

OSN TRIP TO PARIS

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by Claire Natola

In late February, 12 OSNers took off on a six-day trip to the City of Light: Paris, France! Three couples and six singles took the city by storm, seeing all the must-see sights, experiencing the art and the cuisine, and making lots of memories.

Apart from the scheduled two-hour sightseeing motorcoach tour of Paris on the day we arrived (Saturday), everyone was free to partake in their own activities. All twelve of us ate dinner together on the first night, but generally we would pair off in groups of two, three, four, six... There were always at least two people who wanted to visit this cathedral or see that exhibit, dine in this restaurant or go to that shop, so it worked out nicely!



The Tuileries Gardens, albeit in winter



On Sunday, our first full day in Paris, the "six singles" headed off to visit Ste. Chappelle, Notre Dame, and a memorial to the deportees from France who perished during the Holocaust. (Above: Carol, Bev, Terri, and Lois pose while waiting in line outside Ste. Chappelle. Kathy is hiding, and Claire is taking the photo.)



The Seine



Notre Dame

Ste. Chappelle's famous stained glass



Later Sunday we ended up at the Eiffel Tower. Carol, Terri, and Lois decided to brave the long lines in the biting wind to go up in the Tower. Kathy, Bev and I decided to brave Paris traffic by taking a warm, comfortable taxi back to our hotel. It felt great to put my feet up after a full day of walking to many sights!

Dear Claire,

I must tell you how grateful I am for all you did for all of us to make it a grand experience.

Lots of love,
Kathy Marieb

Monday and Tuesday were our art days; having equipped ourselves with a museum/monument pass at Ste. Chappelle the previous day, we put it to good use by visiting the Louvre on Monday and the Musee d'Orsay on Tuesday. The pass allowed us to stand in shorter security lines than the general public, and to skip the ticket lines altogether, saving us a lot of valuable time.

The collection at the Louvre borders on overwhelming, covering thousands of years of art and artifacts. Miraculously, even though we went to the museum in two separate groups, some of us actually ran into each other while there!



I.M. Pei's famed pyramid at the Louvre's entrance



The Eiffel Tower as seen from the Louvre



Sacre Coeur in Montmartres as seen from the Musee d'Orsay

If I had only one day in Paris and had to choose between the Musee d'Orsay and the Louvre, I would choose the Musee d'Orsay in a heartbeat! Once a train station, the building has undergone an amazing transformation into a museum housing Pre-Impressionist, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist painting, sculpture, and furniture.



Monet



Van Gogh



Art Nouveau Furniture

After visiting the Musee d'Orsay, we traveled to the Champs Elysees and visited the Arc de Triomphe. We would have had a great photograph of our little group posing at the top of the Arc de Triomphe with the Eiffel Tower looming in the background, but the American fellow we asked to take the photo failed to actually set up the shot with the Eiffel Tower in the background! Why on earth did he think we were posing in that particular spot? <sigh>



Two views of the city from atop the Arc de Triomphe



Wednesday was our last full day in Paris, so it was the day to take in that one particular sight that we didn't want to leave without seeing. For some, that was Versailles. For others, it was Montmartres. For Kathy Marieb and I, it was the cathedral at Chartres, easy accessible by a one-hour train ride from downtown Paris. The town was beautiful and quaint, and the cathedral magnificent.

Claire,
Just wanted to say THANK YOU for organizing, arranging, and planning the trip to Paris and for all the work you did while we were there. I had a fantastic time and I'm sure everyone else in the group also did.

Big hugs,
Lois Katz



Chartres Cathedral



Slices of Parisian Life



Music in the Metro station

This demonstration against cuts in university research funding, which we encountered outside the Musee d'Orsay, was just one of several demonstrations that occurred while we were in Paris.



Parking is at a premium!



Parisians love their dogs! We saw dogs everywhere...even in restaurants!



Bonjour Claire,

The memories of Paris linger on, don't they?! Thank you VERY MUCH for putting the trip together and for taking such good care of all of us! I really appreciate all you did. The hotel was so convenient and the group was so much fun. It was an incredible trip and I know it was a tremendous amount of work to pull it all together. I enjoyed getting to know you and the others, and will look forward to a movie/photo show in the future!

Merci beaucoup!
Carol Chamberlain

One of the nicest aspects of our trip was how pleasant and accommodating the French were to us! From waiters to shopkeepers, taxi drivers to ticket attendants, we were treated with warmth and graciousness. I've heard many people say they wouldn't go to France because "French people are so rude." If the people we encountered had any desire to treat us rudely, it didn't show. One taxi driver, upon dropping us at our destination, lingered long enough to give us heartfelt thanks, as Americans, for "coming back to France."



Each meal was a delight!



Each evening found us gathered in the hotel lobby, relaxing, sharing bottles of wine and our day's experiences.

On our last night in Paris, Bev Robie and I took one more trip to the Eiffel Tower to see it sparkle at night!

