

This year I have spent my longest consecutive stretch of time at home in Paris (5 ½ months) since retiring in 2009. My typical year until now has involved a big trip (> 1 month) each spring and fall interspersed with several months at my secondary residence in Agadir, Morocco.

Unexpected health issues required cancellation of my planned spring trip to Cyprus, Romania, Lithuania and Belarus. I will reschedule that trip for the spring of 2019.

So, to answer the question one visitor asked – how do you keep busy? And, of course in Paris the answer is how do you keep from not being too busy and how to choose among the competing activities on offer every minute of every day? I must always remind myself that I chose France for retirement in order to adopt a philosophy of taking time to smell the roses.

For me exercise is a major priority. Other than walks (more on that later) my favorite is an almost daily water aerobics workout at one of the 38 public pools. The entry fees are low, especially for seniors, and I have 2 nearby pools, each a 15-minute walk from my apartment. This is Piscine Bernard La Fay in the 17th that I most often go to.



Next priority is foreign films. I love independent cinema and we have at least 100 screens only showing independent films (with French subtitles). So, I travel the world through cinema. Each Wednesday morning when l'Officiel, the weekly listing of all theater, cinema, gallery, museums, expositions, and conferences in and around Paris is available at the local kiosk I plan my schedule for the week around the movies I want to see. I pay an annual subscription of 240 Euros which gets me unlimited visits to 90% of the independent screens and 80% of the majors. The French are among the most devoted movie-goers in the world and the first public film showed here in 1895. Three of the oldest and historically interesting cinemas in Paris are right in my neighborhood: Studio 28 on Montmartre, dating from 1928; le Louxor opened in 1921 with its neo-Egyptian façade and interior and re-opened in 2013; and Cinema des Cinéastes, originally a cabaret in the 19th C, and converted to cinema in 1930.





There is also an association, Lost in Frenchlation (www.lostinfrenchlation.com) which chooses current French films to screen with English subtitles on Friday evenings.

I haven't yet regained the stamina for two of my other favorite activities – Five Rhythms Dance and Ile de France walks. 5 Rhythms (www.5rhythms.com) is a movement/meditation practice created by Gabrielle Roth in NYC in the 1970's and now practiced almost worldwide.

We have several certified leaders here in Paris so there are at least four different sessions on offer each week not counting their special multi-session workshops.

There are countless walking groups in and around Paris. Randonneurs Ile de France www.rifrando.fr is probably the biggest with multiple walks every day led by volunteers using the nationwide walking trail system. One of my favorites is a group of about half and half French and English speakers organized by one member for a walk each week. You meet at an announced train departure with your water, lunch and hiking boots. Most of the walks are around 20 km in forests, fields and small villages within Ile de France. The monthly Navigo transport pass for Euros 75.20 is valid for all destinations in Ile de France. If you are doing excursions outside the Paris arrondissements, zone 1 and 2, this pass easily pays for itself as other destinations can be ~ 15 euros round trip. It also includes the Roissy Bus to Charles de Gaulle airport and the Orly Bus to Orly airport.

Since I can't currently manage the 20 km I now substitute walks in Paris with a couple of Meet Ups: Paris Events Meetup (PEM) Walk, Hike, Cinema, Picnic info@meetup.com and Walkin_paris@yahoo.com respectively with leaders Christophe and Camille (walk wiz Camille), plus almost weekly trips to an interesting town in Ile de France.

In Paris when walking with a Meet Up group I always learn something new, even when I am in my own neighborhood. Paris is not a static city, the walkers are a wide variety of nationalities, and many, like me, are not just visiting, but residents.

Speaking of Meet Ups there seem to be some on almost every subject of interest. I also sometimes go on a wine tasting one (Meetup vin Paris) or a gallery visit (Art Gallery Crawl in Paris #Vernithon of Paris).

For day visits to towns in Ile de France there is always at least one thing of interest: a museum, a church, a garden and a good restaurant for lunch. Friends and I take turns planning these excursions. We take a mid-morning train, return home in late afternoon and have had some good walking exercise as well during the day. A sampling of recent visits includes: Senlis, Conflans, and Moret sur Loing. There are many more and many guidebooks that just focus on visits within Ile de France.

