

# EUROPE TRAVELOGUE

## SEPTEMBER 4 TO 27, 2015

So, we embark on yet another "adventure." By the time we return to the U.S., we will have visited no fewer than *seven* European countries, albeit some of them for just the short time that it takes to change planes. We'll fly on Delta/KLM nonstop from Seattle to Amsterdam and transfer to another Delta/KLM plane that will take us to Venice. We'll spend three evenings in Venice, then board an Adriatic cruise ship that will stop at several ports in Croatia and one in Montenegro. Upon our return to Venice, we'll fly on Swiss Global Air to Zurich, where we will rent a car and drive north to Germany's Black Forest for five days. We'll then drive to Lyon where we will board a Rhône cruise ship that will take us to Avignon. From the nearby Marseille airport, we'll fly on a Delta/Air France plane to Amsterdam and from there back to the U.S. Assuming that all goes as planned, that is.

In my many earlier travelogs, I've paid tribute to my wife for her brilliant planning of our journey. This time, however, most of the work was done by our intrepid travel agent (Stefan Bisciglia of *Specialty Cruise and Villas*, a family-run travel agency in Gig Harbor), who reserved our cabins on the Tauck and Uniworld cruise ships, booked us for an extra night at the hotel in Venice, made the reservations at two hotels in Germany, and arranged for all of the plane tickets and seat reservations.

Nevertheless, we (i.e., Lee) did yeoman (yeowoman? yo, woman?) work in choosing our staterooms on the cruise ships, deciding on the cruise excursions, and finding points of interest in the Black Forest and in the various ports that the cruise ships will visit.

In the course of the trip, I took some 2035 pictures!! Oh, the joy of using a digital camera that does not require purchases of film and film processing! Only a relatively small number\* have been uploaded to my

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\*By this I mean a mere 1700 or so. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

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Picasa account: some of the rejected pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. On the other hand, one can never have too many pictures of Venetian canals, art galleries, charming Adriatic and French ports, and the Black Forest, right? I've posted the pictures in **four** separate albums at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>

### FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4 TO SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

In contrast to most overseas travel days when we are rushed to get our suitcases packed and our household things put away before Jana comes to clean, today is unbelievably (and unbearably) slow. Our flight does not leave until nearly 6:10 pm, so ... having stuffed books, magazines, driving instructions, toiletries, USB cables, power cords ... and, oh yes, clothes into our suitcases in the morning, we have several hours to ponder: What in the hell have we forgotten to do?

We plan to leave for Seatac a little after 2:00 today. Why so early? This is the start of the Labor Day weekend and the newspapers have been warning that the roads will be clogged with desperate citizens beating a retreat out of town. There are also hints that parking at the airport will be difficult to find. Furthermore, last Friday when we left our meeting with our financial advisors in downtown Seattle in mid-afternoon, it took us two-and-a-half hours to get home (for what should have been a 45- to 60-minute trip). The reasons? An accident on I-5 in Federal Way and (of all things) a car fire on WA-16.

Once we arrive at the airport (if we do) and get past security (if we can), we plan to relax in Delta's business class lounge. I imagine that there'll be a fashionably late dinner served on the plane, but we can slake our thirst and quiet our hunger pangs by having drinks and snacks in the lounge. We've also decided to drive to the airport rather than use the Gig Harbor Taxi Service. The reason? Seatac is

offering a sale for use of its parking garage. Really! A legitimate sale! Instead of charging \$130 per week and \$28 per day, the figures are \$99 and \$19, respectively. This is the same promotion that they had last March - is it too much to hope that they'll have similar promotions when we fly again?

So what happens? There is no traffic to speak of ... and we reach the airport parking lot in a near-record time of 45 minutes! And, contrary to the reports of limited parking spaces, there are numerous vacant spaces on all levels of the garage. We check our bags at the Delta desk and are pleased (and surprised) to see that both of our boarding passes say *TSA Precheck*, which means that we should be able to breeze through the security procedure. But that depends on our choosing the correct entry point to security. We, alas, do not. So we do not get to experience the privilege of being pre-approved. Sigh.

