

## □FRANCE

### January 19-27, 2006

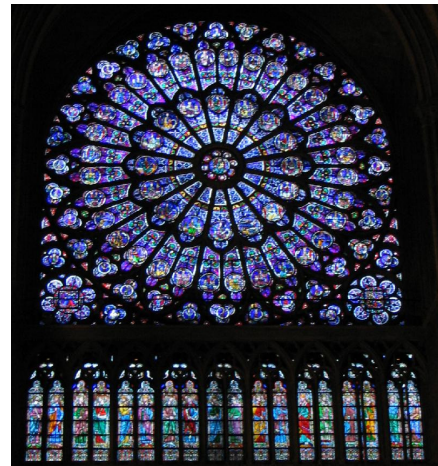
The Jeffs and Beth headed for France for a week of exploration. Some of us slept during the cross-Atlantic voyage.

#### PARIS

**Friday, January 20:** We started in Paris, where we left Charles de Gaulle Airport and took the train to our hotel. There was slight resistance on the part of the train turnstile to accept Mr. Shilling, but it was rectified in the end.

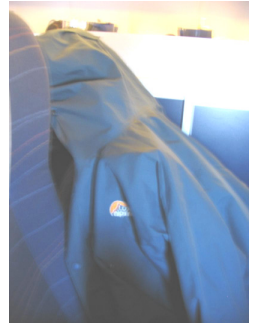
Our hotel, Hotel Familia, had a great view of Notre Dame from its top floor where one of our rooms had old wooden ceiling beams and a little balcony. The first day, it was quite rainy and we diligently looked for the Bastille. We ended up eating nearby and discovered there were no longer any physical remains of the Bastille, which is why we couldn't find it.

**Saturday, January 21:** fortified by a delicious breakfast from the bakery across from our hotel, we proceeded to walk about ten miles around Paris. We discovered a tribute to Holocaust victims at the rear of Notre Dame. We were impressed by the flying buttresses and architectural features on the exterior of Notre Dame.



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We arrived just before Masse started, so we entered the church and saw a small group of patrons join red-robed priests who chanted in Latin.



□ Outside of Notre Dame was a tribute to Charlemagne, the unifier of France.



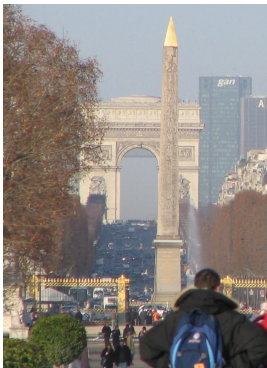
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We continued on Ile de la Cite, looking at old buildings, through the Acien Cloitre Quarter, Pont Neuf, crossing numerous bridges built initially many years ago.



□ As we were walking, we wondered about a large yellowish building across the Seine. Turns out it was the Louvre, which covered several city blocks.

We entered into the courtyard and walked northward to its end; the IM Pei entrance allowed people to enter through a subterranean staircase. The armed guards in the area were slightly frightening.



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We were amazed at the size of L'Arc de Triomphe from this distance, with the hieroglyphs in our sightline.

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We chose to visit Musee d'Orsay and focused on Impressionist paintings.

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One of the most familiar was Whistler's Mother.

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We ate a tasty lunch at a nearby shop (Beth was enthralled with her goat cheese quiche) where a very orderly group of teenagers were also eating. Towards the

end, we were joined by a group of British college students on an exchange program.

We then walked and walked and walked. Past Hotel des Invalides, with the Tomb of Napoleon to the Eiffel Tower, where long lines stretched to enter the top few tiers.

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□ We crossed and went uphill to the Palais de Chaillot, which had interesting inscriptions and teens using the area for roller blading.

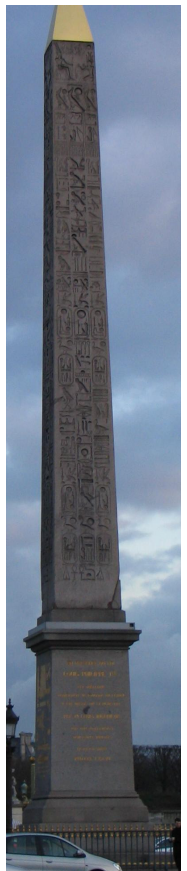


□ We then headed to the Arc de Triomphe and were surprised that it was smaller than we thought it would be! □



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□ Headed back to our hotel by passing Champs-Elysees, Palais de la Decouverte,. Passing by the Place de la Concorde,

we saw an obelisk from Egypt. And the true prototype for the Statue of Liberty before the Puritans got to her.



