

Fall in Paris 2010

Sunday September 26

Today the plan is to leave by 10 a.m. to take in the Sewers of Paris that open at 11 a.m. and then attend a free organ concert at Eglise St. Sulpice. The weather is gusty and rainy.

About 8:30 I went out to look for croissants. The Delambre bakery was open and doing a brisk business. The butcher shop has chickens cooking and lots of delicious other things in the windows. Even Franprix is open until 2100 hours on Sunday. I went to the news kiosk on Delambre but was disappointed it was closed. I wanted to buy a Sunday newspaper. Yesterday I read about a new format of the Le Figaro magazine and was curious to see it. Later Ernie told me the kiosk on Vavin and Montparnasse by the Metro station is open. Ernie wanted a brioche and I got a croissant. It is larger than the ones sold on our corner.

After breakfast we took the metro to Montparnasse Bienvenue where there is a connection to the blue line we wanted. That intersection is very long with lots of stairs and escalators and a moving walkway through a long white corridor, which I took a picture of in an earlier entry. This time as we went on the walkway, I stood and looked at the graphics on the wall. They are charming and depict, in a graphic way the seasons in Paris. Ernie looked toward the other wall where there are series of things to read.

We got off the metro at Invalids and walked toward the Seine and the Quay d'Orsay, which would lead us to the Sewers. I took a photo of the long grassy area from Les Invalides to the Seine. At the bridge over the Seine there are tall pillars with gilded statues on top. I got the golden Pegasus. On the other side there are golden dragons.



Then I noticed how brown some of the trees are turning. As we walked on the Quay I saw fallen chestnuts beneath them. I wonder what the other trees are that have the spotted trunks. Maybe they are Maples. I'll soon see.



As I stopped to take the photo of the trees across the Seine, I saw a group of young children in in-line skates and gear being instructed. The teacher was setting out obstacles and reminded the students to remember their number. In the depth of the picture is a line of adults on skates.



We found the Sewers that are at Pont d'Alma. That was quite interesting with a lot of displays to read. I was a little leery of walking on the metal walkways over the running water. You could hear water running very fast and there was a distinct odor. We were warned by the admission worker to not touch

the walls, as they are dirty. If we do, be sure to wash them thoroughly with soap and water. He didn't need to say that twice.

It is a very photogenic place but I only took two photos. But we read a lot of the posters and looked at the examples of the machinery used to keep the pipes and canals clean of sediment. The huge balls in the photo are made of wood and are used to clean the transfer pipes from one side of the Seine to the other.



I was interested to learn the different phases of creating the sewer system. It has been necessitated by the growing number of population.

Apparently, the foundation for the modern day sewer system was laid by Bertrand, an engineer appointed by Napoleon Bonaparte. It was the same time that he appointed Haussman who had such an impact on the buildings in Paris. He was intent on modernizing Paris. I read about him in a preface to the Notre Dame de Paris by Victor Hugo. Hugo was a leader in a movement in opposition to tearing down so many grand old buildings. Hugo was very opposed and vocal about preserving the history of Paris.



After leaving there we took the RER and Metro back to the apartment and went to get some food for lunch. We tried the little market next to Bar à Huîtres and got lots of stuff. Then we went to the bakery for a baguette and Ernie went to Franprix for beer. We made lunch around the salami.

Ernie picked up a Sunday Le Figaro and I looked at the Le Fig Mag. Pretty spiffy. Ernie said he prefers L'Express.

About 3 p.m. we left for St. Sulpice and were there in 15 minutes so we stopped in the café across the street for a coffee. Then to the church. I stopped for a photo of the fountain, which was not running when we saw St. Sulpice in the Spring before leaving. This time we had umbrellas with us and were glad of it.

