

Post



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Up to Montmartre - May 15, 2025

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SUMMARY

Continued our tour of Paris's most beautiful streets in the area near Montmartre then had a fun lunch at Bouillon Pigalle. Popped over to Neuilly-sur-Seine to stare longingly at our former apartment and neighborhood. Walked a good portion of the nearby Île de la Grande Jatte, a beautiful island in the Seine beloved by the artists Seurat, Monet and Sisley. Took our tired selves back to our hotel for chill time then happy hour in the lobby. Yummy crêpe dinner à short walk away at Café Galette. - Karen

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DETAIL

[Karen here. Today's ridiculously long entry is brought to you by Maxwell House instant coffee. We'll try to control Scott's access to this in the future.]

Today's our first full day in Paris. We have plans, but first, of course, coffee. At a busy corner cafe near our hotel we grab a table and eventually Madame does a quick fly-by to collect our order, repeated back to us rapid fire. There's few servers/baristas in this good-sized cafe and lots of patrons coming, going, and sitting. The cafe crèmes are delicious.

At the Pigalle metro station we hop off and start up the wide cement spiral staircase to the surface. Initially we were following the signs but ended up at an elevator. Mais non! After a dozen or so turns of the spiral staircase we start to regret our decision. After a few more, Karen remembers that this is one of the deepest stations in all of Paris. Needless to say, the hike up is breathtaking.

Before leaving the states Karen asked the Google what are the prettiest streets in Paris. We are about to visit those in the Pigalle/Montmatre area. First? More stairs, lots of endless stairs. Google didn't lie, the streets are very pretty. Stunning houses, windy, narrow streets, blue sky and sunshine, and lots of flowers in bloom. One pretty street ends in a cul-de-sac with stairs leading off in one direction and a gorgeous little pocket park in the other. Naturally we explore both.

Our Google list, and ourselves, almost exhausted we reluctantly head towards the Place du Tertre, in the shadow of the basilica of Sacre Cœur. As expected it is jammed with tourists and sketch artists that we can see and invariably pick-pockets that we can't. At a table in the sun we sit and enjoy another coffee and pain au chocolate (a daily event we've dubbed "elevenses"). We're approached by one of the sketchers. No thanks, we do not want our group sketched. No, really. We're serious.

Fortified, we continue onward to the vineyard on the hillside behind Montmartre, enjoying that sight and the quaint, old bar/singing hall of Lapin Agile. We crane our necks at the Moulin de la Galette to see the courtyard in back where Renoir set his famous painting of dressy, tipsy fashionable people of the day enjoying the dappled sun. Below a different, neighboring moulin (windmill) we stop at the café/restaurant of our tour guide PJ, from a previous trip. It's closed at this early hour.

Our reservation at Bouillon Pigalle isn't until 12:30 but we're hungry and so join the already forming line at 11:45, anticipating the restau's 12:00 opening. The concept of The Bouillon chain is ancient, but new to us and is all the rage. They offer a broad assortment of traditional country French cuisine, well prepared, delivered by efficient waiters and offered at very reasonable prices. The place is big, but they've maximized the seating without making it overly crowded. All are happy to be there. The spirit is most convivial.

This joie de vivre is aided by the beverage list which is similarly regimented but all of 'haute qualité' and well priced. We order a bottle (75 centiliters) of cote-du-rhone red wine, which comes from a much larger container in the back. We could have ordered 25 cl, 50 cl, 1.5 liters, or 3 liters (a jeroboam). What's not to love?? The meal is delightful and we ogle the food at our neighbor's table, and they ogle ours. Dessert? Each soused couple orders a profiterole (choux pastry, cut in half, with big ball of vanilla ice cream in the middle, and oodles of rich chocolate sauce poured over the top. We're in gooey heaven.

We waddle out of the restaurant and metro over to our old neighborhood, Neuilly-sur-Seine. We stroll past our old apartment, it's not changed a bit. We hike over a bridge and suddenly we're on the Île de la Jatte, where Georges Seurat did studies for his famous pointillist painting A Sunday on La Grande Jatte. We walk the island, all the way to the northern tip, admiring where some of the 1% of Paris live.

A bus slowly wends us back to our hotel, not without lots of drama by Nancy's phone, which refuses to acknowledge that she has four bus tickets therein. Ron eventually purchases another ticket for her, with cash money (credit cards are not accepted). A kindly old French lady spends most of the trip explaining to us all of the many ins and outs and gotchas of the Parisian bus ticketing system. She spent twenty years living and working in Colorado and Minnesota. The Americans were so nice to her, she tells us, that she feels compelled to pay back the kindness. As she gets off the bus she hands Nancy a slip of paper with her phone number. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any other questions. How sweet!

We hop off the bus just after passing the regal Grand and Petit Palais's and crossing the resplendent gold-covered Alexander III bridge. Back under our own power we walk home. It's absolutely lovely out and again loads of people are also walking about, taking in the glorious weather.

In our room a splash of water to the face refreshes, as soon do the cocktails in the lobby. The happy hour drink prices are too good to pass up: 12 euro cocktails for 8 euros. A favorite of ours is their Paloma, which they do with tequila, cassis and fizzy water. An ad on the elevator suggests that they also contain a dash of happiness, to which we can certainly attest. Inhibitions relaxed, Ms. Karen thinks tequila shots might be in order. Nancy and I demur but Ron is too much of a gentleman to allow a woman to drink alone. Our ever delightful host, Thomas (pronounced Toe-Mah) is sad to say they do not have shot glasses. The ever resourceful Karen exclaims that the same amount of tequila in a lowball glass will work just fine, and it does. Lime and salt? No need, the tequila is again of haute qualité (brand = Altos for those of you playing along at home).

Dinner is at a very nice crepe place down the street. Our host Thomas calls ahead to make a reservation on our behalf. Medium fancy but quality food and eventually good tasting hard cider from Brittany. We're in bed by 10 pm, still trying to adjust our body clocks. Lots of the day to look back on fondly in our dreams.

Photos



Starting our day with more coffee



Over towards Montmartre which means lots of stairs



The city streets are less steep, thankfully.
Lots for flowers in bloom and more
coming as spring evolves into summer.



An apparently famous statue. One of
those where people rub a specific part,
presumably for good luck?



Heading up to the Place Tertre, with the
very white Sacre Cœur peeking out from
behind.



The area has seen the likes of Toulouse Lautrec and similar. They shaped the area, and now tourists are reshaping it. Not all residents like the way it's going, and some are obviously not happy about it.



Time for 'elevenes'. Coffee and pain au chocolat on Terre Square.



Fighting the crowds, being mindful of pickpockets.



The vineyard in the city. It's been there since forever, we gather.



If you know Renoir's famous painting Le Moulin de la Galette, this is it. We don't know if the windmill is the original, but the location is.



Mirror! Time for a group photo.



And then time for lunch at Bouillon Pigalle. Our first time here but not our last, I'm sure. Just finishing our first course.



Our second course was very good, as well. We chose well.



Only two desserts as they're quite large. Profiteroles.





A very active open apiary with lots of bees buzzing in and out of every one of the hives.



Happy hour at our hotel. Karen and Ron have moved on the shots of tequila.



Yummy crêpe dinner, though we're sure we need no more calories today.



A walk would be good. It's cool as is the sunset. Karen and Scott, goofing around. On a bridge over the Seine.

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