Found a Vietnamese restaurant near our hotel where we were the only patrons dining.



□ Throughout the day, we were intrigued by the small cars and their ingenious parking abilities.



## AVIGNON

□ **Sunday, January 22:** we took the TVG train to Avignon and checked into our next home, Hotel Angleterre and discovered our favorite French restaurant, Flunch. It is a great cafeteria-style place with many local options, wine,

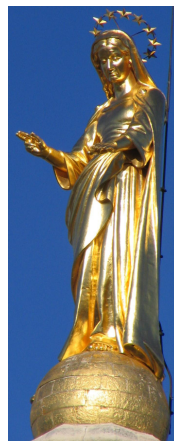


desserts, and daily vegetables. We spent the day walking around Avignon, a town surrounded by medieval walls.

We spend quite some time strolling across the Pont D'Avignon (actually Le Pont Saint-Benezet), singing; □

and exploring the Palais de Popes, a huge sprawling building that was cold and empty, but had a structural beauty to it.

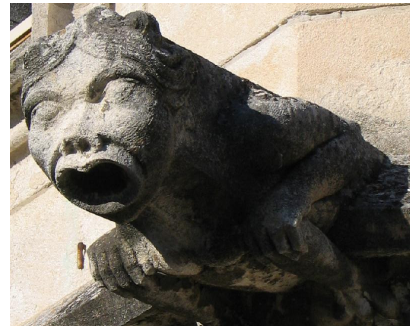
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Many different faces can be found in Palais de Popes.

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Beth did some shopping and purchased a tablecloth that she is still enjoying:



Our dinner was a German-type restaurant and we stopped at Flunch for dessert before heading back to the hotel. A strong, cold wind was blowing.

## NIMES

**Monday, January 23:** After a breakfast from a local bakery, we took the train to Nimes, the city with an accent >

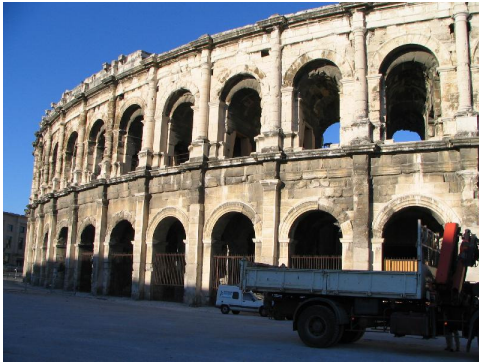
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The wind was brutal and it turns out we were experiencing the mistral, the wind that can drive people insane! We started at the Esplanade de Charles de Gaulle

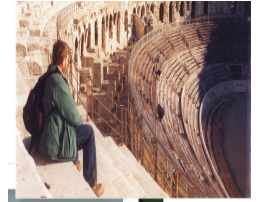
Some of us did not regret bringing our warmer coat.



□ We visited the arena, the Roman coliseum that was still being used for bullfights.



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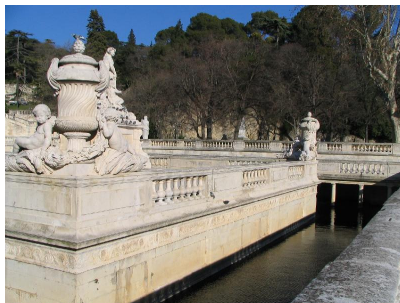


We visited the Maison Carree, an ancient Roman temple that has been preserved. Researchers determined the purpose of the temple by reconstructing the words that were on the top of the building by looking at the holes from the copper letters – cool sleuth work.

□□ We had lunch at the Haddock Café, where we violated almost all the rules of French etiquette (no café or wine, asking for substitutions). Beth was enthralled with a local painter whose work was on the restaurant walls. We past the Square Antonin and along waterways that lined the streets to the Plaza Picasso. Here we watched old men play petanque, metal balls that are thrown towards a central point and retrieved with magnets on strings. We also enjoyed a water park of ancient making. We visited the Temple of Diana, which was from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century



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□ Finally we climbed, with great fear and discomfort, a tower to overlook Nîmes – it was a great view.

