

Post



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# The "temporary" tower - September 27, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

We had a very touristy Paris sort of day. We had a nice Parisian breakfast, al fresco on the food street, Rue Cler. Afterwards, a trip to the top of the Eiffel Tower, something we haven't done in years. Some of us enjoyed a coupe de champagne before descending to the lower level then heading off to lunch. In the afternoon we took a Seine River cruise, munching on figs and tiny perfect, perfectly ripe strawberries (thanks, Liz!). We took the bus out to Neuilly-sur-Seine for dinner at longtime favorite, Le Châlet. Copious quantities of steak, frites, raclette, cheese fondue, yummy desserts and lots of house wine made for a great

penultimate dinner! - Karen

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

### ***DETAIL***

This morning Karen and I are on our own, for a while anyways. Karen's arranged for all six of us to go up to the top of the Eiffel Tower, which is no small feat given how many tourists want to do it.

Associated with that is a boat cruise along the Seine. That'll start later, mid-day-ish. For now we're out walking around, under the beautiful blue sky, in the sunshine.

We see a pharmacy and put on the brakes. Is Karen low on cough suppressant? Yes? We pop into the pharmacy and Karen talks to the lady about what they have. Alas, they don't have the OTC brand Karen got back in Slovenia, but what they have looks respectable enough. While Karen's checking out the "stop me from coughing" products I'm looking at what else is on the shelves. They have a mid-sized jar of skin tightening cream for only €150. It's not behind the counter or under lock and key. It's also, assuredly, not worth anywhere near €150.

After a quick detour back to our apartment to drop off the cough suppressant, Karen and I restart our walk. We seek out rue Cler. It's a foodie street, semi-"pedestrian only", where we've spent a good deal of time on trips past. We install ourselves at a sidewalk café for breakfast. We've tried many of the cafés on this street, but not this one. It's called l'Éclair, which is a good French play on words. They do love their puns. We're on rue Cler, which is pronounced like 'Clair', and an éclair is something tasty that you eat. Get it? You see what they did there?

Breakfast is traditional and good. More importantly the coffee is excellent. We eat and talk and watch the people stroll past. Afterwards we push on towards our meet up with the rest of the team. To avoid a long wait in line at the Eiffel Tower Karen bought tickets for us in advance. In truth it's tickets plus a guide. The process of buying the tickets in advance is complex. Then you have to be in the right place at the right time, and go through two different security checkpoints. Thank goodness Karen did this or we'd be either waiting forever or have paid to go up there and never made it.

We're told to meet our tour guide, and pick up all our tickets, in front of a particular restaurant. They warn us, in no uncertain terms, NOT to eat there, it's dreadful. But we're meeting there. We think we're in the right place. There are other bored tourists also waiting there. We all ask each other if they're here for the Eiffel Tower tour. Yes, yes. We feel better.

Our guide is late and our group swells and swells. It takes our guide quite a while to find everyone, get them checked in, get them their tickets. Each person has two tickets (i.e. two printed 8.5" x 11" pieces of paper) one for the Eiffel Tower and one for the boat. Undoubtedly someone's going to lose one if not both. Thankfully they can't be demagnetized.

We eventually get all the cats herded towards the Eiffel Tower. We hear about it being designed and erected for the Columbian Exposition/world's fair and how much the locals loathed it. The majority of the people wanted it torn town, but it's given just 20 more years, then they'll tear it down. In the meantime this thing called "radio" was invented and became popular. It's work great if only there were some tall structure in Paris on which to put the broadcasting antenna. Ah, ha! And so it's here today.

As we snake through the lines and past the security check points we see the display that shows all the colors the tower's ever been, including the current color they're painting it for the Olympics here next year. The consensus is that the current color, named (by us) "baby-shit brown" is the worst one of all. Well done.

There's an elevator to take you to the first level and then a different elevator to take you to the top. There's two of these sets of elevators, normally, but today one set is out of commission due to some set-up they're doing for a Fashion Week event. Damn you, Fashion Week! This makes the normally crazy and slow logistics of getting up even crazier and slower.

At the top Karen and Liz pool their money to buy a small plastic flute of champagne to share. We and everyone is taking pictures. Not all of us are comfortable with the height and so someone stayed away from the edge (not saying who but it wasn't me).

This business of taking selfies has gotten a little out of hand, and up here it's crazy bad. They have a thick wire mesh, big enough that you can put your hand and camera through but small enough that you can't throw yourself off. I put my camera through a few times to get a better picture and then think of getting bumped and having my phone drop 1,083 feet. iPhones are good but they're not that good.

Eventually we've had enough of the crowds and view and get back on the elevator to go down to the 2nd level. Truth be told, at the top everything looks very flat and not terribly realistic, despite being real. At the 2nd level it's easier to relate to what you're seeing. We take more pictures and soon we're ready to be back on terra firma. Easier wished than done. We can walk down the stairs (all say 'no') or we can wait in the long line for the elevator, which is what we do.

