

Post



Scott Farnsworth

May 14, 2022 · 5 min read

The train to Bordeaux - May 14, 2022

Updated: Feb 22, 2023

[Photos](#) | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

Today we take the TGV, France's high speed train, from Paris to Bordeaux. It's also the anniversary of the day when our travel partners, Nancy and Ron, met. We congratulate them on 43 years of togetherness as we make coffee.

It's 8am and we're cleaning up ourselves and the apartment. We're packing our last few things, including a couple of bottles from the owner's liquor cabinet. We hadn't touched any all week and our host had said to help ourselves. We were sure the pastis (French licorice flavored aperitif) would come in handy down south, as would the red vermouth.

We wait for Zeineb to check us out. Karen votes to get Uber for the half mile walk to the train station, but she gets outvoted. We'll see if she turns out to have been correct, given how much luggage we have and how far the walk is.

We shuttle the luggage down the elevator to the entry. Scott locks himself out and has to use the building intercom to ask Karen on the 5th floor (6th US) to let him back in.

All luggage down, we all (except Karen) wait with the luggage. Zeineb shows and gives the apartment a clean bill of health. We encumber ourselves with our large amount of luggage and roll towards the train station. We normally don't like the red lights where we have to wait, but with so much luggage now we welcome them. Ron measures the distance we walk and in the end it was a mile and a half. Whoops!

At the station we mask up (as required) and head inside to a ticket kiosk. We enter booking information and two faded tickets, with QR code, slowly print.

Our train is listed on the big board but there's not yet a platform (quai/voie) listed. We wait. (And wait and wait). We realize we can relocate closer to the platforms where we can still see the train departure listings while now enjoying some air conditioning. The board now indicates our train will depart 10 minutes late.

We watch the board like a hawk to see the instant the platform number is listed. We watch the board like a hawk to see the instant the platform number is listed. In the end that wasn't necessary since just seconds after the information appears the huge mass of previously stationary humanity lunges in unison towards the now listed platform.

The closer we get to the entrance to the platform the smaller the walkway gets. We try to balance not being too rude with trying to not fall too far behind. Once onto the platform the challenge becomes figuring out how far down to trudge (and drag our luggage). There are a lot of people. The train is not here yet!

We know we're in car 12, and a sign explains that car 12 for this train will stop near spot G. The problem? Finding the G spot. As we continue down the platform we see two smartly uniformed train conductors awaiting the train as well. We ask if they know where is 'Voiture douze' (car 12)? They both wave their arms repeatedly down platform. From the ferocity of their waving, we gather our car will be found close to Spain.

We eventually board, stow our luggage (in the undersized storage space) and find our seats. We have a set of four seats facing each other and there's a table in the middle. Nice!

During our ride we eat our picnic lunch. We're supposed to wear a mask at all time (other than when we're actually eating) so our ritual becomes to quickly pull down our mask, take a bite, and quickly pull our mask back up. It's a bit comical.

The train is clean and new looking. The ride is smooth. The views are beautiful, interesting and mostly pastoral. And they're going by fast. We're in Bordeaux in no time. It is an express train so it leaves Paris and ends up in Bordeaux, not going on to anywhere else. We don't need to rush to get off the train.

On the train we meet the couple who had been sitting in the row in front of us. We have several interactions during the ride involving luggage. We speak French (trying to be helpful) but monsieur doesn't always understand me (Scott), and vice versa. Towards the end he asks if perhaps I speak English, which I said I do. In English, with a heavy accent, he says they're from California, the Bay Area, and are headed to Domme. I told him that I was born in Palo Alto, and we will be visiting Domme. Small world.

We follow the signs to Hertz, get our car and sign Ron on as a second driver. We get to our car and are delighted to see how nice and big it is. But is it big enough to hold all our luggage in the back? Well, just barely. If we press the button to close the hatch, and then help it close, it latches. And it's an automatic, yay!

We briefly try to connect a smartphone to the car via BlueTooth, but soon give up. We'll just navigate on the smartphone. The drive is about 90 minutes. We could have save 10 minutes using toll roads, but we want to limit our excitement for one day.

When we get to Baleyssagues it appears to have maybe ten residents (and we don't see any of them). We find our address, and there is a building there, but no indication it's the right place. No obvious front door, or number, or doorbell. We drive around to see if we maybe missed the real place but keep coming back to this one.

Finally, we park and Karen stands on some stones and pokes her head over the fence. She says "Bonjour" to the group on the other side. Before long it's clear this is the place. Karen is speaking with our host. Apparently they recently changed hosts and the one we were communicating with two days ago is not longer the right person. None of Karen messages got to this new guy. He's a well dressed, classy silver haired French gentleman, Pascal. He says he called and left a message on my phone, but that I hadn't replied. My phone automatically goes to 'do not disturb' when it detects the motion of a car driving, so it makes sense we didn't get the message. It was lucky we caught him!

We park and walk around to the front door. The place is really nice! The big, inviting pool is the first thing you see, followed by some patios, one covered and one not. There are lots of chairs and lounges on the grass by the pool. There's mowed lawn and interesting big trees. Further away there's a huge field (that needs to be cut, but not badly). It has lots of wild flowers. In every direction we can't see any neighbors (though we know there is one on the other side of the house from the pool).

The house is built on top of a building from the 1500s. Now it's quite new on the inside but you can see parts that have been here a long time. We're shown around and are told how to make things work, and what not to do (i.e. put anything other than toilet paper in the toilet). We're told there is internet and there is not air conditioning. We're promised we won't need the A/C. The big, thick, stone walls of the house keep it cool. OK, we'll see...

We pick bedrooms, drag our luggage into our rooms and unpack. We have some wine by the pool and marvel at our luck. We brought some food that Ron and Karen, chef's extraordinaire, prepare for us. We dine al fresco. Life is good.

Photos





FARNSNIENTE





[Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

Subscribe Form

Email Address

Submit



©2023 by FarnsNiente. Proudly created with Wix.com