

What Time is It Really?

Most of Carol and Bob arrive in southwest France..

Thursday, April 24, 2008

We arrived in Toulouse Thursday amidst a thick layer of fog. I'm happy to say it's lifted during the first three days of our trip. Oh, the weather?. It's perfect. I'm talking about the cognitive congestion that accompanies moving the physical body more than 5500 miles constantly affecting your logic, ability to speak in complete sentences, and walk in a straight line. Although nothing in France is straight or level, the rest of the problem is certainly coming from somewhere else.

This time-space warp visited us on our first night's stay when we overslept by two hours thinking we were up early for breakfast. (That would make it a Bed and Lunch. Fortunately most French are not worried about the concept of time.) Kudos go to Carol for successfully driving on the French motorways without incident at something around 90 mph in our rental car and also to Bob for Google Maps and figuring out how to find the miniscule street signs which are microscopically imbedded on the side of the buildings in about 8 pt fonts.



Tempus Fugit: Our B&B Sundial says it all...



Red or White? Find excuses to try both..

Thanks for Latin and the British

Carol started demonstrating her incredible sense of French comprehension and communication almost as soon as we arrived. I, on the other hand, am relying on my mother's insistence that I understand enough Latin word roots when I was growing up and the fact that the English came down here and stole everything good from the French over the last millenium including several thousand words. So, in a pinch just throw in one of those they borrowed and give it as near a French pronunciation as possible.

Just make sure the French-English dictionary is standard equipment when you go into a restaurant or shop and try enough French that people connect with you enough to want to explore their English. This really works.

Lessons Learned on Day 2

Getting the most out of your shopping experience and other French secrets...

Friday Morning, April 25, 2008

We began today with great aspirations like conquering the French grocery stores so we could have some independence from the restaurant scene. There are a few things, however, that Rick Steve's doesn't tell you in his travel guides. The French have cut grocery store labor costs in a number of ways. Want a cart? Just insert one Euro into the slot unlocking the padlock that chains the carts together and you've got one. By putting your cart back into the lock, you get that Euro back. No cart patrol wages. Saves on touch up paint, too, from those pesky flying carts. Also, bring a parka because the inside temperature of the store is about 40 degrees. I watched the chickens in the rotisserie go round and round as long as I could. Don't forget to bring your own bags unless you want to retrieve loose fruit under the car seats – no sackers on duty.



Mystery Veggie



"My Cellar", not Mom's hideout

Lessons in French Time

Another handy thing to know is that the French (and most Euro countries) have very strict work & eat hours. Retail shuts down at 12:00 for two hours. Restaurants are only open for the two hour lunch period, then close again until evening, which is usually from 7:00-9:00 PM. No wonder they aren't an overweight society. It's easy to miss a meal.

Go to Your Cave, Bob

More knowledge of the loss in translation between our languages was evident when I was invited by our host to "explore our cave at the house". This simply means go down and look around the basement, which usually serves as the wine cellar at a cool and constant 50 degrees. You won't need miner's cap, unless it's to keep the cobwebs out of your hair.