

Post



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Jazz in the Quartier Latin - August 16, 2023

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SUMMARY

Another gorgeous day in Paris! Sunny but not too hot - we're feeling very lucky! Spent most of the day just walking around with a visit to one of the outdoor markets and crêpes for lunch. Soufflé dinner at our favorite restaurant (Le Recamier) and a long conversation with the gentleman at the next table. On the way home we were enticed into a bar/restaurant with a live jazz duo playing - very fun! - Karen

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DETAIL

We're up at 6:30, trying to convince ourselves that we're feeling no jet lag. There's coffee in the room, thankfully. As is the custom on this side of the pond, the machine takes little pods. We feel bad for the planet but happily sip our coffee anyway. The shower feels great and soon we're downstairs having breakfast. It's included and what's on offer is voluminous and all good. The bread basket has a 'tartine' (8" section of baguette) for each of us, two pain au chocolats and two mini croissants.

Out walking under blue sky and sunshine, we head back towards the northwest of Paris. We're headed to the only market open on a Wednesday in August: the Avenue President Wilson (yes, that President Wilson). It's around the corner from the Quai John F Kennedy and at the top of the avenue is a statue of George Washington on a horse. I guess our two countries do get along from time to time.

No more than half the stalls have vendors. Fewer people selling goods means less competition but there are few customers, so it all balances out. What they do have covers every category of food and, as always, the produce is gorgeous and ripe with bright color, and is perfectly arranged. They have prepared food, as well. Back in our day it was mostly French with some asian food vendors. Now there's Turkish, Tunisian, Syrian, and other middle eastern dishes as well. We're not so familiar with those smells.

As the day warms we find we're overdressed. Tomorrow, and likely later today, we'll be in shorts and short sleeve shirts. For now, we try to walk in the shade of the tall Plane trees that line so many of the streets.

At the Trocadero is a fair featuring Japanese and Chinese food and drink. We steer clear of the crowds at the base of the Eiffel Tower, instead walking along the Seine, crossing at the Passerelle Debilly (maybe in honor of US President "Billy" Clinton?). The RER train is closed, for some reason, so we wait for a bus. We're headed to a Decathlon sports store, back near our hotel, to buy a better day pack (sac a dos) for Karen.

At the Bistro des Augustins on the Seine we confirm our lunch reservation for tomorrow and then hike to a crepe place near Odeon. NYT columnist David Leibovitz thinks highly of this place and we've eaten here before. It doesn't disappoint.

Changed for dinner, we first take a long walk through the Luxembourg Gardens. It's full of French kids, teens, families, individuals and couples. We watch the children play on the equipment and ride the impressive zip line. We watch the adults expertly play boules. The (allowed) grass is full of reclining couples passing the time, sipping on wine, and the 'interdit' grass is filled with pigeons pecking around for whatever they can find. On the pond miniature sail boats zip across in straight lines with their temporary owners racing around, poles in hand, to the far edge to turn their boats around for another crossing.

After pre-dinner wine at the Bar de la Croix Rouge we settle in for dinner at Le Recamier, a perennial favorite of ours, famous for its soufflés. We shouldn't, but do, get a bottle of wine to enjoy with our dinner. We notice there's a bottle of the same wine at the table next to us. Seated there is a quite older single gentleman, seemingly going to polish off the whole bottle by himself. Bravo!

We wind up chatting with him for an hour or two. He's from Sweden but now lives in Palm Desert, California. He spends eight months of the year there, and four months here. Back there he would always give his next door neighbors (Ron and Nancy) flowers at Christmas. The ever gracious Mrs. Reagan was always thanked him. It turns out that he's been coming to this restaurant about as long as we have, since the 1990s. He's seen various famous people here, such as an older, heavier Gerard Depardieu. We get some tips on other good restaurants here in Paris and places to go when we're in Stockholm, later this trip.

Walking home, Karen realizes she left her sweater. Running back she sees our waitress standing on the curb looking for us to return the forgotten sweater. Our route home takes us past Vieux Colombier, a restaurant where we and four friends had lunch on our trip here last spring. Lively jazz music, from a guitar and clarinet, emanate from the place and so naturally in we go.

We order wine while the jovial performers beseech us for favorite jazz tunes they can play. We eventually come up with Birdland, Take Five, and When the Saints Go Marching In. It's great fun. Later the performers break for their dinner and some friends, or maybe just some other patrons, take up the guitar, he playing and she singing. He is from Paris and she's from Chicago. He plays Angie by the Stones and a tune from Dark Side of the Moon. Man he was good. He plays "Girl from Ipanema" and she protests that she didn't know it. Emboldened by the wine I insist on helping and hurry to the "stage".

Eventually we settled our tab and head down the dark, empty streets to our hotel. Enough fun for one day.

Photos



I am overwhelmed by the small size of our personal jar of Nutella. Is this a great country, or what??



To avoid bothering too many people to take our picture we're always on the lookout for a willing mirror in which to document our journey.



The sun, so low in the sky at this latitude and time of day, puts the gorgeous buildings of Paris in perfect relief.



The Flame of Diane, above where Princess Diana died in a car wreck, is still a big tourist draw, even after all this time.



Being August, many of the normal fruit/vegetable/fish/meat/etc. vendors are absent. It doesn't matter, there's at least one of each of the normal types of vendors here. Their produce and products, as always, look impeccable.



At the top of Avenue President Wilson is George Washington, helping every to know which way is up.



In the Luxembourg Gardens, today as everyday, skilled boules players show how it's done.



Elsewhere in the Luxembourg gardens flowers grow, people relax and talk, and little kids tend to their rented sail boats on the pond.



On our walk to dinner we also pass by the St. Sulpice church. Karen wonders aloud if the builders got in trouble for not having the two towers match.

FARNSNIENTE





Shops all over town have hats and tee shirts etc. for the coming Olympic Games. This jeweler has a watch band for sale honoring the cycling events. The French designers aren't always totally practical.



The soufflés at Le Recamier are as delicious as ever. We also have one for dessert, but at least that we split.



After dinner Karen goes back for her forgotten sweater. We're going to need that in the nordic countries!



Jazz caps off our evening. This picture shows the majority of people at the bar/restaurant.

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