Rather than going to Delta's Sky Lounge (which, from memory, is not especially wonderful), Lee suggests that we go to the newly opened Centurion Lounge, available to AMEX Platinum Card holders (to which group I do not belong but my free-spending female roommate does). It's in Terminal B, a considerable distance from the South Satellite, from which our plane will depart, but what the hell - we're young and we have sturdy legs. (Actually, we are deficient on both accounts, but we're pretty sure that we'll be able to get to the gate on time.) The lounge is pleasant, not at all crowded, and offers snacks, beer, wine, coffee, soft drinks, and assorted munchies. As we'll be well fed once we board the plane, I opt for just a coffee and some nuts and pretzels. While in the lounge, I begin reading the August 24 edition of *The New Yorker* and, with my Kindle, the beginning of another Harry Hole book by Jo Nesbø: *The Devil's Star*.

An information board says that boarding will begin at 5:15, but it's actually delayed until 5:40 "because the plane needed cleaning." Oh. We are in Business Class, seats 3A and 3C, in an Airbus A330-300. Our seats are across the aisle from one another and are angled so as to allow lie-flat reclining. Still, we are more or less within the same zip code, almost within shouting distance over the noise of the engines. (Speaking of shouting, prior to takeoff an older couple spot a young man whom they know from somewhere/sometime, and they engage in a getting-reconnected-and-what's-been-going-on-in-your-life shout-fest from aisle two to aisle six. Oh, well, at least they all sit down once instructed to do so.)

Menus are distributed and the choices look very much like what Delta has been offering on their overseas flights for the past several years. All items are rendered in English and in Dutch; the latter sound more exciting, not to mention more exotic and decidedly more unpronounceable, so I'll give both. We start with Grilled Shrimp with Roasted Corn Salsa (*Gegrilde Garnalen met Gerosterde Maïssalsa*) followed by two starters: Beet and Goat Cheese Salad (*Salade met Bietjes en Geitenkaas*) and Farmers Market Vegetable Soup (*Groentensoep van de Boerenmarkt*). (My poor spell checker is about to blow a fuse!) Given that the beef tenderloin was dry and tasteless on our March trip to London, I choose as my main dish Chicken Cacciatore with Broccolini and Parmesan Polenta (*Kip Cacciatore met broccolini en polenta met permazaanse kaas*). I also ask for a glass of the California Chardonnay that they have on offer.

Before we taxi to the runway, the captain announces an expected flying time of 8 hr 57 min with an estimated arrival at 1:00. (And now I'm totally confused. An ETA at 1:00 is exactly as advertised, but with an ETD at 6:10 PDT and, taking into account the nine-hour time difference, the flying time should be 9 hr 50 min. Maybe I misheard his saying 8:57? Maybe he misspoke? Maybe he doesn't understand time zones? Maybe I don't?) Even though the plane boards late, we leave on time: push-back from the jetway occurs at 6:15 and we are air-borne at 6:33 on a northwest trajectory, right across downtown Seattle and heading toward Canada. The initial 20 minutes are bumpy, but the flight becomes much smoother shortly thereafter. While waiting for dinner, I read more of *The Devil's Star*.

The first two courses are served at 7:30 and 7:45, followed by the main course at 8:00. (I decide against having any dessert; just coffee is enough.) At 9:30, I'm feeling drowsy, so I close the Kindle and work on today's *New York Times* crossword puzzle, a difficult one as is often the case on Fridays. At 10:15 I turn off the lamp, recline my seat, close my eyes, and manage only some 30-45 minutes of sleep. Typical! I keep my eyes shut until 12:15, then give up and resume reading. I move my watch eight hours ahead to 8:15 am. *This is a mistake* - the time differential is *nine* hours, as I'll discover later; unfortunately, I also put an eight-hour delay into my camera, so for the first few days all of the times recorded for the pictures

will be wrong by an hour.

I decide to take on the chess game that's built into the plane's entertainment system, but set my "opponent" at a low level; I win as the stupid fool blunders and fails to discern my clever attack. Ha! (Next time, I should try a higher level, eh?) I try playing Bejeweled but fail miserably (my score is barely positive) and I can't figure out the word game Scramble. Oh, well, at least I'm a certified chess master (lowest level). At 9:30 am, I return to my reading; we are now south of Iceland and heading toward northern Europe.

