

Fall in Paris Journal

Tuesday, September 21 – Exploring Porte d'Orléans

In our continuing exploration of Paris, we took a subway to the end of our line 4 to the Porte d'Orléans and walked around the area. There is a large bus station there with buses that go outside of the limits of Paris with numbers that we don't see in the center of the city. This intersection is called Place de 25 Août 1944 (August 25 was the day Paris was liberated from German occupation.)

Two of the diagonal streets starting here are Avenue Jean Moulin and Avenue du Général LeClerc, two names important in the Free French movement during the German occupation.

The Battle of Kufra (also spelled Koufra, or Cufra) during the Second World War was the capture of the important but isolated oasis of Kufra from Italian forces by Free French Forces. Kufra is in southeastern Libya, at that time an Italian colony. (Taken from Wikipedia.)

General LeClerc is the one credited with liberating Paris from the Germans, under General de Gaulle's orders. According to a book I am reading, *Is Paris Burning?*, [in French, *Paris brûle-t-il?*] it was agreed by General Dwight Eisenhower at the insistence of de Gaulle to allow the French forces to enter Paris first. To the French, however, it was General LeClerc who liberated Paris.

Jean Moulin was a hero in the underground Free French movement who was captured and killed. There is a wonderful museum in a garden at the top of the Gare de Montparnasse dedicated to the Liberation of Paris and features LeClerc and a separate space for Jean Moulin. We visited that museum in our visit in early 2010. [There is a [write-up and photos](#) of the March 4 visit]

There was a lovely park called Serment de Koufra. On the map it is called the Square du Serment de Koufra. It was fairly early and the sprinklers were on. It is still full summer and everything is bright green. The sprinkler looks like it is giving the statue a bath. Her hands on her head look as if she is washing her hair. It is quite graceful. There is a flowerbed surrounding her.

In *Paris Brule-t-il?* There is an explanation of the Serment de Koufra. Apparently, when General LeClerc won that battle he stood on the top of the hill and made a solemn vow that some day he would liberate Paris. Serment means solemn vow. So the park is a monument to his vow, which he kept on August 25, 1944. Now I understand why it is such a lovely park.

The more history I learn, the more significance I see in the street names. How different it is from naming a street Washington, Jefferson and Adams or First Street, Second Avenue, etc.





In our wanderings we passed a huge park called Parc de Montsouris. There was a high mound of grass with a chain link fence at the top that the map told us is a reservoir. Later when we visited the Sewers of Paris, we learned that Montsouris is one of the reservoirs that provides the drinking water to the people of Paris.

As we walked, Ernie reminisced that he remembers this area from his visit to Paris as an 18-year-old student with a back pack when he visited his cousin Claudie (now known as Louise Vincent.) He stayed at the International House at the Cité Universitaire de Paris which is nearby.

We continued walking and went up Alesia, a street name that we keep coming across. It has its share of little pocket parks and amazing facts posted on brass plaques explaining some of the street names. There was one having to do with a giant named Issoire. He terrorized everyone and many men went to their deaths trying to defeat him. Finally a brave man managed to kill him by tricking him somehow. But the giant was so big that the people couldn't move him. So they built a tomb around him. The tomb is gone but the street remains named rue de la Tombe Issoire.

When we returned to our apartment we found that someone on the floor beneath us is moving in. We have been hearing demolition noises on the floor beneath us since our arrival. I think they are moving in appliances and other things to be installed because after a few days of quiet, the noise began again. Occasionally, when we use the stairs, we see piles of trash in the hallway on the 5th floor – big cardboard boxes full of Styrofoam, used sealing tape, stuff like that. This is how they move in Paris.

Our apartment is at the top, above the floor that they are moving into.



