

Post



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Aug 14, 2023 · 6 min read

# First day back in Paris - August 15, 2023

Updated: Aug 17, 2023

## ***SUMMARY***

Off the plane and onto the RER train from Orly to central Paris. Suddenly we were in our Happy Place with perma-grins on our faces! We dropped our bags at our hotel and relaxed over coffee before commencing a full day of walking all over the city in the gorgeous weather. Lunch and dinner both al fresco and involving lots of cheese. Paris in August is awesome! No crowds (except at the Eiffel Tower and on the Champs-Élysées, which were packed) and no traffic!

Karen: walked 10.39 miles, took 25,686 steps

Scott: walked 9.89 miles, took 21,117 steps

- Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Woke up on the plane thirty minutes from landing in Paris. They thankfully let us sleep through breakfast. We're flying in from Newark, so the whole flight is less than seven hours. After dinner and before landing prep, there's maybe five hours for sleep. Neither of us got up once during the night to pee. The flight has free high-speed internet so we got to read the news over our rushed coffee. Yet another indictment of former president Donald J Trump. That confirms we're still in the same universe we were last night.

Our flight approach path, into Orly (the more southerly of Paris' two big airports) gives us a good view of the city. We see Tour Montparnasse, the Eiffel Tower, and the Grand Arch of La Défense, all in a seemingly straight line. In no time our Airbus A322 Neo has gently touched down and we're taxiing to our gate. Immigration and customs awaits. Where did we put those pesky passports??

Across the aisle the gentleman gets his stuff together, including his medium sized cockapoo, Wicket. We were thinking a French poodle would have been more "on the nose". Wicket was silent and well behaved the whole flight. He had his own business class seat. Ah the life of some dogs! There were also a few families on board. Kids flying business class, what's the world coming to??

Off the plane immediately we have to go up one level. Gladly, there's an escalator. Sadly, it's not working. We haul our luggage up the non-moving escalator, overhearing a little girl breathlessly ask "and after that can I put on my princess dress??"

Immigration and Customs were quick and uneventful. In the fog of the time change we couldn't figure out how to convince the kiosk to sell us a cheap ticket into Paris. We end up buying the "sucker tourist" one day Metro/RER pass, US\$63 for the two of us. It should have cost about \$10.

Off the RER my ticket doesn't let me through the gate. I have to call for help and then get my ticket reissued. In the future I am told to keep my metro tickets away from the magnets on my iPhone and earbuds!

It's a short walk from where the metro dropped us to our hotel. On the walk on the edge of the Luxembourg Garden park we pass the Senate building for France. We notice the roads are unusually empty and quiet. What's up, we wonder. It's Tuesday, not Sunday. It's 10 am, not 6 am. AH! It's August, the city is deserted! Despite it being August we do see lots of French, but not Parisian French. The Parisians are away on vacation. Many down in Marseille, Tours, Aix, Bordeaux, etc. And what we're seeing are the French visiting Paris, they're from THOSE cities. Everyone's on holiday. All are relaxed! All, that is, except the poor servers, bar tenders, taxi drivers, and hotel workers. Hopefully they took off in July!

We can have our room at 3:00 and coffee now. We lock up and give up our bags. We make our way through all the orchids in the hotel to the sunlit breakfast room. Soon the efficient server is bringing us breakfast. Whoops, no, just café au lait, please. Well, we didn't spend the night but we do get three coffees and a great place to sit with wifi. It's included with our room, but not today. Oh, well.

We're in the small breakfast room for an hour, from 10 am til 11 am, and other guests wander in to eat that whole time. People are sleeping in.

After our coffee we head out to walk. Our target? Parc Monceau, one of our favorites. Along the way we see the Alexander the Third bridge blocked off and set up for what's labeled as the World Triathlon. We look it up and it'll be happening on Thursday, in two days. What fun!

Feeling peckish we stop for lunch and have a delicious salad with toast and goat cheese and a croque monsieur. Delicious, all washed down with a big beer and golden fries.

