

Post



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Grocery stores and fairs - May 26, 2022

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Today we're going out again, but not terribly far. Before anything we need gas for Doug's rental. Doug drives, for the first time, and does a great job. Scott rides shotgun. Gas is still expensive. It's like US\$9 per gallon, which the French do not like, but they've had high gas prices for a long time (unlike in the US) and have adjusted (smaller, more fuel efficient cars, ability to walk for groceries and other essentials, bikes, etc.) Or maybe we're not hearing the grumbling of the locals as we're not one of them.

For breakfast a couple of us head to the town boulangerie. Going for a family's daily bread is a, well, daily event. It's also social. There are always neighbors there doing the same. We do get a baguette but we also pick up the 'viennoiserie' breads, per the orders of the 'family'.

Some get pain raisin, some pain au chocolat, some "plain" croissants, and one Pain Suisse (Swiss bread).

Viennoiserie isn't from Vienna and the Swiss bread isn't from Switzerland. Pain Suisse is a "pain au chocolate" for those who need more chocolate, I'm told. We'll have to try one before the trip is out! We sit around the table, looking at the view, sipping our coffee, and inhaling our French breakfast breads. Yum!

With cars and people fueled up it's time to head out for real. We are, of course, going shopping. Ron and Nancy are headed back to the states in a few days and they've agreed to take a small bag with them (checked luggage) to allow us to jettison some unnecessary clothes. We just need to buy the bag they'll be taking. Our hostess recommended a big sporting goods store in Apt, nearby. Le Clerc is one of the big grocery store chains in France and this is a sporting goods arm of that chain.

We drive to Apt and quickly find ourselves back in the big city. Well not Paris or Lyon big, but bigger than the tiny hill town village we're in. The grocery store is cavernous. For the stuff they have (like boxed wine) they have so much of it. The shelves full of it go on forever. The six of us split up and explore. Bonnie is looking for a Tide stain remover pen (no luck) and I'm looking for Neutrogena face soap (also no luck). But half the fun is seeing what this grocery store does have (including lots of patio furniture).

We do find, and buy, quite a bit of stuff (to eat or to take back to the states). What we don't buy is the luggage (duffle bag) we need. It seems the sporting goods store is closed today. It shouldn't be (according to the hours sign out front) but it is. No one can (or maybe is willing) to tell us why, but we're assured it'll be open tomorrow. OK... we'll be back.

Once again in our cars, we zip to the other side of town, to the area that has the open air market a couple of times a week. Today is not a market day but there is a fair there, put on by the local Lions Club. It's a "local wine and food and car show" fair benefiting... (we don't know what... lions?). Entrance is free but for a mere 3 Euros you can get an engraved wine glass to get free tastings. For 5 Euros you can get two glasses.

Two couples split two glasses (thereby saving half a euro per couple) and head out. There is wine, dessert wine, and bubbly wine. There are olives, nuts and sausage, candy, cookies and breads. There is the tiny "Ravioli du Royan" that we love. Karen asks how to cook it and in animated broken English and French we learn a smart technique we'll use soon.

We sample some Champagne and I ask if it's local. The vendor, with some disgust, reminds me that Champagne can only come from the Champagne region. Whoops, right. We buy a bottle. We buy some macaron and tuiles cookies and soon decide it's time to head out for more food: lunch in another town.

The other town is Lourmarin, where Karen and I ate the other day. We're going back to the same restaurant as a group. We do have a reservation. Driving into town we see signs for a fair going on here, today, as well. No lions involved. Today is the Ascension holiday and so many French are off and quite a few seem to be here with us. We get lucky and find two adjacent parking spots in a overflow lot. After touring the fair and cute town, we sit at our big table and have another wonderful meal with great weather. The place is again packed.

Our final stop is in the city of Cucuron to see the etang (the stagnant pond, as far as we can tell). It's beautiful and was featured in the movie A Good Year, mentioned earlier. The pond is surrounded by very tall, very old Plane Trees and they make for a gorgeous picture. Apparently the pond isn't a big draw as we have a heck of a time finding it. On foot we wander around this very small town (with roads way too narrow for cars) and finally ask a big French group walking past. They discuss it amongst themselves and then ask a local merchant. In the end they practically lead us to it by the hand. It was great fun.

Back in our own small village we park, this time back in the lower (church) parking lot. Tomorrow is market day for our little town and any car parked 'up top' will be towed. Three of us check out a bunch of the local restaurants (for our final meal together tomorrow). We select one and make a reservation. Back home we have another great dinner with delicious food, wine, views and music.

Photos









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