Senlis existed in Roman times and part of the 3rd C wall still exists as well as ruins of the 18th C Royal Palace. Its beautiful Cathedral is worth a visit.



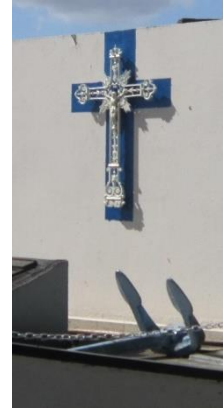
Conflans St Honorine is at the confluence of the River Oise and the Seine.



Both rivers have active ports in this area for waterborne commerce as well as recreation. The day of our visit two of the river cruise ships that do 7-night cruises from Paris to Le Havre/return were visiting for the day.



A very interesting highlight was the boat Je Sers, originally a barge then bought in the early 20th C to be a catholic chapel for river boatmen and a school for their children. Still a chapel and charity, since 2014 it has housed over 50 Tibetan refugees.



At the top of the hill are Tour Montjoie, a Roman tower dating from the 11th C, the Eglise Saint-Maclou, and a fascinating museum of river life and history in the Paris region and France. I took a photo of a salad bowl made in 1751 depicting river life on the Seine.



Moret-sur-Loing is another walled medieval city where the Impressionist Alfred Sisley lived and painted from 1880 until his death in 1899. The scenes along the river Loing with its old mill, bridges and ramparts are stunning





as are just the small moments wandering through town. I believe the café gourmand at Le Bistrot du Loing was the best I have ever had.

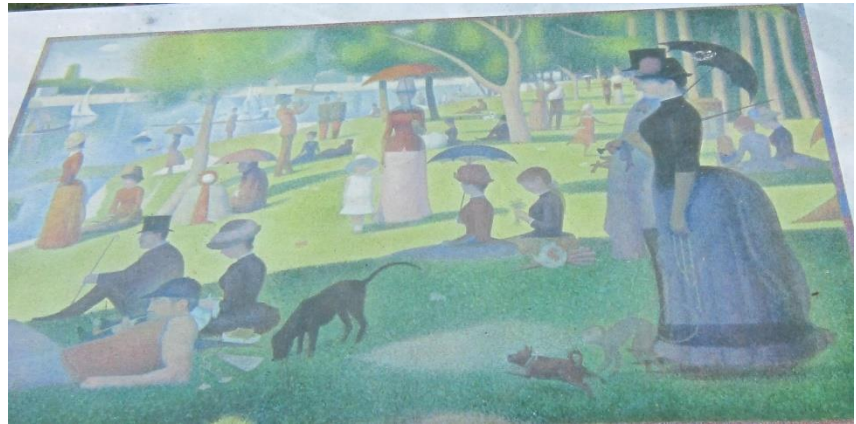


You don't have to leave Paris to have some pleasant walks along the Seine, lined with interesting houseboats. And the islands of Grand Jatte, Puteaux and St Germain have lovely parks.

On St Germain is La Tour Aux Figures, a monumental sculpture by Jean Dubuffet. On Grand Jatte there are replicas of paintings done there by Impressionists. Sunday Afternoon on the Grand Jatte by Georges Seurat which hangs in the



Art Institute of Chicago has always been a favorite of mine and now the island is in my life as



often as I want.

Sometimes friends just decide to have a spontaneous picnic in a nice nearby park (Domain de Sceaux 20 minutes outside of Paris comes to mind). Pick up picnic ingredients and wine on arrival at the closest super-marche near the train station and relax the late afternoon/evening away.

Or, during July and August do the same thing along the Seine at Paris Plage.

A very special treat for me was Joan Baez's Fare Thee Well tour. She did 10 concerts between June 4th and 17th at L'Olympia, and the night I attended was filmed by Arte, so I have the whole concert to enjoy over and over. I loved

the fact that I probably only knew 20% of what she sang, so prolific has she been in the decades since I last followed her. She stood, played and sang for 1 ½ hours without a break, did a few songs in French and the audience was enthusiastic enough for her to do three encores! The audience was French, and the age group on average much younger than mine!



Have you noticed that so far, no museums or other Paris sights have been mentioned?