At 10:30, breakfast is served: Seasonal Fresh Fruit (*Vers Fruit van het Seizoen*), Tomato Basil Frittata with Chicken Apple Sausage and Mushrooms (*Frittata met Tomaat en Basilicum met kip-appelsaucjsje en paddenstoelen*). We are crossing Scotland, right over Glasgow (or that's what the computerized map shows, but any glimpse of the ground is obscured by heavy cloud cover). Skirting the eastern coast of England, past Newcastle upon Tyne and Kingston upon Hall (I love those names) we are over the open water and descending into Amsterdam. The clouds break and we can see huge tracts of farm lands, amazingly close to this large city. We land at 11:30 and reach the terminal at noon. It is a very big airport, with very long taxi ways. [Of course, every time given in this and the preceding paragraph is wrong by one hour, so in fact we land at 12:30, a little ahead of schedule. I realize my error before the plane reaches the jetway and I adjust my watch accordingly.]

Although it's but one capital letter away, it's a long long hike from Terminal D (international flights) to Terminal C, from which our flight to Venice will depart. We clear Passport Control quickly, unlike the often long delays that one encounters at Seattle. I had forgotten, until this intra-airport trek, how incredibly tall the Dutch are - especially the younger generation: men and women in their 20s tower over us. It's so humbling! It's also interesting how many of the signs around the airport are in English - not English and Dutch, but English alone. On our flight to Amsterdam, all of the on-board announcements (at least those that we're actually able to hear and/or understand) were in English, only. I wonder what mixture of English, Dutch, and (perhaps) Italian we'll hear on the Venice flight. And the answer (as we will learn): English and Dutch, no Italian.

With only a little over an hour before departure, it's hardly worth seeking out the Delta/KLM lounge, so we head directly to the gate area. On the way, we stop at an ATM to get some euros. Nearby is a take-out counter that offers juices, sandwiches, and salads; the staff all wear shirts emblazoned with "Personal Juicer."

Our assigned seats are 2A and 2C on this Boeing 737; like many short hauls within Europe, all seating is three-and-three across, but to distinguish Business Class from "steerage" Seat 2B is left empty. Right on schedule, the doors are closed, we are pushed back, and we are air-borne in short order. Our estimated flying time is 1 hour 25 minutes. The cloud cover is fairly thick, but from time to time we do get views of the ground. I spend my time reading the September issue of *The Progressive* and the Kindle version of *The Devil's Star*. With a tummy that's quite full from the previous flight, I turn down the offer of lunch, but I do have coffee and some cookies. We enter Italy over the Alps that form the border with Austria, but there's really too much cloud cover to appreciate them. As we near Venice, we are astounded by the amount of water surrounding very small pockets of land. In particular, there are what appear to be (and actually turn out to be) sea lanes from the airport to the city: water taxis and other small boats are zooming in well-defined corridors both to and from the airport.

According to Wikipedia:

Venice is a city in northeastern Italy sited on a group of 118 small islands separated by canals and linked by bridges. It is located in the marshy Venetian Lagoon which stretches along the shoreline, between the mouths of the Po and the Piave Rivers ... In 2009, there were 270,098 people residing in Venice's commune of whom around 60,000 live in the historic city of Venice (*Centro storico*); 176,000 in *Terraferma* (the mainland), mostly in the large frazioni (roughly equivalent to "parishes" or "wards" in other countries) of Mestre and Marghera; and 31,000 on other islands in the lagoon.

The Marco Polo airport is relatively small and is situated on the eastern shore of the mainland, jutting out into the huge Venetian Lagoon. The plane lands at 4:03 and, because there is very little air traffic and very short taxi lanes, is at the terminal in just a few minutes. (It would be nice if luggage retrieval were equally efficient, but it's not.) Just as the plane reaches the jetway, the skies open with torrential rains that make an ominous pounding noise on the roof of the cabin; we're fortunate that we can stay covered, at least for the time being.

In the arrival hall, we are met by Tauck employee Francesco and his muscular assistants. Francesco whispers that they look like gangsters, but are quite reliable (as they make off with our suitcases). The rain has stopped. We travel by van a relatively short distance to the "taxi" stand (i.e., the pier where the *water taxis* arrive). Several of these are commercial (i.e., like land-based taxis in other cities) but one is dedicated to travel between the airport and the Hotel Danieli (<http://www.danielihotelvenice.com/>), our "home" for the next three evenings. The taxi arrives after a few minutes; we and our luggage and another couple\* from Bend, OR are loaded on board - and we are off! Fast!! Our driver, undoubtedly trained

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\*Because none of the Tauck travelers whom we meet authorized the use of their names in this travelogue - not that they even know of its existence - I'll refrain from identifying them by name.

