

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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# The beaches of Paris - August 17, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

Leisurely morning at the hotel (my new favorite - Villa Madame) then a long walk along the Seine admiring the Paris Plages. These are a series of "beaches" created for those unfortunate folks who aren't vacationing in Cannes or San Tropez. They used to bring in real sand but now use decking, grass and wood chips with beach chairs and sun umbrellas. Lunch at Bistro des Augustines. For the evening we bought a combo ticket for tapas, wine and music. The tapas and wine were served at an okay little bar on the right bank but the music was awesome - a string instrument concert at Sainte-Chapelle featuring Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Although an excessive heat + humidity warning should have been issued! - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Today we sleep in, maybe due to our late night, or too much wine and song. We both feel that we somehow avoided any jet lag coming this way. So far. For this we're happy and a little proud. It's unlikely we'll be so lucky on our way home.

Like John Lennon and Yoko Ono we spend most of the morning in bed, catching up on the news and arranging our day. We get tickets for a classical concert (with tapas and wine) for tonight at 8pm. The venue is Saint Chapelle on the Île de la Cité in the heart of Paris. This really is the big draw. The wine can be had anywhere and once our tickets are in hand we see the wine/tapas is to be had a good twenty minute walk from the concert. Oh well.

We did have dinner plans for tonight, at the Bistro des Augustins on one of the quais of the Seine. Online we've switched that to be lunch instead. We don't know this restaurant but it got very good reviews on both Yelp and Trip Advisor so we're cautiously optimistic.

We dress for the day (in short sleeves and shorts in anticipation of warm weather). Breakfast is great and then we're off for a long, meandering walk. We haven't actually walked along the Seine yet so we head that way. We're hoping to see some of the 'beaches' on the shoreline.

Back in the 90s when we lived here what was along the banks of the Seine were one way road where they cars traveled fast. You'd be driving up on the "ground" level and then you'd take a little exist that zipped you down and over to along the banks of the Seine. Later they started to shut them off to vehicular traffic on the weekends. Eventually they said "no cars, ever". The roads were only for pedestrians, bikers, skaters and the like.

Even later they added some sand and lawn chairs and called them "Beaches". They've kept improving them. Now there are misters, huge panels showing real beaches with palm trees (courtesy of the French Polynesia Travel Consortium). I don't know how the drivers feel but the Parisians, and tourists, can't get enough of them.

To get back to ground level we walk down a long underground tunnel. They've added lights and encouraged talented graffiti artists to decorate the walls. It's really something. One lane is for bikes, traveling in both direction, and the other is for the joggers and pedestrians.

Again on 'ground level' we hike through the Louvre courtyard with I.M. Pei's famous glass pyramid. Young kids are lined up for their turn to stand on roadside stanchions holding their fingers just so, the resulting picture looking like they're resting their finger on the top of the pyramid. It never gets old.

Through the alleyway of the Richelieu Wing of the Louvre and we're out on to the Rue du Rivoli, a street we've walked down a zillion times. This time it's different. There are now two lanes of bike traffic in each direction and one small lane of one way taxi-only traffic headed west/down-stream. You'd think the Parisians didn't like cars! The cyclist seem to love it.

After dropping back down to Seine-level for more beach action we eventually cross over to the Île St. Louis and then to the Île de la Cité, with it's singed Notre Dame. It's still sad but they're working like crazy to return it to it's old self.

We snake our way through the tourists in front of Notre Dame down to our restaurant for lunch. It's good we made a reservation. It's crowded, which bodes well for the food. Alas it's just OK. Live and learn. The beer and people watching, though, were quite good.

We break up our walk back to the hotel, through the mid-day heat, to buy a gift for our friends we'll be seeing in Copenhagen: Macarons from Ladurée. Yum.

