


07/16 Nice

Our time in Nice was nice but our time on the Cote D'Azur has come to an end. Today we are taking a 3 1/2 hour bus ride to Avignon and will board our Viking ship the Buri. 

John ❤️ Rita will be there to greet us as they have arrived earlier from their pre-cruise excursion. The Gang will be all together again and we start the river cruise later on this evening.

07/17 Arles

07:00 Went through our first lock on the Rhône River.

09:15 Took walking tour in the morning. Vincent Van Gough lived and worked in Arles for 12 months beginning on February 20, 1888. When Van Gogh got off the ship in Arles, it is not clear what made him want to stay here. One theory is that there were all these lanterns that lit up the way along the Rhône river. As he looked back along the river, and saw all the lanterns lit up (and the stars in the sky above the Rhône) he exclaimed "What a Starry Starry Night!" He lived in the "Little Yellow House", which he later painted. Van Gough typically produced 2 pieces of art per day when he stayed here. In total, Van Gogh created 187 paintings in Arles, including "Starry Night". He also cut off his ear in a fit of rage and was taken to the local hospital "Hotel Dieu". When he was at his worst mentally, he was taken to St. Remy asylum.

We also visited the Coliseum in Arles and heard about its history.

07/18 Avignon

09:00 Walking Tour of Avignon. Visited the “Pope’s Palace” in Avignon.

02:00 Chateauneuf-Du-Pape Wine Tour

Today we are back in Avignon. We went to the wineries of Chateauneuf de Pape. There are 300 wineries on very small acreage in a very small town. The wineries are owned and worked by 300 families. It is 94 degrees here today.

07/19 Viviers

09:45 We took a Walking Tour in Viviers. It is a village of 3,730 people in the department (state) of Ardeche in southern France. We toured the Cathedral of St. Vincent, Romanesque, an 18th century Gothic church.

07/20 Tournon

07:30 Connie & Kay took a tour of a Rhône Valley Vineyard L’Hermitage.

09:00 Dave & Brook took a ride on the Tournon Steam Train in the l’Ardeche Region. The train railway was built in 1886. The train is pulled by a 44 ton engine. It takes 4 hours to prepare for each trip. Today’s steam engine was built in 1901.

Breathtaking views of the Gorges du Doux.

We passed by St. Joseph Vineyard. We saw aqueducts called “German Aqueducts” because they were built by German POWs from WWI.

04:45 Walking Tour of Vienne.

Vienne is a town in southeastern France. It is 35 km from Lyon (22 miles). The population is about 30,000 residents. It was a major center during the Roman Empire. We visited the Saint Maurice Cathedral. It is a blend of Gothic and Romanesque styles.

07/21 Panorama Lyon

09:00 We took a bus tour which stopped at the Basilica of Notre Dame de Fourviere.

We had a leisurely afternoon on the Viking Buri.


We listened to a report about the resistance that was centered in Lyon. Klaus Barbie committed many atrocities in Lyon. Barbie was recruited by the US for counterintelligence and arranged for him to go to Bolivia. The US later apologized and Barbie was returned to Lyon and was convicted of war crimes.

07/22 Beaujolais Wine Tour

08:45 We began our tour with a bus ride this morning. We went about an hour ride from our ship to the Beaujolais wine region of Southern France. After exiting the M6, Our bus went on narrow winding roads, through several small towns and by several wineries to get our final destination. It was a beautiful countryside! Finally, we arrived at Chateau de Varennes. We were greeted by Gerard who is the winery's caretaker. The current owner's family purchased this 50 acres and winery in 1809.

07/23 Transfer Ships

08:45 Today we said farewell to Viking Buri. We took a bus to the train station to catch our high speed train to Paris.

09:50 Began high speed train ride from Lyon to Paris. As advertised it took us 2 hours and 18 minutes to arrive in Paris. Then the adventure began. About 30 streets were blocked off for the conclusion of the Tour de France. It was quite an adventure to get from the train station to our new ship the Viking Fjorgyn . Our bus driver seemed to know all the shortcuts. We arrived at the Viking Fjorgyn around 1:15 PM. Our luggage was waiting for us in our new stateroom.

03:00 Connie and I decided to take a walk to the Eiffel Tower. It was about 3/4 mile to get there. We took the required selfie with the Tower and then walked back to the Fjorgyn.

