

EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs | 2 grand-boys

Traveling locally

The weather has remained consistently warm, reaching a hot 33°C today. To make the most of our sightseeing adventures, we've adopted the habit of rising early and setting out to reach our chosen attractions by approximately 8am. This strategy comes with its advantages; the morning hours offer cooler temperatures, and there's ample parking space to be found. However, there's a drawback for Heather, as many shops have yet to open at this early hour. This results in more time for strolling for me and less for leisurely browsing for Heather. But as soon as the church bells chime at 9am, the crowds begin to pour in, and the day starts to heat up.

It never fails to astonish me how rapidly the once quiet, deserted streets transform into bustling thoroughfares filled with vehicles and leisurely-paced pedestrians once the bells commence tolling. It's commerce time! It's amusing to observe women inspecting and contemplating whether to purchase trinkets from the "high-quality" stalls at the Bonnieux market today, while the men stand back, rolling their eyes. It's a universal scene, played out all over the world. And then, I find myself agreeing to buy a sun hat! I suppose you have to embrace the local style and join the guys with their fedoras.

Parking in many of the nearby villages poses a genuine challenge. Some villages have well signed designated spacious parking lots, while others allocate various areas for visitors in not so obvious places. Finding a parking place is always a chore, particularly for motorhomes with barriers to stop them. We're often uncertain about whether we need a parking ticket, and navigating the ticketing machines can be quite perplexing. I can't help but feel that it's a bit unreasonable for villages to actively attract visitors to their attractions with a hefty entry fee (and obvious add-on income to local businesses such as gift shops and restaurants) and still expect them to pay for parking. But that's just my perspective.



Further Afield

The village of Roussillon was the target for today. We have actually been there before in 2015. It is known for the ocre deposits on which it is built. For centuries the ocre has been mined and sent around the world. The structures of the village itself are obviously made of the local product and thus have unique colours that range from pink to cream and all the shades in between.

We managed to find a park up the mountain somewhat and walked to find the city centre but although we walked around a we could not orient ourselves and had trouble finding any "main" streets. Because we only had a park spot for 45 minutes we had to return and shift to another location. This time we were near the walls of the old quarry site that now has a life as a walking track. We tramped around with lots of other tourists. By this time it was about 9.30am and getting hot. Boarded walks took us down into the depths and enabled us to get a good look at the strange shapes and colours of the remaining deposits.

I don't think anyone can help taking some home on their shoes - I'd hate to walk the track in the wet.



Roussillon



Roussillon

Le Pont Julien was our next stop. This bridge is simply amazing. It dates from 3 BC!!! It was originally built on the Via Domitia, an important Roman road which connected Italy to the Roman territories in France. It was used for car traffic until 2005 and now only takes pedestrians and cyclists. We scrambled down to the currently dry river bed and admired its structure with a bus load of other admirers. We met three Australians in this group but they had to leave fairly quickly whilst we went to the other side of the bridge to spend more time with the “old girl”. Note the holes in the big pylons - these enabled flood waters to pass through. Siggie decided he had to cycle over “Big Julie” and in the process found a lovely bike track we might come back to next week.

Bonnieux was on the way home to Lauris. I happened to know that a market was to be held there today so suggested we try for a park and “enjoy” the experience. I think the place did dint Siggie’s “no browsing mode” a bit because we both really enjoyed the village and its ambience. Brightly coloured produce was massed on many stalls that wound up the steep, narrow streets. Bonnieux is known as one of the most beautiful villages in France for good reason. We acquired some fresh fruit and veggies and decided on a street stall lunch of pizza. Yum yum.

After we got home it was an afternoon sleep for three hours (after all we are retired), and then a swim in our private pool. Despite the heat of the day, the pool was actually freezing to get into. Once in it was quite refreshing however and Siggie looked dapper in the hat I bought for him today. My husband likes to skinny dip.