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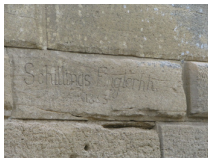
We returned to Avignon for dinner at Caveaux del Theatre – a most excellent dinner. Beth ate bull steak and we all had crème brulee.

### PONT DU GARD, ETC

**Tuesday, January 24:** today we rented a car and set out exploring. We spent the morning at Pont du Gard, marveling at its immensity, structure, and the impression the Romans must have made on the locals. We were impressed with the graffiti, some of which was quite old.



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We then drove south to Aigues Mortes, the port of Crusade departures. It was a quaint town with cobblestone streets and lots of allure.

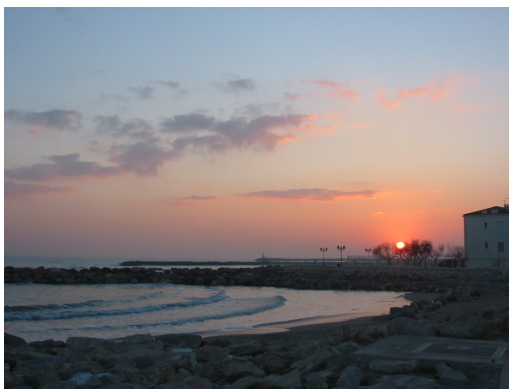
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We continued into the Camargue to Saintes-Marie-de-la-Mer. Here we played in the Mediterranean Ocean and tried to capture ourselves on film.



Due to limited activity, we decided to head back to Avignon for dinner. Had an interesting experience trying to pump gas at a station that would only take credit cards, and not US credit cards. Fortunately there were other stations. Had a great dinner at our favorite, Flunch.

## ARLES

**Wednesday, January 25:** took the train to Arles. The market was going and we enjoyed looking at the huge range of items for sale. Just amazing: spices, rabbits, fish, cheese, clothes, shoes, jewelry – you name it.

We started our tour at the far end of town, where we visited the Musee Province Antique. It really gave us a great overview of the Roman buildings and subsequent development of the town. Including some amazing tile floors, statues, and sarcophagi.

We found the garden at the Arles hospital where Van Gogh recuperated after his ear incident....



Had the best sandwiches in the world made fresh by a Tibetan Buddhist – incredible. Definitely worth a return trip.

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A small piece of the Forum was more recent buildings – very unique materials!



incorporated into use of building

□ We waited for things to reopen after the mid-day break and were disappointed by the Roman Public Baths (Thermes de Constantin). We were entertained, however, by the Museon Arlaten, the former home of Frederic Mistral. The interior courtyard housed part of the ancient Forum. The floors included a reconstruction of daily life in Provence and many examples of traditional dress and history.



□ The Roman Theatre was being reconstructed while we were there – it was impressive even with only two columns standing.

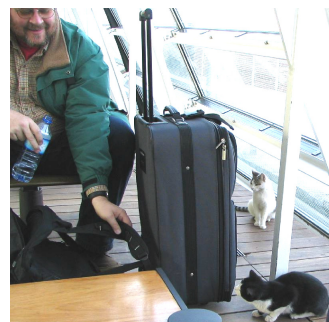


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The Arena, which, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, protected 212 houses and 2 churches, was another amazing architectural wonder.

□ We took the train back to Avignon





and walked a zillion miles to dinner at the Restaurant Le Pichet, where we had a wide variety of foods including crab tart, lamb and eggplant, cheese and mousse.

## AVIGNON VILLENEUF

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□Early the next morning, we walked across the Rhone River, across the islands to Avignon Villeneuve, where the royalty of the popes had lived to avoid the Avignon stench. After checking out the local market, we toured Saint-Andre Fort there (seen here from the Avignon side). The inside was a series of huge rooms that we



entered through narrow staircases. One was the preau de prisonniers, who left their comments.

## □PARIS



□We then boarded the train for Paris. Were surprised to see snow-covered fields on the way and snow fell in Paris. Attended to sore feet, purchased promised cheese at the Cheese Shop, and had an extravagant dinner, with free champagne due to mentioning our hotel's desk clerk. Again, we had a view of Notre Dame from our window.



## TO THE USA

With sore feet, we shuttled back to the airport and headed back to the US via Iceland. With only a minor delay due to an absent passenger, whose baggage had to be removed, the remainder of our flights home were uneventful.