

Post



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Angling off to Angoulême - July 7, 2024

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SUMMARY

Spent the morning walking through the Latin Quarter and down one of Paris's food streets in the 5th Arrondissement, rue Mouffetard. Good lunch under the trees in a square listening to an accordionist and watching people swing and line dance. Back to our hotel for our luggage then by bus to the Montparnasse train station for our trip south. We're visiting the Charente region of France for the first time. Somewhat hilly walk to our new hotel but it is awesome and worth it! Wandered around the Old Town looking for a dinner spot. Slim pickin's on Sunday and we weren't terribly hungry so we had leftover cheese and bread plus nuts we

had on hand with a nice bottle of rosé on our balcony. Lovely weather! - Karen

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DETAIL

Our train out of Paris today is not until 4pm, check out is at noon, so we sleep in. Downstairs we have another good breakfast. But also another broken yolk. The chickens will be questioned.

We clean up, pack and leave our luggage at the front desk. Our long walk in the cool morning air is delightful. It's Sunday and there's little foot traffic and even fewer cars. We linger to inspect the offerings at the many booths of an outdoor market snaking along the sidewalk of Boulevard Saint-Michel. We again visit the narrowest street in Paris, La rue du Chat qui Pêche (the street of cat who fishes). Spoiler alert: with the in-progress construction it's temporarily even narrower.

We get to our destination, a long foodie street we haven't been to in quite a while: rue Mouffetard. Most there are locals, which is nice. Everyone seems to be just milling about. We see families out enjoying the lovely weather together. We see mass getting out and the priest in his robes greeting the faithful as they file out of the church. There are ad hoc musicians and dancing. Life is good.

Back at our hotel we talk with the manager about today, the second (of two) rounds of voting for government representatives. He says at this point there are no possible good outcomes, just less bad ones. Vote counts will be reported at 8pm. Violence is a definite possibility. The manager is from Spain and says he's now looking for work in Canada or Holland. We look and listen for clues that was a joke. None are forthcoming.

We hop a bus to the train station, hoisting our luggage from the curb and paying for the ride with a bus pass from our iPhones for the first time. Pretty slick.

We wait with "tout le monde" for the announcement of the quai number for each subsequent departing train. It's not actually announced, rather the space on the big board where you'd expect to find this information is suddenly not blank. The instant that happens everyone moves at once in the same direction, like a single organism.

Early on, once you reach your quay, there are a long row of paddle gates controlling access. We show the camera our ticket's QR code and we're through.

We happen to be in 1st class where the personal options are like a Batman utility belt. There's a shelf or a desk (or neither), a power outlet (for a hairdryer??), a USB outlet, a dimmable desk lamp, an over-the-shoulder reading light, a cup holder, an armrest (up or down), a makeup mirror (with sliding cover), seat adjustments, a coat hook, a foot rest, an adjustable window shade and a QR code for the bar car menu. We were exhausted before we pulled out of the station.

Shortly before getting to Angoulême a portly conductor comes to scan our tickets.

Off the train we wheel our bags, starting the 3/4 mile walk uphill to our hotel. The city is old and built on top of a plateau. The better to defend from. The city is nicknamed "the balcony of the southwest" because of its views .

Along the way we see a few of the 30 murals, many on the entire side of a building. The subjects are different French comic book characters: Tintin, Astérix and Obelix, Sylvain and Sylvette, ... You know, all the ones with which everybody is familiar. The city is the comic strip capitol of France with more than 70 animation and comic book companies in a city of only 42,000. The recent Wes Anderson film *The French Dispatch* was made here.

At the hotel the young desk clerk, Pierre-Louis, gives us the low down and lists the very few restaurants open tonight, it being Sunday. Tomorrow? It's Monday. Again most will be closed. Good for them. Bad for us.

We order a cold bottle of pink wine for the room (25€) and make dinner of cookies, nuts, crackers we brought from the US and the leftover cheeses from our food tour. The balcony, with its delightful view of huge linden trees, is a perfect spot to eat.

Photos



Checking myself in the mirror prior to heading out for the day. Good lord, is that the same outfit I've been wearing all trip? It looks great!



We pass quite a few voting locations. Somber looking Parisians going in and coming out. Fingers crossed.



At a toy shop Karen contemplates buying this Lego kit to make the Tour Eiffel. We both miss that they also sell a plush stuffed pigeon. How French!



La rue du Chat qui Pêche (The street of the cat who fishes). Reportedly the narrowest street in Paris. With the construction scaffolding it's even narrower!



This church is right next to the Pantheon. During WW II the two statues were removed for safe keeping. They were put back into their niches afterwards, but only years later did anyone notice their initials at the top and determined they'd switched places (and thus initials!)



It's Sunday and they're people and groups playing music for tips all around. These musical oldsters were really good.



Also everywhere is fresh fruit and vegetables, like at this green grocer. Everything is so colorful and properly arranged. I love this sales person's goofy, self-confident gallic look.



Delicious lunch. Salmon tartar (with 'des frites', bien sur), and burrata with grilled aubergine, lettuce, and grano padano. Oh and cinquante (50 ml) of a delicious cahors.



Afterwards we watch passers by stop and dance to accordion music.



On the walk back to our hotel, going through the jardin de Luxemburg, we see youngsters headed out for some equestrian exercises. (This is about as fancy as the sessions gets).



At Gare Montparnasse we stand around with everyone else and then we all move at once the instant the quay for our train appears on the big board.



FARNSNIENTE



On the TGV to Angoulême Karen models some of the accoutrements available to us first class passengers.



Angoulême is know for it's 30+ murals of famous french comic strip characters. We passed the  on our way to our hotel.



Our room where, presumably, someone acting in, or otherwise involved in, the making of Wes Anderson's *The French Dispatch*, stayed.



Out on our balcony, making "dinner" from left overs and a bottle of cold pink local wine.

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