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on the streets of Manhattan, speeds along at a very rapid pace, bumping and making like a bucking bronco, sending spray in all directions. Unlike the streets of Manhattan, there are no "vehicles" in our lane, so we do not fear a collision. Capsizing, on the other hand, is a constant fear. From time to time, it rains a bit. We and the other two passengers are under cover, but our suitcases are not.

The historic old city of Venice is, actually, a small island. As the water taxi nears it, the driver slows down and makes his way to the south shore (we have approached from the north). Going very slowly now, he turns into a small canal that leads right to one of the doorways to the hotel (as shown to the lower left).

We (and our luggage) are "downloaded" and we make our way to the reception desk. Although we and the other Tauck couple are the *only* people checking in, the procedure takes an inordinately long time. (Does this fit our pre-conceived notion of Italian "efficiency"? Yes it does!). But while the process is going on, we have the opportunity to scan the lobby of this very elegant and



venerable hotel. It is truly magnificent, although several orders of magnitude more ornate than would be my preference. (Tomorrow morning, I'll take pictures of the public areas - they'll be posted at my Picasa site.) But for the time being, here's one from the hotel's own web site (to the upper right).

According to the hotel's URL: "Remarkable and luxurious, Hotel Danieli is made up of three beautiful



Venetian palazzi dating back to the 14th, 19th, and 20th Centuries, featuring hand-made Murano glass chandeliers, precious rugs, hand-carved marble columns, and many original antique pieces." The central building (called *Palazzo Dandolo*) is separated from the one



to its left (*Danielino*) by a narrow alley; and from the one to its right (*Casa Nuova*) by the canal on which we arrived. Our room is in *Casa Nuova*. The good news is that we do not have to swim across the canal to get there. Instead, at the top of the lobby staircase (shown in the picture on the preceding page) we turn to the right and walk over a covered bridge (behind the white pedestrian bridge in the photo just above to the right) and into the next wing, where we find an elevator that will take us to our room on the "second" (which is really the third) floor. As we look from the bridge down to the canal, we see not only the water taxis but also many gondolas, piloted by gondoliers, most of whom wear traditional horizontal striped shirts and hats with a single tassel. And at the front of the hotel, looking out onto the wide Venice lagoon, there are numerous gondolas and gondoliers for hire. (We'll get to ride in a gondola two days from now.)

Our room is large (king bed, dresser, night stands, a large bathroom, a capacious walk-in closet) and, *mirabile dictu*, air-conditioning that has made the room too cold even for me!! There is a thermostat for adjusting the temperature, but it's tempting to leave it where it's set lest, somehow, we go immediately from icy conditions to tropical. Everything is lovely ... except for this: we discover that our Delsey hard-sided suitcases are not water-proof! During the torrential downpour at the airport, they must have been sitting on the tarmac long enough for rain to enter through the fabric on which the zippers are located and where the two sides of the suitcase are hinged. Thus, clothes near these locations in both suitcases are wet. Very wet. We hang the soggy items on towel racks and wherever else we can find places for them.

The front door of the hotel opens onto the Riva Degli Schiavone, a wide promenade separating the building from the lagoon. It is packed with tourists as well as with vendors and scammers (many of them recent arrivals from Africa) who display their wares (such as faux Louis Vuitton handbags, laser pointers, and who knows what else) at intervals along the paved walk. Were the day less wet (as it will be the next two days), the crowds would be enormous - tourists of all ages and nationalities strolling alongside the lagoon. The Danieli is at about the midpoint of the promenade which stretches from Saint Mark's Square and the Doge's Palace at the western end to the Arsenale at the eastern. It then continues along the waterfront, but changes its name each time it crosses another canal.

