

EUROPE 2011

B28 Our Own Normandy Invasion Ends

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PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

SUBJECT: B28 OUR OWN NORMANDY INVASIONS ENDS SCRIPT

DATE: 11 JULY 2011



Life in a luxurious four-star chateau is something to which we could easily become accustomed. Not only were the grounds beautiful, spacious and well cared for, but the rooms were the same.



Just to keep us in class status, our rooms were in the outbuildings that once must have home for the servants.

Our room was spacious with a king size bed and a big coverlet to crawl under.





The bathroom was 1/3 the size of the bedroom and featured double sinks, big fluffy towels and kleenex. A servant never lived so well.



Since we were being carted around daily in a VW van, the MG had a chance for a few days rest in the chateau's parking lot.



If I had any concerns about it being lonely they were swept away at the end of the first day when it was joined by a 1962 Jaguar XKE coupe and a 1929 Bentley, one of the famous racing Bentley's that won Le Mans several times in the '20's.



Matthew was there at 9 AM to shepherd us to Mont Sainte Michel, a fortress-like rock outcropping about a half mile from the mainland and connected by a paved causeway. This is the place where the tide comes in at the speed of a galloping horse and signs are posted about when to expect it. With the tide out, visitors park on the ocean floor. If they don't come back before it comes in, they'll find their cars bobbing around like corks until they sink. It pays to know how to tell time here.



What looks like a church at the top is an ancient abbey, long ago used for religious services and now to house tourists who are willing to make the 900 step climb to the top. Fifty three years ago we did it and, when we reached the abbey, discovered it was empty. No pews, no beautiful windows, no sacred alter, no burning candles...nothing.

As our family started up the steps I asked 27-year old Matthew if anything had changed at the top over the past 50 years. "Not much," he said, reminding me that he was alive for only half that time. I decided to tag

along and take some photos while Louise elected to sit at the base of the mountain and lure people into conversations about their travels, their kids, their dogs, etc.



At step #450 I chose to leave the pack and find another way down the mountain. It was hugely crowded that day and my impression is that Mont Ste. Michel is populated only by people selling souvenirs and curios and visited only by people who come to buy them.

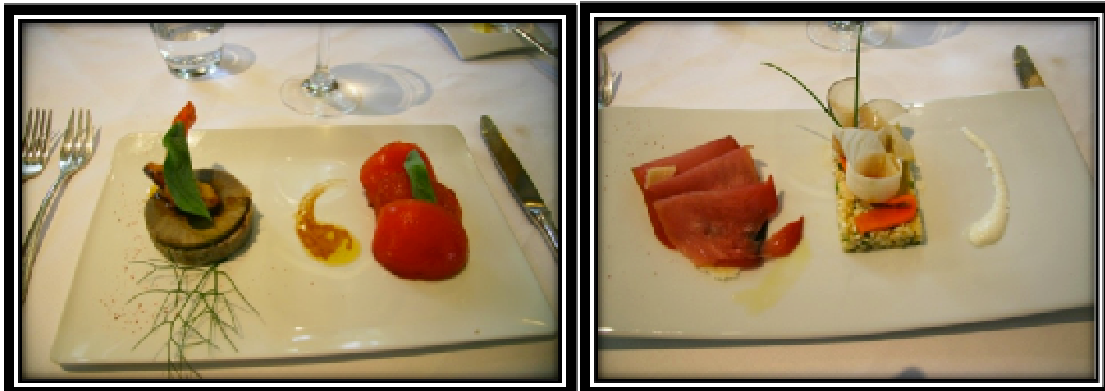
It is also crammed with restaurants and attractive crepe makers.



While waiting for the others to descend I took a short nap; an event that caused Louise to bring her camera out of hiding.



That evening, before our final meal at the chateau, we got together for a before dinner glass of wine



Can't identify all these dinner selections but they were not only delicious





but beautifully presented and my camera was ready.



The following morning we made our final stop in the city of Bayeux, just a few miles from the chateau. Once well known for its tanneries and leather products, canals and waterwheels supplied power and water for these industries. Another innovation was a form of outhouse that you see attached to the exterior of the building. It was flushless but still needed water to finish the job.

Of course we visited the cathedral where the ladies altar sodality was beautifying it for Sunday services with fresh-cut flowers.



We saw the oldest house in Bayeux. 1600's and still in use.

But the big draw in town is the Bayeux tapestry; a 200-yard long hand embroidered tableau that tells the story of William the Conqueror. This form of story telling was used to inform the largely uneducated populace about him and how he came to be in charge of their lives.



The storyline was largely slanted toward William because, after all, he was the conqueror. No picture taking allowed so items in the boutique will have to do.

As we left the tapestry we saw an artist trying to capture the magic of Bayeux on canvas. It may not be 200 yards long but he was telling his own story by creating images. Nothing has changed. At this point we said goodbye to Matthew; kissed our family as they returned to Paris and then on to Miami. Louise and I pointed the MG's radiator cap toward the fishing village of Honfleur. We're on our way to England.



Louise and Ray