



# Burgundy

## Notes from the Road, Seizing the Day

I just returned from an 8 day relaxing, intimate vacation *en famille* to France. The occasion was grand, my father's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday! On my first day in France, upon arrival in Paris, I took the RER line to Gare de Lyon downtown train station to board the TGV train. In a 1h20 ride I was in Burgundy and on my way to the little village of Curtil S/Burnand (45km North West of Macon). Part of the family had rented a "gite" for the week. Gites are small or large simple, self contained homes located all over France, mostly in the country. They are meant to allow French families to have an affordable vacation. Our stone house had 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, full kitchen, large dining room, living room, and a lovely garden with an inviting shaded area for meals. Along with the gite came a tandem bicycle! You will see on my photos that using it was an experience and a lot of laughter. After 5 minutes the bike fell apart and we landed on the ground.

I quickly adjusted to the familiar sounds of the village—the church bells ringing every hour and half hour, the *camionnette* honk every day around 11AM (mini van parked in the middle of the village selling bread; the only merchant in Curtil is a café/restaurant), and the far away sound of the TGV zipping through the countryside. My next 5 days were spent enjoying the bounty Burgundy has to offer—driving on small country roads looking at castles rising from vineyards, fields of corn and sun flowers, visiting medieval churches and meticulously preserved villages, admiring geraniums set against ancient stone walls, going to the neighbor to pick up fresh eggs or vegetables from their garden, sitting outside for a daily 2 hour lunch and 3 hour dinner (thanks to my sister Christine), participating in very lively discussions about every subject from politics to arts to food (a hobby in every French family), sitting at a café and people watching, going to a harp concert in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century church of Chapaize, and flying on a 4 seater aircraft over the Maconais region with my brother-in-law for pilot. Burgundy is definitely the land of the good life for those who appreciate fine cuisine, wine in historic settings, and stunning natural beauty.

I took the TGV back to Paris for 2 nights and a full day of city life. I stayed in a small 3 star hotel on the right bank, right behind the Louvre museum, adjacent to the church of St Germain l'Auxerrois. My very small room had the most inspiring view over the *gargouilles* of the church. After a delicious dinner "Chez Lulu" in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, I went on a tour of Paris by night thanks to my sister Carole who had rented a car. My favorite thing to do every time I stay in Paris and such a sweet memory from my childhood years! The monuments at night are magical and the ambiance in the streets is exciting. The next day took me on a long walk through the Pere Lachaise cemetery (make sure you rent the video called "Forever", a wonderful documentary about Pere Lachaise cemetery). I checked out the beach scene along the Seine River (every year from July 20<sup>th</sup> to August 20<sup>th</sup> the expressway along the right bank is closed to traffic and replaced by a beach with sand, pool, longue chairs, cafes, and palm trees). I went to several book stores in the Latin Quarter and splurged on a supply for several months. I visited the St. Chapelle, made a stop at the flower market next to it, and did a lot of window shopping and day dreaming sitting at a café. My vacation ended on the new Delta non stop flight from Paris to Salt Lake City. What a treat! I left Paris at 10:20AM, landed in Salt Lake City at 1:00PM, and was in my home by 2:30PM. I Hope you all are as lucky as I am this summer and get to live the vacation of your dream filled with simple pleasures and happy moments.

Fondly,

*Murielle*

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