

Saturday, September 11

We had a breakfast of a baguette and butter and black cherry jam and bitter orange jam, orange juice and coffee in our apartment.

This is early morning from the corner window of our apartment.



Our big task today will be to stay awake and to go to the open-air market on Port Royal, which I remember so fondly from our visit in winter. But after our experience carrying stuff home from Monoprix yesterday, we decided it was time to buy a grocery cart called a pousette. As we walked down Montparnasse toward the market, we looked for a place to buy a pousette. We eventually realized that we were confused and were walking toward the Gare and away from the market. So we turned around



This is looking down from our 6th floor (would be 7th as counted in the US – here the first floor is “0” or rez-de-chaussée) apartment toward Blvd. Montparnasse. The white building on the left is the roof over the Bar à Huîtres. Above it is Hotel Raspail.

We passed the store where we bought our tablecloth in January and stopped there. Unfortunately, she didn’t have any pousettes in stock. So we continued walking toward the market this time and came across a narrow store with pousettes parked in front of it. There were two styles and we chose the one that cost 18 euros and picked the more conservative gray with white polka dots over the bright red one with big flowers splashed all over it. (turned out later this was very cheap for a pousette –most of them are 30 or 40 euros). He also sold us a garlic press and offered us other things to set up housekeeping but we only bought the 2 things from him. Now we were ready for the market. (See September 12 write-up for pictures of our pousette).

A few more blocks and there was the Port Royal market in all its wonderfulness – stalls and stalls of green grocers, fish mongers, cheese vendors, creameries, fresh eggs, dried fruits and nuts, Lebanese deli, Chinese deli, fresh meats and cut meats and rotisserie chickens, ribs, huge vats of paella, flowers, leather goods, an upholsterer, a wine merchant, women’s bags, children’s clothing on and on. Through the tarps the sun shone through. It was wonderful. It looked different with leaves on all the trees on Port Royal.

This is the entry to the market coming from our apartment.



There were at least 4 greengrocers making it hard to know which one to buy from. Finally we stood in line for the crèmerie and bought an assortment of cheeses - blue d'Auvergne, Swiss Gruyère, and a small round goat cheese and yogurt. (Wonderful coffee yoghurt in a glass jar, Ernie's favorite.) Then another line for two patés, another line for stuffed grape leaves and a condiment of creamy cheese seasoned with mint and garlic, grilled skewers of chicken and peppers. The vendor threw in a package of pita after tempting us with pita stuffed with chopped lamb with something delectable in it. We got pistachios, big green olives, haricots verts, tomatoes, an apple, potatoes, two lemons, a head of garlic, a mixture of salad greens and stuffed it all into our pousette.

In the picture following you can see the ladies with their pousettes. You can also see how colorfully people are dressed for the end of summer.



We happily walked back and put everything away and had some lunch in the apartment – I think some of the paté with bread and tomatoes.

Then we started to get ready to leave for the Parc Floral to hear a concert and consulted the Metro map. It looked simple enough so off we went to catch the Metro at the corner of Vavin and Montparnasse. Our Navigo cards worked just fine. Our Metro train is line 4 and we changed at Chatelet, a big interchange, to line 1. About 45 minutes later we emerged into the bright sun at Chateau de Vincennes.

A lady saw us looking around and asked if she could help us find something. We told her we were going to Parc Floral and she pointed to a brown sign directing us to a walkway. It was a long tree-lined avenue and between trees we caught sight of the Chateau. Wow! We will have to return to tour the castle. Here is what we glimpsed. This is from Wikipedia



There are lots more to it. So the Parc Floral must have been a personal garden. It turns out that it dates back to 1150 when it was a hunting lodge for Louis VII. From the size of the park, it had to have been a private forest for the King's use.

It was a good walk to the actual park from the Metro stop. People were riding bikes and picnicking on the lawn in front of the castle. There were soccer games and lots of young children running around in the balmy sunshine.

We finally entered the Parc Floral (5€) and went toward the garden. The concert we were going to would be in the covered white structure. Admission to the concert was free with no specified seating. So we started in the garden.



This was the orange side. There were lots of signs explaining the flowers; there were pavilions with explanations of the evolution of particular types of plants, of animals and their interactions – one could read for hours.

As we went on, I had to take a photo of the blue flowers. The circular garden was arranged by hues, like a rainbow. We are at the end of summer and the flowers were profuse. There were a few that were over but most of the flowers were still at their nexus.



There were large lawns with curved broad walks in gravel connecting areas with others. On the lawns were people having picnics, playing boules, soccer, riding bikes, children on their daddy's backs. It was idyllic, lush, and dreamlike. Of course, we were still feeling jet lag and everything seemed surreal. This photo gives the feeling of the afternoon and the people at play.



We found a little café and stopped for a sparkling water then went to the white covered area. It was 3 p.m. and we hoped to get a seat in the front row for the 4 p.m. concert. We were too late. The best seats were taken so we quickly found the best seat we could and claimed them.

The concert was a collection of songs by Mozart transposed for a quintette (one more than a quartet, with 2 cellos) followed by Schubert's *Quintette à cordes en ut majeur*. The 5th player forming the quintette with the quartet *Parisi*, was Raphaël Chrétien, a fine concert cellist with a sparkling personality. He not only played brilliantly but was very emotive. He was dressed in black pants and a bright white long-sleeved shirt rolled up to the elbows while the quartet musicians were all in black. Their playing was flawless.

The outdoor pavilion was packed with probably 200 people in the audience. The quintette was interrupted by a scattering of inappropriate applause. When the audience applauded after the third movement, the first violinist began to motion the audience to stop. We were surprised because at the concerts we attended during the winter here, the audiences were very sophisticated and were quiet and

attentive and only applauded at the end of a piece instead of at the end of each movement. So this crowd was different. In many ways that was apparent. There were lots of little children in the audience, some of them running around the band shell area, but quietly.

The music was so riveting and complex and full of melodies and rhythms that neither of us had trouble staying awake.

There was a get together afterward on one of the lawns but it took so long to get organized and for the musicians to come out that we began to get sleepy and decided to start our journey home. The return was easy.

That night we had dinner at home and took a picture with the Bar à Huîtres in the background. That is the lit up white roof seen through our wrought iron balcony ornament. The salad of tomatoes, olives, radishes and salad greens is on the table. Our first plate was dolmas with that delicious condiment. I should have bought more of it. Then we had pieces of chicken and peppers on a skewer from the market, small white potatoes boiled and seasoned with butter, garlic and parsley.

