

Fall in Paris Journal

Thursday, October 14 – AMOPA Reception Association of Members of the Palmes Academiques

We left quite early since we were not sure how the strikes would affect transportation. To be sure not to get stuck on a train deep in the Metro, we decided to walk. We took Notre Dame des Champs to Luxembourg gardens, about a 5 minute walk.

I had been thinking of scarves and decided to take pictures to show the folks back home how the women (and men) wear them. Also to show what I mean when I say they wear “really long scarves.” So here are three photos as we walked through the Luxembourg Gardens. It was a stunning autumn afternoon and there are lots of nice things to see in the photos as well as the ladies and their scarves. Below the statue is a lady wearing a long pink scarf. (and that building is where the Senat, one of the two houses of the French government meets).



Below is what I call a “really big” scarf. The two women to the left are wearing normal scarves.



Here are two more examples of scarves.



There were other interesting sights at the Luxembourg Garden. The workmen have been sweeping up the fallen leaves and I wondered what they did with them? Here is one answer. The chain link fence meant to contain them is overwhelmed with the task. I hope they shred them and make it into compost. I should have asked Ernie to stand by it to give it perspective. The pile towered over us.



We passed an area where the sign on the grass (translated) said, *Do not walk on grass. Danger from bees.* That seemed strange at first and then around the corner I saw a gazebo with piles of bee hives under it and around it. It is an Apiary that has been there since 1851 and is a center for teaching the care of bees.





It was after 5 p.m. as we passed through the Luxembourg Garden and saw people at leisure sitting in the sun and reading the paper or a book or chatting with each other or walking. There were also people warming up for a soccer game and others playing Boules. Boules looks to me like it takes quite a bit of skill and eye/hand coordination. It is mostly for men with the occasional women player.

Here is more from the French version of Wikipedia: La Pétanque is the game of boules. It is the 8th most popular sport in France. It has hundreds of clubs and millions of occasional players. About 14% of the players are women.



When we finally arrived at the Sorbonne and figured out which building we should go to, we were 45 minutes early. It was a little nippy so we went to the Brasserie Balzar for a coffee. I ended up having a chocolate mousse with my coffee.



The waiters here wore black pants, white long-sleeved shirts with a bow tie and a long white apron practically to the floor. They each had a white napkin draped over the left forearm – just like pictures one sees of French waiters. Gradually others from the Association began to arrive. The women were

well turned out and older. I was sure I could pick them out. Later, in the crowd, I saw that I had pegged them correctly.

After our coffee we went out and it was still too early so we walked around a pocket park and saw a very interesting building that Ernie asked me to photograph. It turned out to be the entrance to the Musée de Cluny, one of the highlights of our visit in the winter. The building very appropriately houses a museum of the Middle Ages and holds the Tapestries of the Lady and the Unicorn.



Finally it was time to line up. We remembered how pushy this group of people are from the reception we attended there in February so we were prepared. Even so, we ended up being pushed back from the very front where we started.

Below is the entry to the building. Where the two people are standing is the entrance where about 40 people amassed waiting for the guard to let us in.

For pictures of the inside of the Sorbonne, you can [click here](#) to link to the February 15 reception.



We heard a talk in French at the Palmes Academiques reception. The talk (in French) was Research on Paradise by the author of a recent book on the topic. I caught about every 3rd or 4th word but got the gist of it. It was a review of the literature on definitions of Paradise. He started with the Garden of Eden according to the bible then proceeded to other writings - The Divine Comedy and a few other centuries that I missed entirely then to Rousseau and the African tribes as innocents. Ending with the idea of a suburban house with land for the children to play in, an all-electric kitchen, that kind of stuff.

His conclusion is that Paradise is defined individually and can only be found within. I can agree with that.

Following the talk, there was a moving ceremony to name a Commandante to the Legion d'honneur. I was impressed by the old guy who gave the speech describing the man's life decade after decade – without notes. He could barely walk up the stairs so I was surprised at how long he talked. He must have talked 20-30 minutes reviewing this great man's life. Again, I missed a lot of it but Ernie heard that he was the head of Citroen. He used his position to do good things in the world, but again, we missed exactly what that was. But it must have been significant for him to get such an honor. They hung a huge medallion on his chest on a bright red ribbon, everyone shook his hand, there were tears and he gave an emotional thank you speech. It was quite a sight. And there were many presents for him and his wife.

Following that the string Quartet from the Garde Républicaine (whom we had heard in February) played excerpts from Hayden's "Seven Last Words of Christ". Haydn originally wrote this for orchestra and later transcribed it for a string quartet. We heard a lot of Haydn that weekend; the next night we heard The Creation at the Trinity Church.

Again, there was a Champagne reception - this time we knew they push and one has to use elbows to get to the table. We were prepared and managed to get two glasses of champagne and our fill of little hors d'oeuvres.

Afterward, we came back to our neighborhood. Stopped at VaVin Café on Notre Dame des Champs and Avenue Vavin. Ernie had a fish dish prepared with fenouille (fennel) and I had an entrecote with fries and a couple of glasses of wine. Ernie had beer. Then to our apartment.

We walked into La Sieste, the restaurant next door between us and Elements, the Pilates studio, for a late night drink. It was pretty empty. I was thirsty and had San Pellegrino. Ernie had a Calvados.