

Paris Journal 2010

10, February Our Apartment

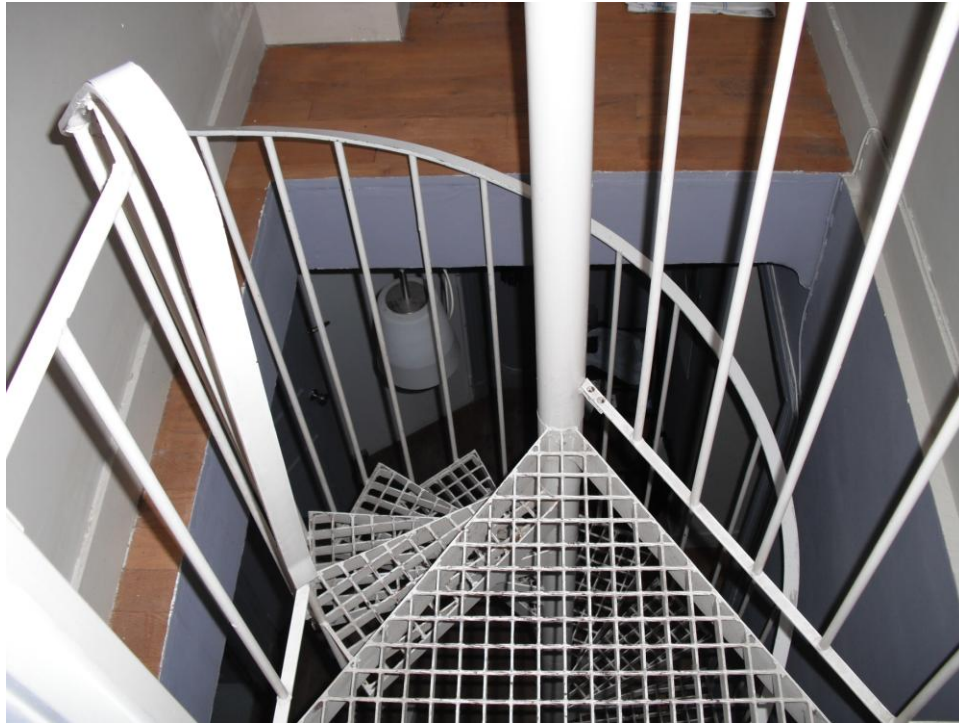
Ernie asked that I post a few photos of our apartment. He is pleased with the space he has carved out of the upstairs bedroom and fixed up as his office. It is a bright room and we are told the fireplace could be used. We would have to have it certified and do a bunch of stuff, but it is operational. Not likely that we will go to the expense.

The location is fantastic. We can walk to the Notre Dame in about 15 minutes. We are surrounded within walking distance of unbelievable outdoor markets, shops, restaurants, everything.



Our apartment is a bit funky -- we have two medium sized spaces, one on the 5th floor (would be 6th in the US) and one on the 6th floor connected by a narrow steel, definitely non-OSHA, spiral staircase. Each floor has a bathroom so that will be convenient when we have guests (several already scheduled!) The furnishings provide for all our needs although they are a bit "thrift store."

Here is a view of the staircase looking down from the 6th floor. It could give one vertigo. You are looking down into the entry way and the light fixture hanging from the ceiling of the entry way.



I get a kick out of the kitchen. According to the books I have used to study French, French apartments are notorious for devoting very little space to bathrooms and kitchens. So take a look at our 3m² (about 9 sq.ft.) kitchen.



The white box above the coffee pot is not a cabinet. It is the boiler that heats the water and the radiators for the apartment – a very important fixture. The refrigerator sticks out and opens in a way that one has to go out of the kitchen to put things into the frig.

Under the stovetop is the dishwasher. It holds dishware from about a days-worth of meals for the two of us.

Here is another view.



Notice a nice view out the window. The window also bathes the room with natural light. There is a light over the stove and another one over the sink area that are controlled separately. In this picture I have closed the dish drainer so I won't burn it while using the gas burner. There are three functioning burners on the stove – two gas and two electric – but the bigger electric plaque doesn't work. [the knob is loose and Ernie couldn't fix it, nor are we able to contact our landlady who is very hands-off as far as taking care of anything in her apartment]

Under the sink is a shelf where the cleaning supplies are kept. I also keep things like onions, garlic, potatoes and ripening avocados on that shelf. Directly under the counter (and the glass jar) is a convection/grill/microwave oven. I am still learning how to use the various features. I have somewhat mastered the grill, and can use the microwave but have yet to try to use it as a regular oven to roast or bake anything. I microwaved a couple of salmon fillets for about 2 minutes and boy was that luscious. I don't know if it was the microwave (I have always heard that is the only way to cook fish) or if the salmon was particularly fresh. It could have been really fresh, having been bought at one of the outdoor markets.

The next is a photo of the storage rack for the dishes and pots and pans. Food has to be stored in a cabinet in the living room, along with the glassware.