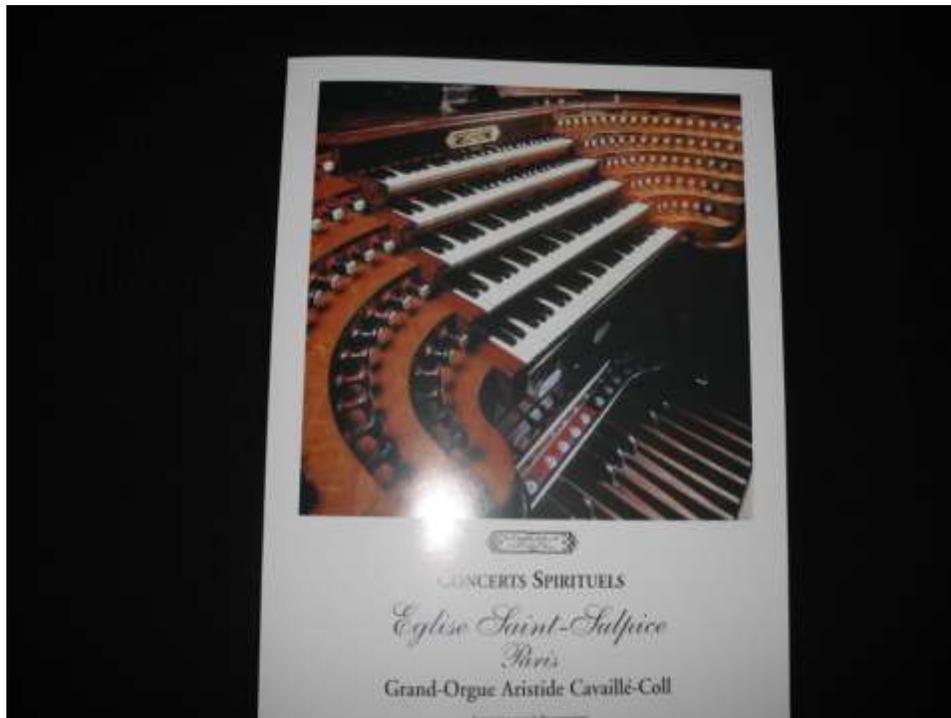


Then into the church. Here is the organ we will listen to.



It was a wonderful concert. Ernie said, “Church & organ are magnificent; I would have preferred other music although the Symphonie by Louis Vierne was quite interesting although somewhat long.”

Here is the cover of the program. Nice graphic. It shows the 5 keyboards, the many stops and 14 pedals.



We came back to the apartment and I have worked on this entry. We will go out again into this rainy night for dinner.

We ended up going for a fish dinner at Le Dome. Ernie decided he wanted Bouillabaisse, but it is only served for two so I decided to go along with it. I sat facing the bus station and was fascinated by the activity there for the 40 minutes it took to prepare our Bouillabaisse. We weren't sure what to expect -- lots of different fruits de mer. In fact the classic recipe has fish, potatoes and a lovely broth. The broth, of course, is made with a very long list of ingredients. I don't really like most cooked fruits de mer so that was fine with me. In the meantime, the wait staff was great to watch. They had a space to work in that was smaller than my kitchen on r. Berthollet and were handling dishes, and condiments, silverware, dirty plates, bread, hot plates. It was like a ballet. The assistant waiter for our section was extremely tall - probably close to 7 ft - with very long arms. Waiters and the assistants had to pass between Ernie's back and the furniture holding all the equipment so they had to warn each other when they were passing. There were 3 waiters walking through carrying food, dirty dishes, and the busser setting up tables and complicated meals like ours. I also faced the entry way and watched the Maitre d watching everything and thinking.

We were at a tiny table and there were 4 glasses, our two dishes, two baskets of small pieces of toast, our silverware and a chafing dish. We got a bottle of Perrier to hold us while we waited the 40 minutes. About 30 minutes later the waiter, in a black suit, of course, came by with a plate of several small fish and showed them to us asking our approval. We nodded and the man at the next table who saw it looked at us and said Bon Appetit! Yeah, we were worried about doing it justice.

First came the broth in a lovely bowl with a large ladle. By this time the Perrier bottle was gone and the waiter had removed one of the baskets. I forgot to mention that we each had a saucer holding a large very crunchy roll. Then the bowls with 5 pieces of filleted white fish placed in the shape of a star with small yellow peeled and steamed potatoes placed around the bowl. He ceremoniously ladled out fish broth and gave us our bowls. It was great! We hadn't ordered a starter to leave our appetites intact. I

hardly nibbled at my crunchy roll, knowing I had a huge meal before me. But at the end, we ate it all. Ernie finished off the few pieces of fish I couldn't eat. They came and asked if we wanted more fish? But we had enough. We didn't even have coffee or dessert, even though they looked scrumptious and I am sure they were.

Years ago, when television was new, I saw a young Yves Montand on the Ed Sullivan Show perform the shift of a waiter in a song and dance rendition in French. With his velvet voice and his graceful body he showed what a professional waiter in a fancy place like Le Dome goes through in an evening. These waiters reminded me of his performance. It was like a dance and the clinking of silverware on plates were the rhythm and the hubbub the music.