

The background of the page is decorated with a light purple floral and lace pattern. On the left side, there are stylized flowers and butterflies in shades of purple and orange. A vertical lace border runs down the center of the page.

France

Part 1

*Paris to
Avignon*

June 27 - 28, 2015



June 27, 2015 - On the plane from Athens to Paris we flew over the Alps and I took these photos from the airplane window.





I booked my 10-day bus tour through Trafalgar Tours. Since I was late getting into the Charles de Gaulle airport from the 5 hour layover in Athens and missed the shuttle that Trafalgar provided, I had to hire special transfer from the airport to the Evergreen Laurel Hotel in Paris.





The room was nice although it was just for a short evening and night of sleep. I was also too late to miss the introduction dinner for the group on the bus tour. After a long day of traveling, I soaked in a hot bath and went to bed.





June 28, 2015 - In the morning I had another all you can eat buffet breakfast at the hotel and sought out others that were wearing the Trafalgar name badge. I sat down with a man and woman from Australia, and then another lady from Australia joined us. I met our tour director, Cindy, and we all boarded the bus to drive through Paris to the train station.





The tour bus was comfortable, well air conditioned and with very large windows all around, which provided a great view from any seat. I had my first glimpse of Paris and the Eiffel Tower in the distance and snapped these photos from the bus window.









We drove along the Seine, and Paris looked lovely at my first glimpse. But we were not spending any time here yet until the end of the trip. We were headed to the train station to catch a train to the south of France.





We arrived at the train station and gathered around Cindy as she explained the plan for the day.





Cindy explained that we were to get some "to-go" food to take on the train for lunch, while she went to get our train tickets. We all met up back at the appointed spot. Cindy took a head count and we headed for our coach on the high speed bullet train. Our bus driver, Francois, would be driving the bus down and meet up with us later.





The train took about 3 hours while we ate lunch comfortably on our table trays. When we got further south, we passed many fields of sunflowers and a few lavender fields. The south is known for lavender fields, but they weren't all quite in bloom at this time of year.



When the train pulled into the station, we had another bus take us to the ancient Roman ruin of the Pond Du Gard aqueduct where we were met by a local tour guide.







The aqueduct is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is thought to have finished construction somewhere around 60 A.D. It is amazing that it is still standing today. It was built 3 tiers high of arches, which can be seen in the photo on the right.





We climbed a lot of stairs to get to this level. Our local tour guide seen in the picture on the left had the keys to that locked gated door, so that we could enter and actually walk through where the water once flowed. We had to walk up these crooked stone spiral stairs.





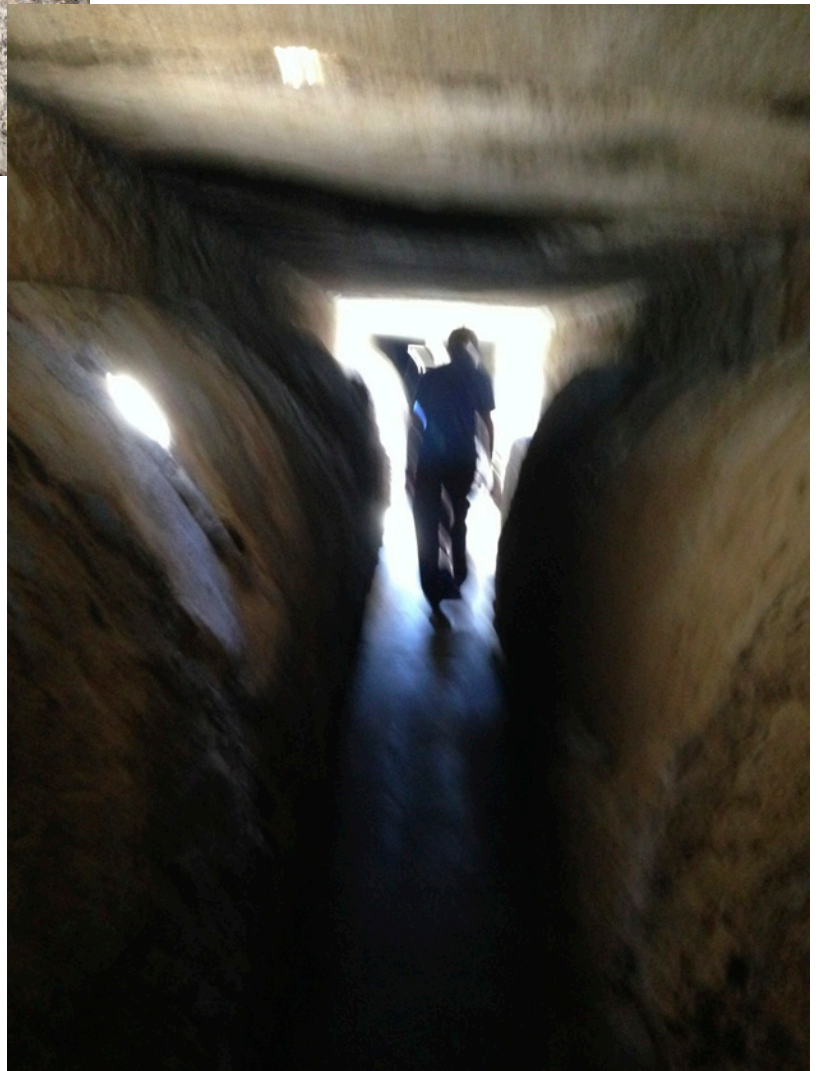
Where it was once all covered, there were a few spots open where we could stand upright and take in the view. In the photo below our guide pointed out the calcification marks from the water flow from so long ago.





It was windy up there. On each of our tours through Italy and France we were given a little audio box where we could put small headphones in our ears to listen to the tour guide.

This picture is blurry probably because I had to duck my head going through the parts that still had the stone covering.





It was very dark in some parts where all the stone ceiling was still in tact.

When we exited at the other end, we had to walk down to the walkway level to cross back over the river.







On our walk back to the tourist center, our guide pointed out this thousand year old olive tree still producing olives.

After stopping for ice cream at the tourist center and browsing in the shops we met in the parking lot to see that Francois was there with our original Trafalgar bus. We boarded the bus to drive to Avignon. That is a bridge that only goes part way across the river.





Avignon is another old walled city, and Francois had to maneuver the bus very carefully to get through the tight entryway to the city to park the bus.







Our hotel was just a short walk from the parked bus.





We checked into our rooms, which were lovely. Francois was in charge of unloading our luggage while Cindy checked on each bag to make sure they all got to our right rooms. We would find our luggage outside our room.





I had this lovely view of
a garden outside my
room window.





Cindy took us on a short walking tour orientation to the city of Avignon, and then gave us free time to roam on our own to sightsee, take photos or shop. Since Avignon is known for lavender, there were numerous shops selling lavender soaps and potpourri. Just walking the cobblestone streets the smells were lovely. This is the opera house.





Cindy said the French love carousels and that they're everywhere, and we did see a lot of them during our tour.





This building is called the Palace of the Popes.





This church in Avignon is
also called Notre Dame
and once again dedicated
to St. Mary.





Beautiful distressed window shutters.





That evening we had a tour group dinner served to us at the hotel. That dessert on the left was unbelievable. Chocolate drippy fudge in the middle of that chocolate cake, and the peach ice cream tasted so fresh like handmade with large chunks of fresh peaches.



