

Paris Journal 2010

Spring in Paris – Late March and Early April

It has been thrilling to watch the transition from what people say was a particularly hard and long winter in Paris, to spring.

I am surprised by how many trees there are. In the winter, leafless, they were more or less invisible. No more, as they begin to leaf and in many cases, to bloom. Of course, the place is full of daffodils and tulips.

The week before Easter (March 28) we went to the Jardin des Plantes and visited the small zoo.

This is what Wikipedia says: In the course of the French Revolution the menagerie was founded in 1793. Exotic animals in private hands were to be donated to the Menagerie in Versailles or killed, stuffed and donated to the natural scientists of the Jardin des Plantes. However, the scientists let the animals (the exact number of which is unknown) live. In due course the Royal Menagerie in Versailles (*ménagerie royale*) was dissolved and these animals were also transferred to the Jardin des Plantes. Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814) is considered to be the founder of the menagerie. He was committed to the principles of keeping exotic animals in their natural environment, having regard to their needs, placing them under scientific supervision, and allowing public access in the interest of public education.

There are some wonderful animals. Apparently some King in the 1700's gave a couple of Giraffes and then other royalty gave other exotic animals. The Giraffes were a great sensation and for some months everything in Paris had a Giraffe motif - drawings, jewelry, fabrics, and cookies.

Unfortunately, the Giraffes are gone, but there were lots of monkeys and Orangutans. There is an Orangutan named Nenette who has achieved the old age of 40, which is very old for Orangutans who usually live only to 30 or 35. In fact, she has outlived all of her keepers. A movie about her was just released in Paris in French.

There were a wide variety of birds and a great house of amphibians. We didn't go into the Reptile House but did go in to see the big cats.

Here are a few photos from the web:





We returned on Easter on April 4 and spring had sprung. The Jardin des Plants is a garden and has several buildings that house Natural History and one with an emphasis on Evolution. Unfortunately, for us they were closed for renovation and will reopen in time for summer.

Here are some of the many blooming trees. The first is a plum tree with Ernie in front of it.



Here is another plum tree, low and wide. This one has white blossoms.



This is a pretty spectacular tree. The next is the blossoms from this tree in detail.



There were lots of families and lots of dads with a child or two in tow. Weekend fathers? The carousel was fun. The animals are based on the animals in the menagerie, many who are not in it currently. Notice the Giraffes, Panda and Gorilla.



This one shows the ubiquitous scarf – even men. As the weather has changed, the color of the scarf has become more colorful.



And here is yet another, different plum tree. From the distance you can see its distinctive shape.

