

Post



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Our day full of 'nos' is a wash - May 19, 2025

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SUMMARY

A bit of a “joy of travel” day. The four of us headed off by bus to the Lourdes-Tarbes airport quite confident our rental car would be waiting for us. We were quite wrong. No car today, no car tomorrow! That means no scenic drive in the mountains, no fondue/raclette lunch! It was a bit of a blessing in disguise, however, as it started raining late morning and kept it up all day. Back on the bus to Lourdes and a great burger and salad lunch. Also, why not find a laundromat and wash some clothes? We spent the afternoon looking online for rental cars from a number of cities with no luck and finally booked train tickets for tomorrow

from Lourdes to Saint-Jean-de-Luz, our next destination. This being Monday, many restaurants were closed so we headed back to our lunch spot for excellent tapas. - Karen

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DETAIL

Maybe today's our day to right wrongs? We didn't pick up our car as scheduled on Saturday, and the office was closed on Sunday, so we couldn't pick it up then. So today's our first chance to actually have a car. It's not only for checking out the Pyrenees, but also our ride over to Saint Jean de Luz on the coast. It's important.

The airport's just 6 km away (less than four miles). There's a bus every hour or less, from the train station, a 20 minute walk from our hotel. All four of us make the trek (pilgrimage?) out to the airport to pick up the car. We find where the rental cars are and there's an office for Avis and Sixt, but for Enterprise there's just a guy washing cars. He explains the desk is in the actual airport. At the desk we're happy to see three people behind the counter with two parties being waited upon. This can't take long. (Of course it can, and does.)

When it's finally our turn we explain our situation. "But we were open from two til four!" he protests. "Yes, but we called to ensure you were open and no one answered!" we answered truthfully. That's all neither here nor there. The car's gone. Can we get another one? Lots of paper shuffling and exasperated sighs. "Please wait while I take care of these people [who do have an actual reservation]." Yes, we must be punished.

After thirty minutes of waiting it's established there is no car. Given that we're wishing to drive the car far away and not return it, their reluctance is understandable. Tomorrow? "OK" he says "When would you like to pick it up?" We think and say "when do you open... nine?" He scoffs with incredulity at our silly answer. "But the car will not be ready then!" he protests. "When will the car be ready" I ask, hoping that's not a crazy question. "I do not know" he replies, and we believe him. Being French, and thus of superior intellect, he comes up with a solution. "Here is my card, this is my cell number, call me at 4 pm this afternoon and I'll have an answer." I kiss his ring and Ron kisses the hem of his ermine robe and we're out of there.

We do have good luck on catching a bus ride back to Lourdes (3 euros each again). We arrive two minutes after it was scheduled to depart, but it's three minutes late, so we do catch it. We couldn't have timed it better. On the ride back we kibitz about other ways to skin this cat. We find that we can get a convenient train to Saint Jean de Luz (changing in Bayonne) for a reasonable sum and maybe we can arrange for a rental car there. Hm, no. OK, we go only as far as Bayonne and get a car there. Hm, no, well crap. Do we really need a car? Maybe not. We'll cross that bridge when we get there. For now we have transportation to Saint Jean de Luz, where we have our next hotel room reserved.

It's still mid-morning by the time we get back to Lourdes. We haven't had breakfast and would love a coffee. At La Renaissance Café they appear to be open and have a few customers. Karen enquires in French "Table for four?", the answer is like "Huh, what?", "Are you open?" Karen asks. "For what?" is the reply. Who's on first? This isn't going well. The manager steps in and explains it's too late for breakfast and too early for lunch. We are welcome to sit and have a coffee. They do have croissants, but only two. We opt for that, hoping that (with our current string of bad luck) we don't get food poisoning here.

Coffeed up and each having eaten just a half a croissant we're still hungry. One of us finds a gastro-pub bar near by named 100 Culottes. We eat there and enjoy it immensely. Good food and good atmosphere. Maybe our luck is turning around. We head back to our hotel and it starts really raining. On that luck thing? Maybe not.

We head out, between showers, and do laundry at a self-serve laundromat. We don't read the instructions, we know how to do this stuff, right? The lady who runs the place (normally not here) is here doing laundry. She notices we are washing on cold. "You know that will not really do much of a spin cycle, yes?" Um, no, we don't know. Too late now. They're sopping wet when they come out. 2 euros gives 10 minutes of drying and our clothes are so wet we need lots of 2 euro coins. We check the clothes and they're not dry, after many cycles. Ron comes in to check their clothes. "If I open the door to check will it keep running (or can I restart it) after I re-close the door?" Yep! We reply. Nope. Our string of luck continues.

At the hotel we dry off from the rain the best we can. We lay out our 'not quite dry' clothes in the room to continue drying (including Karen's PJs). Down in the lobby we reconvene. Ron and Scott are assigned to figure something out about this darn car, while Karen and Nancy work on making restaurant reservations in Saint Jean de Luz. After quite a while of fruitless searching both teams come up with a big goose egg on both assignments. Argh. Not our day. And it's still raining.

For dinner we decide to throw caution to the wind and have Mexican at the restaurant just next door to our hotel. We'd been in there a couple of times for beer. The young lady bartender doesn't understand my French very well as she's from Mexico City. Her English is impeccable. Maybe we can enjoy some margaritas, guacamole, and who knows what. I grab a soggy umbrella and head over to grab a table. It's closed. Maybe because it's Monday... lot's of restaurants are closed on Monday.

Well crap, yes, it all fits. Where do we know that's open today and has good food? 100 Culottes! Where we had lunch. It is (among other things) a tapas bar, and we've not yet had our fill of things tapas. Karen calls. They're not open for dinner until seven thirty, but we can have a drink until then. We don't want to push our luck at 100 Culottes so we pop into another bar (Bar Van Gogh). We get four aperitifs: a Pastis, a Campari, an Aperol Spritz, and a margarita. There's no Happy Hour price, but the normal price for these are between three dollars and four fifty. Is this a great country or what?

Dinner, thankfully, is superb. We make note of the various tapas that we have and plan to do them at home some time. We take the half eaten jar of yummy duck rillets home with us for tomorrow's train picnic. We chat with a couple of Irish ladies who are here with family for a pilgrimage. We understand a fair amount of what they say (in English!). Back at our hotel Karen puts on her PJs. They're still damp. Maybe tomorrow will contain better luck and fewer "no's".

Photos



There's no active organized pilgrimage going on so the streets are empty. They are a tad damp from the rain that comes and goes.



Step one for the day? A 3 euro, fifteen minute bus ride to the airport to get our car. Then a similar bus ride back to town. No car to be had.



On the walk back from the bus stop we do get a lovely view of the Chateau Fort.



Lunch at 100 Culottes is a win. My wheat beer is just peeking out from the right. Good salads and yummy burgers. We like this place.



While doing laundry (in a room about the size of our bathroom back at the hotel) we can find out what other businesses the laundromat's owner runs. Rooms for as low as 25 euros per night, rental cars. Quite enterprising.



(Almost) not raining and we have (almost dry) laundry. Well, that's one win for the day.



OK, now it's really raining.



FARNSNIENTE ≡



In a chocolate shop window, a chocolate farm run by chocolate pigs (one riding a chocolate rabbit) is raising chocolate vegetables.



Dinner where we had lunch (it is open and we know it's good). Tapas dinner is also most excellent.

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