By the time we are off the tower it's getting on 2 p.m. and we're all ready for lunch. We head down the boulevard to "La Terrasse du 7ème", kitty corner from the École Militaire. Lunch is good, traditional French. We have wine to calm our nerves. Next we pop in next door, to a favorite grocery store, and buy Aligot Potatoes, to take back to the US. Each of us buys two or three packages and pretty much clean out the store.

We hike to our boat along the trees dropping their fall leaves, along the green grass in front of Les Invalides, across the Alexander III bridge with its gold statues, and past the gold *Flame de Diane* remembrance of where Princess Diane was killed. It's warm by the time we get on the boat and the breeze from the Seine, or maybe from the movement of the boat, feels good. We see models dressed in the latest Haut Couture using the banks of the Seine for photo shoots. We see all the buildings along the Seine, including the injured Notre Dame being rebuilt as quickly as possible (while doing it right so it lasts another 800+ years).

Off the boat we hop on a metro and head out to Neuilly just outside the west edge of Paris. We're going to an old favorite Alpine restaurant for cheese, potatoes, steak and wine. Le Chalet doesn't disappoint and before long we're waddling back to the metro. Time for bed. We need to sleep. We need our energy for tomorrow, our last full day in Paris.

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## Photos



Rue Cler. A foodie street. Kind of a pedestrian street. Early in the day, doesn't look so exciting here.



A green grocer on rue Cler



An arch we'd never seen. You walk through it, you drive through it, and people live on top of it. Who knew?



Getting our prepaid Eiffel Tower and Boat Tour tickets



Hearing about the history of the Eiffel Tower



You can see the current paint color (left) and the new paint color (right). I like it but then, I'm colorblind.



The long immobile line in which we didn't have to wait.



We did do some waiting and while we did this sign cycled through a bunch of information in a bunch of languages. I think the second word means Elevator and I know what the first word means, I think. I don't normally put those two words together.



The view from the top. The Trocadero at the bottom and La Defense in the distance. The Bois de Boulogne is the big green patch in the middle.



The triumphal arch



Les Invalides. Under the gold dome you can find the sarcophagus of Napoleon.



The Champs de Mars, where we were supposed to meet and have our picnic. You can see where they built that big stage over the fountain. Grrr.



Us. Liz in the background for scale.



On the boat enjoying the cool breeze and the nice views



This year's fashion being photographed.  
Note the grumpy fish on the right.



Emma Stone on the Musée d'Orsay



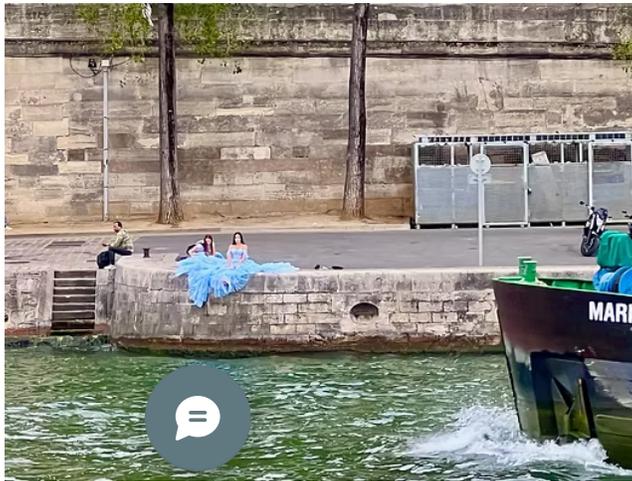
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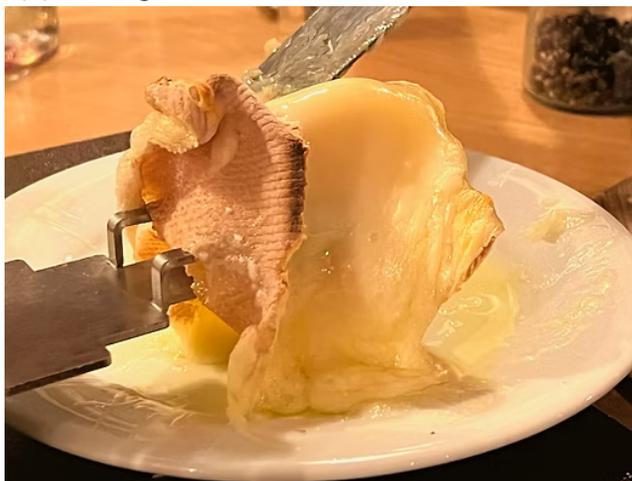
these buttons aren't really buttons



A building dolled up with bright reflective gold for (what else) Fashion Week



Another "along the Seine" photo shoot. At least a small portion of the Seine (her reflection) is blue. Its normal color isn't so appealing.



The end of our big wedge of Raclette cheese. Yum. Nothing went to waste, I'm sad to report.



We're almost back to our apartment. We see the Eiffel Tower in the distance. Our day goes full circle.

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

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