

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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La Fête de la Musique - June 21, 2025

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SUMMARY

Another great lunch at Bouillon Pigalle which has become a big favorite of ours. As today was La Fête de la Musique we assumed there would be music all day long as there had been on past visits. But, we looked all over the city during the day and found very little. Maybe because it was SO HOT! The evening was a whole different story. Still hot as heck but there was music everywhere. A big difference from previous times we'd attended was that a lot of it was by DJs (techno) as opposed to live musicians. We had a good Mexican food dinner (don't judge, it had been over a month) up north and it was a madhouse with huge crowds

blocking the streets and making it hard to get back home. Sad to say but we've aged out of the Fête and this was our last one. - Karen

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DETAIL

We slept in, not having the best night with our warm room. My jerry-rigging of the A/C unit worked fairly well, but it's not quiet. We plan to have lunch, again, at Bouillon Pigalle, as we did at the beginning of this overall trip. We walk to Tom and Cindy's hotel, watching for anybody playing music yet, for this Fête de la Musique. This festival, all over France, was started by President François Mitterand, way back when. Anyone, anywhere in France can make whatever music they like on this, the summer solstice. It's really caught on, but we see no one yet. It's too early, maybe.

Off the metro at Pigalle we wait in line, trying to be in the correct place, given that we don't have a reservation. Everyone tries to figure out a reason to stand in neither the 'DO have a reservation' or 'DON'T have a reservation' lines. All who try get verbally slapped around by the hostess and told where to stand.

While we wait, Tom and Cindy go to the nearby shops in Pigalle to buy small French pin-up posters (gifts for friends back home). Once all of the people with reservations are seated, our line is next and we're first in line. We're seated and order and before long the wine and food arrives, in courses. It's great and really is a price performer. No wonder this place is so popular. Tom and Cindy are very impressed by all of it, especially dessert.

Afterwards, we head off, and search for music. Perhaps up at the Place du Tertre up in the shadow of the Sacre-Cœur on top of Montmartre? Nope. We head to The Centre Georges Pompidou. They're getting set up for something big, but nothing yet. Maybe at The Fountain of the innocents? One band and a small crowd. We walk through Les Halles and marvel at the life-size LEGO representations of a boulangerie, Jules Verne writing "Journey to the Center of the Earth", and other notable French stuff.

At Église (church) Saint-Eustache there's 36 hours of music going on and cool stone floors on which to sit. An electrical guitarist and organist are jamming weird, psychedelic space music. Given the respite from the heat, the performance is well attended.

Continuing on we skirt the circular Bourse (old stock exchange) and stroll through an old galleria (covered pedestrian market street) before finally getting to the Carousel of the Louvre. A band is warming up for a huge (ticket only) show, testing the mics belting out their version of U2s 'In the Name of Love'.

We chill (or bake, in our case) in our rooms for a while and then head out for dinner. Cindy read about a good sounding Mexican restaurant so we're aiming for that. Tom and Cindy plan to take an Uber from their place and Karen and I plan to take the bus. Well, their Uber never shows and our bus is headed in the right direction, but it's slow going with so many people out for the Fete de la Musique. At one point the bus doesn't turn where it should but just continues straight ahead. At the next stoplight, with the bus stopped, a number of riders (including me) approach the driver to say (in French) WTF?? Apparently due to the Fête the bus has a different route today. If we want to get to where we were heading, we better get off and start walking. Most riders do, including us.

Following the GPS we get closer and closer to the restaurant and the crowds, listening to techno music, get thicker and thicker. At one point we realize we're not going to be able to get through the crowd and so are forced to make a detour around the block. At the restaurant I charge in to the tiny place (missing that there's a long line out front) and am immediately stopped by the bouncer. Do I want a drink or dinner? Dinner, for four (but we're only two now). Sit here!

We order drinks and food and keep in touch with Tom and Cindy to assess their progress. They are walking here and it's a long way. As people at our table (the only table in the place) leave, I remind the bouncer we have two more people coming. His attitude is that if they're not here, he doesn't care, someone else sits and eats. When Tom and Cindy do arrive they get in line, about 12 people back. Someone leaves our table and I tell the bouncer our people are here. He grabs my lapel, hauls me out to in front of the restaurant and demands that I point them out. I get Tom and Cindy to come to the front of the line and poof, they're seated. Unbelievable!

