

Post



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Goats driving taxis? - May 20, 2025

Updated: May 23, 2025

SUMMARY

Returned to the covered market to buy our train picnic. Train from Lourdes to Bayonne delayed at the outset for an unknown reason and later for either goats, taxis or both on the tracks in protest of who knows what. Missed our connection but were automatically assigned to a later train to Saint-Jean-de-Luz. Once there we lucked into a rental car after all the previous "nos". Drove to our beautiful hotel in time for cocktails on the terrace (gorgeous with trickling fountain and lush vegetation) followed by delicious shared small plates in the lobby living room. - Karen

[Photos](#) | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

DETAIL

OK, today we're changing cities. We've been in Lourdes and we're moving to the coast, to the lower elevations of Saint Jean de Luz. We were going to drive there in our rental car but since we don't have one we'll go by train. We're up, we pack, we again buy a picnic at the covered marché. Similar stuff. You don't need all the deets.

That arranged we go for coffee and croissants. After our last 'fastoosh' you'd think we'd go somewhere different, yes? No. We go to the same place. It's more breakfast-time now so we should be fine. Our same waitress is there but "madame" the manager isn't. We get a table and order coffees and croissants. There are three waiters (the young girl and two guys in baseball bomber jackets that seem to maybe have just walked in off the street). Our waitress takes forever to get over to the machine to make our coffee. I'm watching her intensely. She does one part of one step in making our coffees and a colleague tells another part of the story. She stops and turns around to hear it. She goes back to her task. Repeat, repeat, repeat. I'm willing her (silently in my brain) "JUST MAKE THE COFFEE". That seemed to work.

Having retrieved our luggage from our hotel we've now walked to the train station. We're there early (just in case, don'tcha know). Which is when we learn our train is going to be 20 minutes late. Crap.

We wait and say no repeatedly to the pan handlers at the station. Eventually we board the train and take our seats. Again we're at a four top, the four of us around a single table. We're helped by two French ladies behind us and they ask where we're from. The USA. "Ah, we like you and your country, but not your president." We, too, neither.

A while into our ride we break out the picnic. It's good. No wine. Have to be good at some point, yes? We overhear three people sitting near us. They're all speaking English (one Brit, two Americans). It turns out they're all doing the pilgrimage walk.

Suddenly the train stops mid-journey. There's an announcement in French. We can't really understand it all, but it's something about protest, tracks blocked, taxi drivers? Maybe goats? Maybe taxi driving goats? Our French isn't good enough to understand the announcement. We ask our French friends how long we're going to be stopped. We get a very good Gallic shrug in response. Twenty minutes later we are going again. Good, I check my math and it looks like we'll still make our connection in Bayonne. Whew.

The train stops again. More protests. Now we're going to miss our connection, drat. There's more unintelligible PA announcements. Two conductors walk slowly through the train cars. Are they checking that we all have valid tickets? Nope. They're here to determine where everyone is going. How many passengers will miss which connections. Soon we get an email from SNCF. "You're probably going to miss your connection... we've rebooked you... here's your new train and tickets (QR codes)." Apparently this happens so often they've automated the process.

We do miss our connection but we are able to catch the later train. We're eventually get into Saint Jean de Luz "no problem". Off the train Karen suggests we check at the Avis car rental office to see if they have any cars available. They do! Yay! But only for 24 hours. Boo, but we'll take it. As we're filling out our paperwork I'm "parlez vous-ing" with the lady behind the counter in my best French. Towards the end of our transaction I ask if I call tomorrow, before our car is due, maybe we'll be able to keep the car one more day. She thinks about it a bit more, and rifles through some papers and agrees we can have the car for two days. Yay! As we're finalizing the paperwork she's going through all the numbers with me, in rapid-fire French. Wait. 10 km, what does the ten kilometers mean? Oh, that's the odometer reading. This is a new car. It's never been driven. Yikes. And it's a manual car. (A Ford Puma).

It's white and wonderful and we're happy to have it. We're able to get all of us in the front and all of our luggage into the back, no problem. We do the quick drive over to our hotel. It's lovely, overlooking a lush green golf course (that we won't be using). We unpack, have tapas dinner and wine in the hotel bar. It's all really good. We're here and settled and we have a car. All is good with the world. Time for bed!

Photos



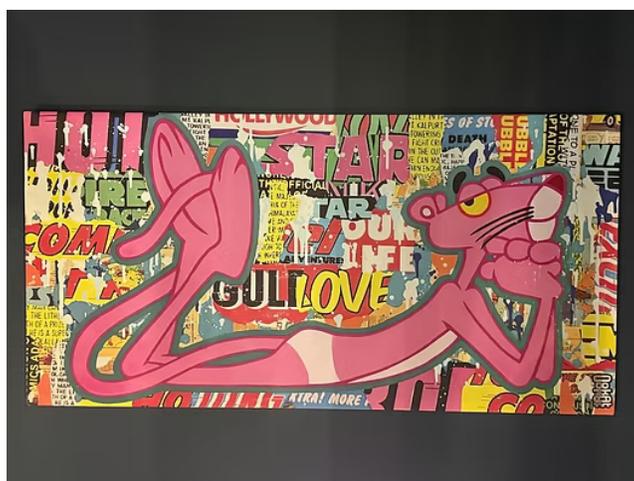
Off to get a picnic at the covered marché one more time, cooler in hand.



Being a weekday everything (pretty much) is open. We get our usual sandwich, quiche, dessert, etc.



Then off for coffee. It shouldn't take this long. But it's yummy.



Back to the hotel to collect our luggage and say our good-byes. Including to this art of the pink panther. We were trying to wrap our heads around the fact that not only is the panther pink but he sometimes sunbathes in a speedo style bathing suit, so he can get a tan??



More coffee at the train station. Our train is 20 minutes late. Plenty of time for lots of coffee.



On the train at last. Yay. No worries now. We're four around a single table. It works out well for having a picnic.



OK, we're temporarily stuck in Bayonne. Our train was so late we missed our connection but SNCF got us on the next train to Saint Jean de Luz.



Our lovely hotel is hidden somewhere behind those trees.



Across the street? A golf course we won't be using. The trees had their annual haircut recently and are ready for summer.



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In the pool two pool floats wait for us patiently.



Part of our lovely tapas dinner at the hote.



An after dinner walk by the golf course.
We were surprised by how long our
shadows are here. We all look quite thin,
no?

[Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

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