

B6 OUR FIRST DAY IN PARIS

SUBJECT: EUROPE 2011 BLOG

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DATE: 2 JUNE 2011

We have just completed our first twenty-four hours in Paris beginning with our grand arrival at Charles De Gaulle airport. We were met by long time friend Herve Laurent who, immediately, made us feel at home by joining rush hour traffic on the peripherique freeway that circles Paris. It was so like LA even the graffiti seemed familiar.

We arrived in the 14th district of Paris, not too far from the Montparnasse tower...the tallest building in Paris. Our daughter, Chrise and grandson, Kade were waiting with a meal and a bed. After so many hours without good sleep it was a hard choice but we went for the food and wine first. Next day, after our customary twelve hours in bed, we got up feeling drowsy and already late for lunch.



Since breaking her foot after falling down her circular staircase, Chrise said there were errands that needed to be run so we split up into teams. Louise went with our grandson, Kade, with a list of grocery items and other needs. Not surprisingly it turned into a chocolate hunt and neighborhood tour. I was teamed with our crippled daughter who, after a month on crutches, was almost able to outrun me, including zipping up and down metro stairs, hopping on buses and dodging the ubiquitous motor scooters that fill in the spaces between the Parisian taxis. Our chores were far ranging but I was certainly on the right team.



Our goals included a stop at l'Avant Comptoir, a wine bar on the street Carrefour de l'Odeon, to thank the manager. After breaking her foot, he offered to help Chrise install some sort of a safety device on her circular stairway so we wouldn't break our feet (or worse) during our visit. His solution was to install a heavy rope at the top of the stairway with large knots tied at strategic points on the way down. It is a little like climbing a rope ladder and, because of the cramped quarters, I feel like Quasimoto scaling the towers of Notre Dame. It makes each trip to the downstairs bathroom an adventure.



This wine bar is somewhat unique, even for Paris. It is a narrow little space with a food prep area on one wall, a bar for eating and drinking and another bar hung from the other wall. The place offers no seating so the turnover is pretty brisk. Customers order hors d'ouvres that are prepared on the spot and quaffed with their favorite glass of wine.

I had some ham wrapped in cheese and light deep fried while Chrise had an order of sardines cooked in butter and served with bread for dipping. A light Pinot Noir was Eric's choice for us.



It is fairly easy to strike up a conversation with your neighbor. It usually begins with, "Would you please move your elbow so I can take a sip from my glass?" This is followed by, "And what are you drinking?" We met a fellow Californian from Santa Barbara who is working in Paris. Today is his 31st birthday so the whole room toasted him and sang "Happy Birthday" in several languages. (Did you know the lyrics and tune are copyrighted?)



And, with our goals accomplished, our first day in Paris ended at home with a frittata, superb salad and a bottle of red wine. We can hardly wait to see what chores there are to do tomorrow. Bon nuit from Paris.