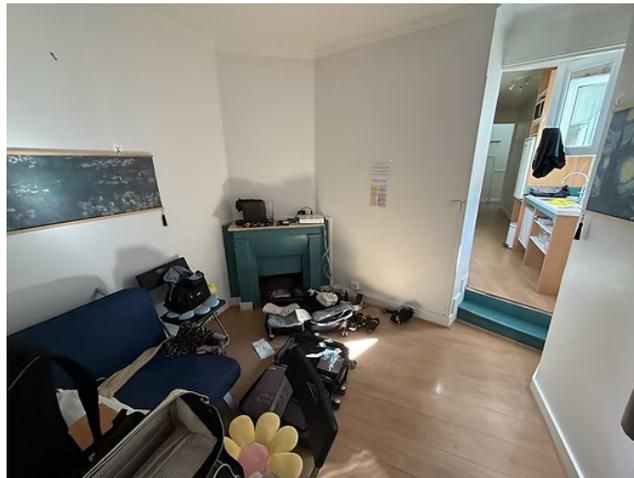
We eat and drink and get drinks to go. The streets now are very full of people and thumping music. It seems borderline unsafe. We walk home but at many points it gets too packed and looks dicey. Every twenty-something is carrying a full sized bottle of wine they're drinking from. This isn't great fun. There's music but most of it is techno, recorded. We do a fly-by of the Notre Dame, which is surprisingly quiet. When we get home we're relieved and again cool down as best we can and head off to sleep.

Unbeknownst to us, at this time Tom and Cindy are getting back to their hotel. Another guest is complaining about the noise. If it doesn't stop they swear they're moving to another hotel! The manager says the whole city is like this. When will the music end? Maybe three or four a.m. Oh my goodness. What a night. We promise ourselves never to participate in France's Fête de la Musique again, at least not in Paris. It's crazy.

Photos



After a warm night we evaluated our test of putting the A/C with the cold air blowing into the closed bedroom and the warm exhaust blowing into the laundry/bath (with the window opened to the outside). It worked pretty well, but not perfectly and it's not quiet.



We get ready for the day, in part in our 'living room' which is small and mostly is just our suitcases open on the floor. After so many awesome places we've stayed this trip, this place is quite a let down. Who knew? :-)



At Bouillon Pigalle we're almost first in line (among the 'no reservation' crowd) and there is a long line of people behind us, also wishing to eat here.



Seated and ready to eat!



While we wait for our food we get to see the 'racy' Paris postcard style posters Tom and Cindy bought for friends back in Austin. An 'X' rating back then was a bit more modest.



Continuing on our search for music we head up to Sacré-Cœur up on Montmartre. The funicular is the way to go, but the line is long and the system doesn't really take you very far. We opt for human power and the stairs.



There being a lot of people out on this Saturday there are marketing teams taking advantage of the situation, including Sungold Kiwi. As warm as we are we have to think Monsieur (or Madame) Kiwi must be sweltering under all that covering.



Back down close to the Pompidou center we visit the Defender of Time animated statue. Alas we get there just a few minutes late and didn't get to see all the animation, just the final breathing of the dragon (visible as it's chest going in and out).



We did a quick stop at the Stavinsky Fountain, which wasn't spewing it's normal water, alas. Also no music!



Nearby at the Fountain of the Innocents we got to see the fountain since it's been refurb'ed. It looks beautiful. Nearby? Music! and a small appreciative crowd, rocking to the beat (and sweating in the sun).



At the Église Saint-Eustache there was psychedelic space music being performed between an electric guitar and the church's magnificent organ. Lots here enjoying the cool interior. No A/C but the stones are very slow to change seasons.



Through the walkway at the Louvre we get into the gardens of the Tuileries, specifically the Carrousel Garden where they'd set up a huge stage for a paid concert. The performers were doing a mic check by performing U2's song "In the Name of Love". Pretty impressive.



Near our dinner spot, and everywhere else in Paris at this hour, it seems, it's youths drinking and bopping to the thumping techno being played.



We somehow got a table for dinner, in a mexican restaurant with one table. Good food and drinks. Outside there kept being big clouds of smoke. It's not a calm, relaxing night. More to come?



Crossing the Seine, at last, on our walk home we can see the former roadway along the Seine has been converted to an impromptu stage where a band is making a lot of people happy. People are everywhere. It's fou! (crazy)



Surprisingly there was very little music that we could hear at the recently re-opened Notre-Dame. We got to relax and re-gather our wits before our final leg home. It turns out we had an easier, less stressful walk home than Tom and Cindy.

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