

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Cognac, anyone? - July 9, 2024

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SUMMARY

Took off to the west after breakfast with a first stop in Jarnac then Cognac. Had a nice (big!) sandwich lunch at an outdoor café then took a two hour boat ride on the Charente river in a replica of the kind of barge they use to transport cognac in. Beautiful scenery but a bit too long and the guide spoke too fast for us to understand him. Back to the hotel for relaxation and dinner on the terrace. - Karen

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DETAIL

It's Tuesday! Our first full day with a car. Cognac is on our minds, but alas as I'm driving it's just as a destination, not as a beverage. Breakfast first, downstairs. Same as yesterday.

Jarnac is on the way to Cognac and it's supposed to be a pretty village, or at least it has some cognac houses. It's also famous for being the hometown of French President Francois Mitterand. We don't quite make it to his house or museum or gravesite, but we were in the town.

We did see where Courvoisier is made. They seem to have lots of kegs of French oak aging lots of Courvoisier. We don't think we'll be running out any time soon.

We also see the town of Jarnac (population 4,500) was very proud of their olympic athlete who competed in the white water kayaking competition in Japan. No word of any metals. The town, like so many in these parts, is on the Charente river. It's pretty. It's convenient for industry such as mills and distillers. They do have the suspended poles set up for the kayak racing. We're all excited to see someone zip down the course, zigging and zagging, but no such boater ever appeared.

We did tour their quite small covered market. In such a small space the orders of the fish and cheese and meat all seem to reach your nose around the same time. We both agreed the town is a bit small for us.

We push onward to Cognac. Along the way there are fields everywhere. Wheat, corn, sunflowers, etc. We list each using it's French term as we go by. Karen's wishing for a perfect, huge sunflower (tournesol) field with all the flowers in full bloom and all facing our direction. We got some middling contenders but apparently we have to come back later in the summer

With the car parked we walk to our first choice for lunch: Olympic Crepes (here the Olympic being the Greek God's home, not the games, but if it works). Sadly a note on the door explains that the owner needs a medical test and it's scheduled for today in Bordeaux and so the restaurant is closed. Too much information and the wrong conclusion.

A few restaurants later we finally find a place that excites us (and is open and can take us). I have a big (enormous, monumental, ...) croque monsieur and Karen has a big piece of toast with a smear of goat cheese, slices of goat cheese, smothered in grated broiled cheese. Lots of cheese between the two of them. We eat and drink and smell the cigarette from nearby. The rain that wasn't forecast comes down for a long time.

The skies dry out enough for us to head towards the quay and the boat ride we may be taking. It leaves at 2:30 and we see no one when we get there at 2:15. The boat guy looks up the online signups to see if the cruise will even be going. He finds it's completely full, save for three spots. We figure that we need only two of the three spots and so this math seems to be working out. The rest of the group is French and we realize how much French we don't know.

Two hours on a slow moving boat is a long time. It's calm and relaxing. We go through a lock and when the lock master finally opens the last gate to allow us to continue on the whole boat erupts in cheers and the lock master blushes. You'd think he's just rescued the puppy from the well.

Utterly relaxed we drive back. Driving stick shift in France in hilly terrain in rush hour is enough to erase all the relaxing we have stored up. At the hotel we wash and head down to where we'd been having breakfast to have dinner. A mature silky golden retriever greets us and makes it clear that petting and scratching are more than welcome. When we think we've given him enough he pokes his nose under your elbow to explain that more petting and scratching is warranted.

Our waitress/bus person/bar tender/sommelier/restaurant owner explains the dog's name Shelby and he's her dog. Dinner is good and we're keeping an eye on Shelby through the night, and vis-versa. We get a bottle of wine, knowing we can take it to our room if we don't finish it. In the end, of course, that won't be necessary.

Photos



But first... coffee



The view from the breakfast (and dinner and meeting) room is impeccable. A bit of the pool, and the church on the hill (one of many) and kinda blue sky.



Trying to look like we're awake.



OK, quick, to the bat-mobile! or at least our manual Clio.



The Fruit and Legumes vendor in the covered market, but it's so small all we can smell is poisson (fish).



The entrance to the Hotel De Ville (town hall) in Cognac. City taxes been belly, belly good to me.



It took all our will power not to tour the Courvoisier plant at 10 am.



We're sure there's logic to the suspended lines over the water but for the life of us we can't figure them out. That is only one (of many) reasons we're not olympic kayakers.



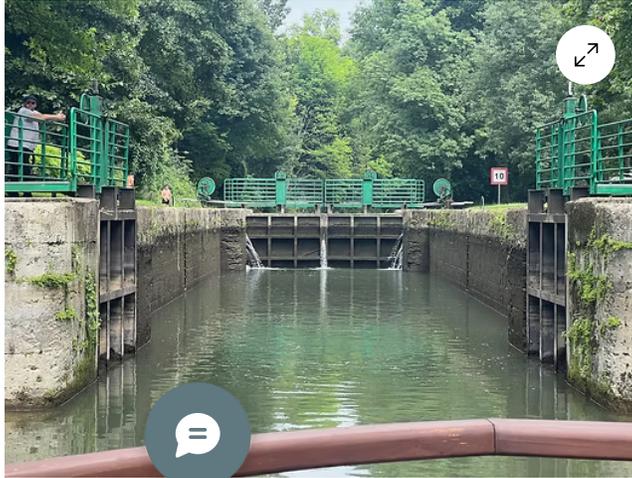
So many ways to put together bread, cheese, and sometimes ham, in France. So good. The beer helped.



FARNSNIENTE 



On the boat. We're wishing for a picture of us, but what the heck, everyone smile! (Do NOT miss the moustache in the background)



The entrance to the ecluse (lock). We see a small leak at the far end. We need a young dutch boy to put his finger in to stop it.



Shelby judging each of us, in turn, on our dog petting and scritchng prowess.

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