The American Library in Paris (www.americanlibraryinparis.org) is an amazing institution. In addition to having (I believe) the largest English language collection outside the English-speaking world, they organize a multitude of activities. Other than a brief summer break there are weekly Evenings with an Author open to the public. I feel more connected now to literary events than ever before (alas, previously too busy working!).

When it comes to museums, galleries, etc. I tried this year to visit many I had never known before. This also gets you to neighborhoods you might not otherwise visit. The stand-out was the new multimedia facility in the 11th, l'Atelier des Lumieres (www.atelier-lumieres.com). This former metal factory dating from 1835 produced maritime and locomotive products. The opening offering is a beautiful tribute to the artistry of Gustav Klimt – musically and visually moving across walls, floor and ceilings of this very dramatic space. It closes on January 6, 2019 and I can't wait to see what the next season will bring.



Sadly, a standout gallery, Maison Rouge in the 12th which hosted Ceija Stojka's work and Black Dolls, the collection of Dorothea Neff, is closing definitively. If you can find a retrospective of Stojka's work, she was Austrian of Roma origin who survived multiple concentration camps during WWII, seek it out. I also learned a lot from the Black Dolls exhibit.

A space around the corner from me, Le Bal, just off Avenue de Clichy, www.lebal.fr opened in 2010 and is devoted to photographic arts. They have 2-4 exhibitions each year and a very good restaurant associated with the space.

Because our family loves horses, I went to an exhibition at Pavillon de l'Ermitage (www.ermitagepavillon.wordpress.com) in the 20th devoted to The Economy of the Horse in east Paris 1850-1914. The building is all that remains of the former Domaine Bagnolet in this neighborhood near Porte Bagnolet. It sits in a very pleasant small park and is part of the former Village of Charonne, before these villages became part of Paris in 1860.



Not to be confused with the large Musee du Monde Arabe in the 5th, is the Institut des Cultures d'Islam in the Goutte d'Or district of the 18th. This 2-building facility (www.institut-cultures-islam.org) mounts excellent shows, most recently Baghdad Mon Amour, and also has a café with a well-executed simple lunch menu. They are a true cultural center with language classes, lectures and other cultural offerings. While in that neighborhood check out the various artists and artisans, www.madeingouttedor.paris website has a good map of the neighborhood's artisans.

Another passion of mine (as readers of my travelogues will know) is urban street art. Districts in Paris particularly boasting this art form are the 20th and 13th arrondissements.



A memorable Sunday was spent walking the Canal de l'Ourcq from Parc de la Villette to Bobigny. This summer there was a special-invitation show hosted by Studio Harcourt featuring 13 new installations. But what was special was actually seeing several groups of artists creating their works. A particularly moving one was two portraits commissioned by the parents of a recently-deceased young man, one of his face and one of his spirit.



One day walking home from the hardware store I looked up and noticed a new installation right around the corner from me by the Villa des Arts where artists such as Paul Cezanne and Auguste Renoir, among many others, had their studios at various times. www.villadesarts.paris. It is still an artist community.

I have neglected one very important part of Paris life and that is food. First, of course, are the fabulous public covered and street markets with everything fresh. Vegetables and fruits are about half the cost of the U.S. You find cheeses, charcuteries, fish and a wide variety of prepared foods - not only French but Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern fare.

Usually a visit to an exhibition is coupled with a nearby meal. It is never difficult to find an excellent lunch, usually for less than 20 Euros for two courses, and remember that already includes the tax and tip. I like to simply walk and look for where the French are eating as that will usually be the best price/quality equation. But La Fourchette (www.lafourchette.com) is also an excellent resource. The very same meal often costs more in the evening, so lunch is a good plan.

Another friend and I like to focus our in-Paris walks on parks and cemeteries. I made three visits to Bagatelle gardens in the Bois de Boulogne which I knew for its famous rose garden but not for



its ponds, waterfalls, peacocks and Chopin concerts.



And I finally found the tomb of Sarah Bernhardt in Pere-Lachaise cemetery.



I am writing this at a favorite café in Agadir where my simpler life (water aerobics, beach walks, visits with friends) allows time to reflect and plan.

This will be the first post of my new blog (<http://60after60.com>). I will gradually be posting all my prior travelogues from 2009 and, of course, those of future travels.

Marilee