On the remaining walk to the park we enjoy the empty streets, the relaxed people also on holiday and the 72 degree sunny weather. Parc Monceau is as wonderful as ever. Couples and families and joggers are enjoying the park as well. Pigeons strut around awkwardly and pick for crumbs left by the revelers. Signs from the Paris park's department beseech you to take everything and help rid us of these rats with (and without) wings. Good luck.

On our walk back to our hotel we intentionally skirt the Arc de Triumph, ensuring it's still as regal as ever. We stroll down the Champs Élysée, remarking that HERE'S where all those pesky foreign tourists are! We buy the ever-necessary prunes at a local grocery and metro the rest of the way back to our temporary home.

Our room is ready and it's quite nice. Karen thinks she may have a new favorite place to stay. After a bath and rest we head back out to dinner, metro-ing the whole way. The metro is full but again it's mostly French and they all seem to be in a laissez faire holiday spirit. It's contagious.

Dinner is at Le Chalet de Neuilly, in the town where we lived in the late '90s. It's been a favorite of ours since then and based on the ever present crowds, we're not the only fans. The food is what you'd normally have in the winter in the Alps, but it's yummy and so everyone's happy to enjoy it year round. We have fondue and salads and stuff. It's delicious and filling. We sit outside and marvel at how late it stays light. We bus back home and get even more chance to inspect this fun city.

Finally a full night to sleep in a normal bed. Life is good.

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## Photos



With the flight almost over, the furry passenger across the aisle, Wicket, is ready to be off the plane to finally relieve himself after seven hours



Through customs and immigration Karen does a little public rearranging before our train/walk to the hotel.



Almost to our hotel, Karen shields herself from the sunshine and blue sky as we skirt the beautiful Jardins de Luxembourg



On our walk to lunch we find the Alexander III bridge blocked off from car traffic to accommodate the runners in the World Triathlon coming Thursday



At lunch I check to see if a beer might help my jet lag



Lunch was enjoyed outside with very little traffic



And a delicious lunch it was too! The goat cheese was delicious and the French do know how to grow (or maybe import) produce.



Part of what was keeping the roads so empty was all of the temporarily closed business, such as this cafe with their chairs stacked high and locked safely away until September



Parc Monceau did not disappoint. The flowers and greenery were in fine form and the smart Parisians were out in force relaxing and luxuriating in the Parc's glory.



Along the way we see this Chinese-looking building we'd never noticed before. It's old. Having just returned from Asia we feel a bit as though we were being followed!



Back at our hotel we notice they did seem to have an orchid infestation. They were everywhere!



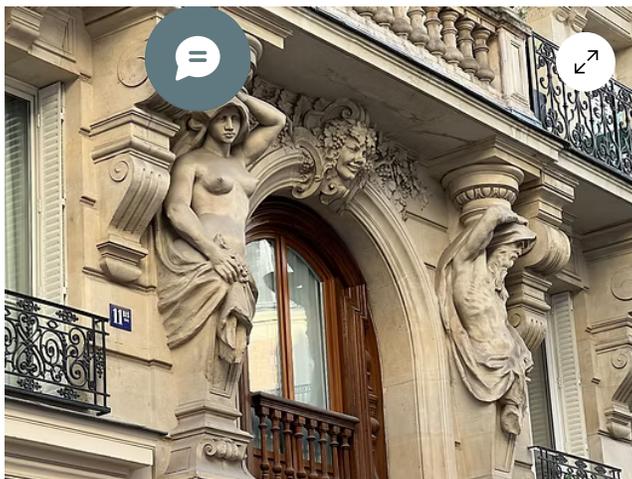
FARNSNIENTE



From every angle



Karen insists on making sure I am in some of the pictures. I ensure we keep them G rated.



The view from Le Châlet, including this frou-frou on this building across the street, reminds us of how much money Neuilly had (and still has)



Le Châlet, being Alp-themed, felt obliged to have a ski gondola cabin. We had to check it out.

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