The cool of the room feels great and we reluctantly head out for our pre-paid wine and tapas. It was hard to imagine how they'd have us in the Saint Chapelle Chapel listening to classical music eating tapas, and sure enough, that wasn't their plan. We hiked quite a ways to a bar on the right bank, just off the busy road. We get two glasses of dry rosé wine and three tapas. That, plus the cigarette smoke wafting over from the next table, really made us feel like we are in Paris.

Back at the real St. Chapelle we go through security. The guard with the (alleged) metal-detecting wand seems to be getting a little too much pleasure from asking each person to "tournez, tournez". They'd packed as many chairs in St Chapelle as it would hold and tried to fill each one. Two French ladies, with one empty seat on either side, made a bit of a scene, not wanting to move to allow a couple to sit together. These were the seats they selected and they were happy with them, thank you very much. Everyone there just rolled their eyes and said "oh, la, la", facing their palms skyward.

Alas all those bodies in the chapel generated a lot of heat and we were all roasting. People were using whatever they could find to fan themselves. The musicians, who do this five times a week, got through it as quickly as they could, doing ten pieces in sixty minutes. We figure that's about six minutes per piece, or maybe five with applause. Vivaldi, if he could hear, would be rolling over in his grave.

As much as we enjoyed the show, we really enjoyed getting back outdoors, into the cool of the night. All we want now is to get back to our nicely air conditioned room and crash. We showered and packed for our early departure to the airport in the morning. Scott realizes that he's now lost an article of clothing, a Columbia fleece he's had for a dozen or more years. Oh well, maybe it'll be warm enough in the coming six+ weeks that we won't need it. (Not bloody likely).

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## Photos



Getting ready for the day, looking out our hotel window



A tad bleary-eyed for breakfast



Our hotel, our temporary home. To the right? That's an elementary school. Those kids take playing seriously. They yell and scream while playing. (It's endearing)



A Wallace Fountain. Drinkable water.



The fountain in front of St. Sulpice. It's called The Fountain for Saint Sulpice. Hm. OK. (I thought it had another name)



Art added by citizens that's considered tasteful isn't deemed graffiti, rather it's considered art and left up. These tile art pieces are all over the city. Not typically this large. Say Hi to C3PO and Chewbacca from Star Wars



On one of the Paris beaches. These chairs are free for the using.



Free misting to cool you down



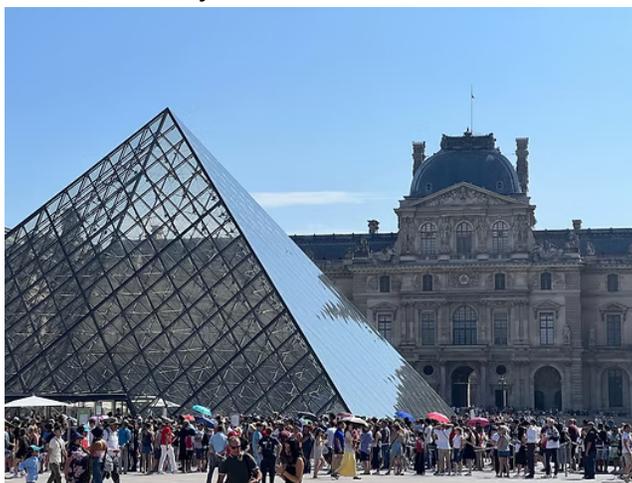
Free mirror for couples selfies



What Paris hopes the opening ceremonies next year look like. On water. What?? That's cray-cray.



It used to be a long underpass. Now it's a walk/bike-way/art hall.



So many tourists. Stay back!!



FARNSNIENTE



Lots of people trying to get a picture that looks like they finger's touching the exact top of the I. M. Pei Louvre Pyramid. (Kids today)



Notre Dame getting a much needed make-over



The Bistro des Augustines. We didn't think much of it. Maybe we ordered the wrong things.



Saint Sulpice what the what-cha-macallit fountain



Tapas (and wine coming) before the concert



The concert. It was warm. Nice venue, though

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