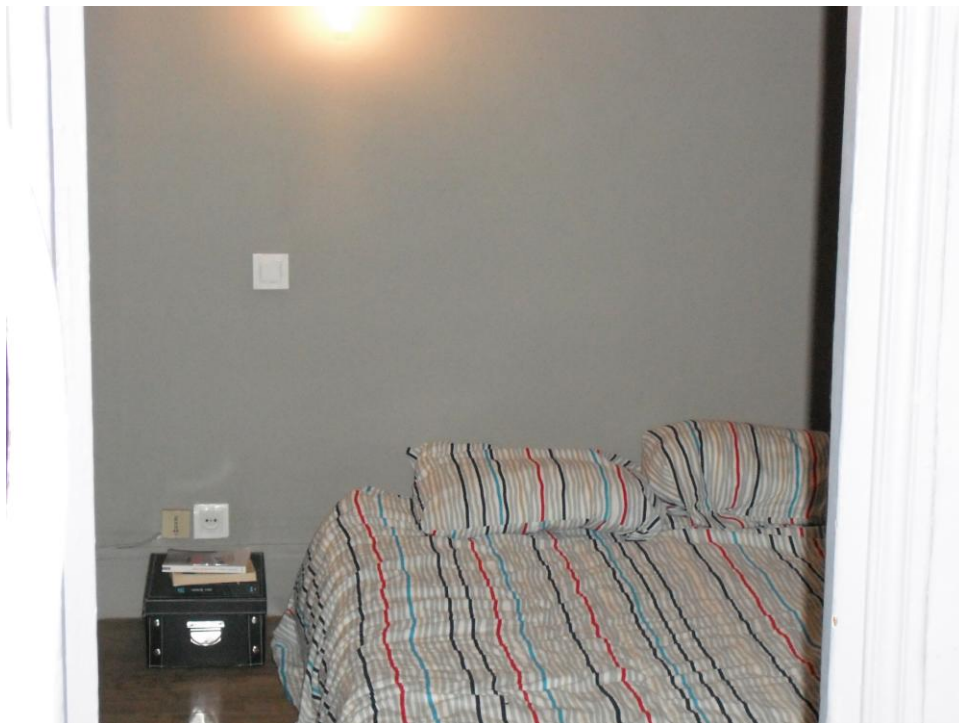
Yes, we are embarrassed to admit that we bought Pepperidge Farm cookies in this place where every street corner features a bakery with pastries to make your mouth water. Pepperidge Farm cookies keep. It's probably the preservatives in them.

The amazing thing is that the tiny kitchen functions just fine. (One summer in my youth, I spent a summer living on a 27-foot sailboat anchored at Seal Beach. The kitchen in it was even smaller; the storage area under the floor.) I wouldn't want to produce a dinner party for 8 with 4 or 5 courses in this kitchen. For one thing, we don't have enough dishes and flatware. Unless, of course, I just bought the various courses from a local charcuterie or traiteur shops, of which there are 2 or 3 on every block – Indian, Asiatic, Italian, Algerian, as well as regular French fare. Besides, most of the restaurants also offer their food to go.

Here is the living area divided into a rather nice dining room with nice views of the rooftops of Paris and the living room, which has a full sized futon for a sofa. Somebody likes red. Fortunately, we do too. (This photo was previously shown in the Journal entry titled Jan_19-23.)



Next are pictures of the master bedroom on the first level. An interesting feature of this room is the tub and sink in it. Off of the entryway is the teeny, tiny WC. It also has a wash basin. I have a picture of it following the two of the master bedroom. The bed and duvet are quite comfortable.



Both sides of the bed have an individual light with its own light switch.



A nice feature of the heating system is that the radiators can be used to hang washing. It dries quickly that way. That's good because while we have a washer in the second bathroom, there is no drier and the weather is very humid. There is lots of storage in this room. You can see three levels of cabinet in this picture and on the other side of the room is an entire wall of cabinets and hanging closet.

Then, there is the WC.



Fortunately, we are not big people. It is about 4 feet long and 3 feet wide, if that. But then, how much room do you really need?

The living room is quite large, especially since there is very little furniture. We used the cardboard box the printer came in for a telephone stand. [we bought the printer at the local version of Office Max, about 3 blocks away]. The little blue scarf covers the cardboard box, mostly. The sofa is a futon and may be the place we put our guests. Because it turns a corner, I needed two photos to show it.



Both living room and dining room have a view onto the street and of the rooftops of Paris.

There is a cabinet in the corner where we keep our glasses, food, candles and things we want out of sight. See the ornate decoration on the ceilings. The walls are quite bare and we are searching for large posters or something to hang on them. We are both used to living with bright, original art. [note added Feb. 15, we bought a nice poster at the Musee d'Orsay yesterday and will hang it]

The "telephone stand" sits on marble, which is where the fireplace once stood. The floor is parquet wood that has lost its grout so it would be dangerous to walk on it in high heels.



The apartment is warm, the kitchen functions and we are high enough to escape a lot of street noise. Almost everything works and Ernie repaired a few items that were hanging on hinges, non-functioning door knobs and moved the TV/cable/Internet to the other side of the room from where it was when we arrived. It stuck out into the living room. It is the source of our wireless network in the apartment, which works well and gives us high-speed access to the world.

It is the location that is the best part about the apartment. Out our front door is a bus that in 10 minutes takes us to Boulevard St. Michel, St. Germain and the Seine. A 5-minute walk to Blvd. Port Royal takes us to a bus that in 10 minutes takes us to the Montparnasse Train Station, which is a hub for buses all over Paris. Then there is the 10-minute walk to a Metro station that is the gateway to any place we want to go in Paris.

Our “Navigo” card is a prepaid discount card with a chip that we swipe to get into the Metro, on a bus, the boats on the Seine or many trains. The Navigo card can be charged for a week or a month at a time at any Metro station or train station. My friend Barbara took us to the Montparnasse Train Station to sign up for it as soon as we arrived. There are days we use the card 8-10 times. What a great invention.

Shopping is right out the door either to the right or to the left. A 5-minute walk takes us to the rue Mouffetard that is a pedestrian mall with open air markets everyday except Monday. Mondays many places are closed. I have an entry with photos and description of rue Mouffetard. The upstairs bathroom is brand new but I don’t think it is necessary to include it. It’s more like what one expects in the US. This entry is already long enough.