

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Out of Q-Tips - September 29, 2023

SUMMARY

Made our way safely home to Austin! -
Karen

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DETAIL

We're up at six, even before the alarm. We're thinking "Miss the alarm and maybe miss our flight?" so we had multiple alarms set. We close the windows so as to not wake the neighbors. We wash, dress, and finalize packing. We leave quite a pile of things on the kitchen table, clothing, food, and other stuff we don't need but that's still useful. Maybe the maid can enjoy it. We put the keys on the table, send a note to our host, and leave the apartment for the last time.

After just one long block to the Seine, in the dark, we catch the 63 bus towards St Michel - Notre Dame. Our smartphone app checks off each stop as we go along. It's also told us the name of the last stop before where we get off.

We see the next-to-last stop go by and then... the next stop has the wrong name. It's not our stop. That's weird. We think "Did they add a new stop?" Ditto for the next stop. At the stop after that we do get off. By now we're a good fifteen minute walk back to where we should have gotten off. Shit. We walk as fast as our luggage will permit.

Along the way I feel a bit dizzy and unsteady. Well crap, another episode of Ménière's Disease. Thankfully episodes are not that frequent, but bad timing on this one. We find an RER station entrance to an elevator. Yay! What does this sign say? "Hors Service?" (Out of service?) Well crap. We power on.

At the Place St. Michel we find another RER station entrance, this one with an escalator. Nice, but it's on the other side of the street that runs along the Seine. No problem, we'll just wait for the light, that is... other than the dozens of police officers stopping all traffic in all directions. The way the police are holding their hands says "stay where you are". Our maybe it doesn't.

Soon a long line of police vehicles fly by, unhindered by anything, thanks to all these police shutting down everything. We're near the biggest police station in the city (in the country?) so this is likely your run-of-the-mill "drug kingpin is in custody and is being transferred between prisons".

Everyone is looking at the long police motorcade, so they're not looking at us... they'll never notice us cross this little crosswalk here. It works and we buy our tickets (€11). We drag our luggage, snaking our way through the maze of underground tunnels and escalators to our platform.

RER B is one of the regional lines, a hub and spoke system. So we need to figure out which of the trains, that stop at this platform, is going to our destination. Look for the "PAUL27" train. It's here in three minutes and we board. Standing room only, and it's warm. I'm still dizzy. Just in case I've put my phone and ticket in my pocket. All that's in my hands are a folded up airplane barf bag, you never know. (Who carries a "discomfort sack" ONTO a plane??)

We go to switch from the RER to the OrlyVal shuttle. Our ticket permits us to do this but again when I put the ticket in my pocket, the phone's MagSafe back demagnetized it. More drama but I do get through the sliding Lexan turnstile. I pull my iPhone from my pocket and my flat plastic container falls to the ground, opens and scatters my anti-queasy pills all around. I pick them up and put them back in the case. If I gotta eat one, I'm going to do it. Ew.

At the station we go through security which is busy. I remember to take off my belt, two phones, iPad, laptop, wireless ear pods, extra battery, etc. I forget about the big jar of foie gras (duck liver), charger cords, and a 1.7 ounce bottle of eye drops. The lady slowly goes through my suspect bag, asking questions and offering advice, all in French. I answer and smile. I continue to feel quite queasy and wonder if sweating and throwing up, right here, would make me look even more suspicious.

After another boarding pass check we're in line for immigration. No questions and we do get our passports stamped. Karen says "yay!".

We get to our gate (F01) forty five minutes before our departure. Karen buys water and I take one of those 'maybe dirty' anti-queasy meds (Dramamine).

We only see about ten people there. Is something wrong? Are we at the wrong gate? Nope. We find out later the airline has a special lounge with food and drink and comfortable chairs. Maybe next time.

On the plane we find our seats, one of which is already occupied by a lady in the wrong seat. We stow all our luggage overhead, as required. Soon we're airborne and a half hour later I'm feeling better. The big four course lunch is good, as is the selection of movies. Soon I'm sleeping off the lunch, wine, and Dramamine.

I sleep for few hours (not bad for a transatlantic flight) and Karen's on her third movie. She still gives an occasional energetic cough. Her cold is not done yet.

Ninety minutes before landing we eat again. We both choose the courgette tarte and petit pois gazpacho. Not bad. Wine and champagne are offered but we opt for coffee and water.

Very choppy coming in for our approach. We learn later there's heavy rain in the NYC area and a "shelter in place" warning due to the flooding.

Going through immigration a robot just looks at our faces and waves us on ("Global Entry"). A bit further along a human matches our faces with ones that the robot OKed and we're really through. We don't even see customs.

We make it to the gate for our flight to Austin in plenty of time and after all that (likely because of the weather) our flight is delayed a bit, too. In Austin we take our carried on luggage off the plane and zip out to catch a Lyft ride home. The house is already cooled down and we're ready to dive into bed. Home at last.

Go to Croatia and Slovenia, they're great. (And Copenhagen and Stockholm, and Gdańsk, and Paris, and...)

Until next time.

Photos



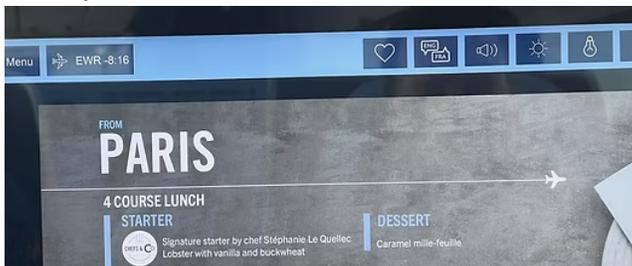
On our way to the airport before dawn.
Walking to the bus stop along the Seine.



On the bus ride, stopped at a traffic light, I see this ghost floating in the air! It turns out it's the reflection in the bus window of the mannequin in the clothing store behind me. Spooky! Just in time for Halloween.



Finally on the plane



FARNSNIENTE



Lunch!



Yum then time to sleep



Good food



Funny, entertaining movie from 2023.
Mon Crime ("The Crime is Mine").



Home at last! Well, almost.

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