Hotels, restaurants, and shops line the esplanade; on the water side, there are boats for hire, fishing trips, and (best of all) gondola rides. Because the restaurant at our hotel is quite expensive, Lee had done some research and found a reasonably priced restaurant (<http://www.hotelwildner.com/en/dining/menu>) associated with the Wildner Hotel, about a ten-minute walk to the east along the esplanade; it is also well-reviewed on TripAdvisor. The afternoon's rain is tapering off, but still there are umbrella-wielding pedestrians and puddles to avoid. The restaurant is outside the hotel, but protected on all sides by tarps and clear plastic sides; there is also indoor seating, which is where people without reservations are directed. We share an order of "Sardines and scampi In Saor (marinated in vinegar, onions, raisins and pine nuts) with polenta Bianca perla" (€17). For our mains, we each have "Fish fillet with seasonal vegetables"\* (€25), along with a half-bottle of "Soave Azienda Agricola Monte del Fra" (€16), and bread

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\*Which turns out to be pan-fried turbot with baby zucchini and a squash blossom.

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(€2) - probably pricier than many of the restaurants that we frequent at home, but a "bargain" in this notoriously expensive city. The food is excellent, the service smooth, and the passing scene interesting. Following dinner, we return to the hotel and are in bed by 11:00, the conclusion of a very long day.

## Sunday, September 6

I wish that this didn't happen, but it's a regular "event" whenever we travel to Europe: I'm wide-awake at 2:15 and, unable to sleep; I get up at 3:00 to read my Kindle book so that I don't disturb "Sleeping Beauty" by turning on the room lights. At 4:00, I return to bed and manage to sleep until 6:30; Lee gets up at 7:00.

Breakfast is served in the Terrazza Danieli on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of *Danielino*, the building to the left. To get there, we take the elevator in *Casa Nuova* (where we are staying) down to floor two, walk across the

bridge over the canal and into the main building (*Palazzo Dandolo*), find another elevator, go to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor (which is really the 5<sup>th</sup>), and walk from the main building to the restaurant. There is indoor seating, but the morning is sunny and warm, so we choose to sit on the outdoor terrace, protected by an awning (which doesn't do a really good job of keeping away the pigeons, gulls, and sparrows, all of whom scour the floor looking for crumbs that might have fallen). The view is spectacular, but (alas) I've left my camera in the room; I'll remember to bring it to breakfast tomorrow. The buffet spread is substantial, not the most extensive that we've seen but still more than satisfactory. Following breakfast, I retrieve my camera and take several pictures of the lobby and adjoining public rooms - these are posted at Picasa.

Because the scheduled Tauck events don't begin until this afternoon, we're on our own. We begin by visiting the Gallerie dell' Accademia, about a 25-minute walk from the hotel. We leave the hotel at 10:00 and walk past the Doge's Palace and St. Mark's Square (where the esplanade ends), then wind along various city streets (map in hand - and needed!) until we finally reach the Ponte dell' Accademia which takes us across the Grand Canal and to the island where several museums are found. The morning is warm, the sun is hot, the walk is surprisingly strenuous (we cross several smaller bridges over the minor canals), and, of course, the museum is not air-conditioned. According to the museum's web site, it houses "a very rich collection of Venetian paintings from Veneto, as well from the Bizantine and Gothic fourteenth century to the artists of the Renaissance: Bellini, Carpaccio, Giorgione, Veronese, Tintoretto and Tiziano until Gianbattista Tiepolo and the Vedutisti of the eighteenth century, Canaletto, Guardi, Bellotto, Longhi." The syntax and grammar are a bit muddled, eh? And if these names sound like types of pasta, well that's your problem!

The "star" of the show is Venice's native son, Tintoretto (whose name was really Jacopo Comin\*), 1518-

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\*Wikipedia informs us: "In his youth, Tintoretto was also known as Jacopo Robusti as his father had defended the gates of Padua in a way that others called robust, against the imperial troops during the War of the League of Cambrai (1509–1516). His real name 'Comin' has only recently been discovered by Miguel Falomir, the curator of the Museo del Prado, Madrid, and was made public on the occasion of the retrospective of Tintoretto at the Prado in 2007. Comin translates to the spice cumin in the local language."

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1594. I take many pictures, but reject most of them because of poor lighting and the ineptitude of the photographer. Only a few are posted at Picasa, alas without an indication of who the artist might be. But you can see several of the paintings in the collection, accompanied by the artist's name, at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallerie\\_dell'Accademia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallerie_dell'Accademia).