07/24 Panoramic Paris

09:00 We took a bus tour around Paris to see the highlights for tourists. Of course, our first stop was at a wonderful location to get more pictures of the Eiffel Tower. Next, we circled around the Arc De Triumph for a few pictures. Next, we saw the Hotel De Ville (Paris City Hall). Then we went to the site of Notre-Dame-De-Paris. The Cathedral experienced severe damage during the fire it had in 2019. There was a lot of scaffolding still up, and restoration work has been ongoing ever since. The current estimate is that Notre Dame reconstruction will be completed by the end of 2024. We then saw a tree that our guide described as the oldest tree in Paris. She said it was planted in 1606.

We then walked by the Sorbonne Academy, the oldest university in France.

And lastly, I saw an office of BNP Paribas which is the parent company of Bank of the West, for whom I worked for the final 10 years of my career.

07/25 La Roche-Guyon

La Roche-Guyon is a community in the Val-d'Oise department in Île-de-France in northern France. It is located in the Vexin regional nature park. The community grew around the Château de La Roche-Guyon, upon which historically it depended for its existence. The town's population in 2019 was 479.

12:00 At noon we sailed away and at 2:00 PM we arrived in Vernon. The population of Vernon is 24,772. It features Our Lady Collegiate Church.

Our excursion took us on a short bus ride to see Giverny.

Claude Monet arrived in Giverny in 1883 by train and fell in love with the area. Monet settled in [Giverny](#), located in northern France, where he purchased [a house and property](#) and began a vast

landscaping project, including a water-lily pond. Monet lived in Giverny until his death in 1926.

07/26 Rouen

Rouen, capital of the northern French region of Normandy, is a port city on the river Seine. Important in the Roman era and Middle Ages, it has Gothic churches, such as Saint-Maclou and Saint-Ouen, and a cobblestoned pedestrian center with medieval half-timbered houses. The skyline is dominated by the spires of Cathédrale Notre-Dame, much-painted by Impressionist Claude Monet.

10:00 We listened to a talk that explained the mechanical and electronic workings of the Viking longship.

11:00 We listened to a talk about the extraordinary life of Joan of Arc.

01:45 We took a Walking Tour of Rouen this afternoon.

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07/27 Normandy Beaches

08:45 We visited The Normandy Museum of Peace. We saw many films and pictures of the Allied forces storming the beaches of the region of Normandy.

Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword were the names given for Operation Overlord.

01:30 We visited the US Cemetery at Colleville-sue-Mer. There are 9,386 graves of American service members buried here. Near the end of time at the cemetery, we paid tribute to our countrymen who had fallen here. They also asked for those of us who had served in the military to come forward to be recognized. It was my honor to do so.

After a long visit at the cemetery, we returned to our coach bus and we were taken to the actual Omaha Beach. We got to walk on the beach and put our feet into the water. We thought about the 9,386 young men who gave the ultimate sacrifice for freedom on this beach. We thought of what it must have been like to spend 10 hours on a crowded transport ship. Many were probably 17 to 20 years old. They likely did not know anything about Normandy France. They had been told there would not be any Germans where they would be going. There were 20 soldiers (19 from one company) who were all from Bedford, Virginia. They were all killed on D-Day. We saw the elevated positions that the Germans had above the landing site. Those 9,386 men were the first and paved the way for over 2,000,000 Allied troops who followed.

07/28 Les Andelys

02:00 We took a leisure walking tour of the town.

Les Aundelys is a [commune](#) in the northern French [department of Eure](#), in [Normandy](#).

There is a castle on top of the hill above the town. It was built by Richard the Lion-Hearted in the extra-ordinary time of one year.

07/29 Le Pecq

09:30 Today we took an excursion to see the last home of Napoleon and Josephine in Le Pecq.

Josephine bought the estate in 1799 while her husband was away fighting in Egypt. Josephine loved it and began furnishing the mansion with lavish furniture and beautiful artwork. She loved the land also and planted thousands of flowers and trees and brought in many exotic animals. When Napoleon returned from Egypt, he was furious with her for buying the estate without consulting him. It was not the style that he was accustomed to in the large cities of France. However, he loved Josephine and forgave her. She continued to furnish it lavishly for the remainder of their marriage. It is called Chateau de Malmaison.

At **5:45 PM** the Fjorgyn arrived back in Paris for the final night of our Viking Seine River cruise.

09:30 PM We took a nice excursion on the Seine on a small river boat. The guide described many sites along the Seine River. At **11:00 PM**, the pilot maneuvered us into just the right position to take perfect pictures and videos of the Eiffel Tower as it sparkled for the first 5 minutes of the hour. It was a spectacular sight to behold!