to eat dinner, but restaurants will humor tourists and take their money. We have a hilarious waiter, Enzo, from Italy. This favorite restaurant of ours does wonderful soufflés for dinner and dessert. Each of us orders one of each and they're divine, as always. We drink too much wine and share many stories and laughter. When we can't eat another bite we pay our bill and waddle back to our respective homes.

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## Photos





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