Following this, at about 11:30 we walk to the nearby Peggy Guggenheim Collection where the art is some 400 years more recent than that at the Gallerie <http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/> There is an excellent outdoor sculpture garden that features works by Arp, Giacometti, Hepworth, and Moore (among others). Peggy Guggenheim\* (1898-1979) is buried here, along with her 14 dogs (sporting such names as

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\*Her biography reveals a rich (in both senses of the word) and varied life, both in the U.S. and Europe; if interested, read about her at <http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/museum/peggy.html> Among the artists shown in the collection is Max Ernst to whom she was married for two years.

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Peacock, Sir Herbert, and Hong Kong). (See the pictures at Picasa). The featured exhibit, indoors (for which photography is prohibited), is of the works of Jackson Pollock and his older brother by 10 years, Charles along with Thomas Hart Benton who was a strong influence. In the permanent collection are works by Calder, Dubuffet, Kelly, Rothko, Stella, and the rest of that 20<sup>th</sup> century gang. We return to the sculpture garden for a brief lecture (in English!) about the life of Peggy Guggenheim.

After some refreshments (ice cream\* and coffee) in the museum's cafeteria, we make our way back to

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\*It's chocolate ice cream, but it's much too soft. It also takes "forever" to get our check, and even longer for the server to collect our money, so Lee walks over to the cash register to pay.

the hotel. The afternoon is even hotter, but in our room I can exclaim TGIA! (Thank God it's Air-Conditioned!) and I sit in the cold wind that is issuing from the vent, sweating profusely but eventually cooling off and getting dry. As noted yesterday, I'm amazed to find an Italian hotel whose air-conditioning is even more robust than most any hotel in the U.S.

**UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS (NOT THAT THEY'RE NOT TRUE) ABOUT VENETIANS AND THE VISITORS WHO COME HERE:**

- It's truly depressing how many New York Yankees hats one sees; some even have a ghastly yellow background with green lettering, a color mixture that would rival the uniform colors of the University of Oregon football team.
- This is Europe, so where are the dogs? We see only three during our long walks to and from the museums.
- We see surprisingly few Muslim headdresses for the young (and also older) women.
- The crowds seem to be mostly Italian. Whether they are locals or visitors from other parts of Italy, we can't tell.
- The walkers, strollers, amblers, sight-seers, etc. have no "sense of space" - that is, they flail their arms when talking and they slide from side to side, oblivious of the American couple who are trying to get past.
- The crowds are larger than normal because a regatta is taking place this afternoon, featuring gondolas piloted by one or more gondoliers; there are stands for viewing, but they are full. But from the bridge in our hotel, we can see a few of the contestants.
- Gratifying is that there are surprisingly few cigarette smokers in the throngs. Given the heavy aroma of cigarette smoke around the airport when we arrived, we had expected to find the same in the city.
- Depressing is the number of visitors with selfie-sticks. Why, why, why do these people (Millennials, I assume) insist upon imposing their sappy faces over the tourist attractions that they've come to see?

The lack of sleep last night is catching up with me, so I take a brief nap from about 2:30 to 3:00. At 3:30, we head to the hotel lobby to meet the Tauck tour guides. We had already received a packet at the hotel desk, indicating the schedule for today, tomorrow, and Monday. There are approximately 114 Tauck passengers and we are arbitrarily divided into three groups. Lee and I are in the group assigned to Carmen Núñez; the other two guides are Laura Núñez, her younger sister, and Steve Grosse (who is nobody's sister). The Núñezes are from Spain, Carmen from Madrid and Laura from Barcelona (if I recall) and have been doing Tauck tours for years. Steve is also an old hand at this - we learn, later in the trip, that he was born in Germany of German-Hungarian parents, did his undergraduate work in political science at Göttingen and received a masters degree in international relations at Kent State before returning to Europe. Over the course of the next nine days, we'll have the opportunity to interact with all three of the guides - they will prove to be knowledgeable, smart, hard-working, and competent. What more could one ask?

So we meet Carmen, are given an alphabetical list of all of the Tauck\* passengers, and we turn in a form

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\*Most of the passengers are married couples (some of whom do not use the same last name) but there is a significant number of single people (or married people who have left a spouse behind). Nearly all are from the U.S. Sprinkled among us are a few Canadians and two couples from Australia. There's also a couple from Chile (whom we never meet) and a pair from the Virgin Islands (about

whom much more in a short while). There will be an approximately equal number of non-Tauck people aboard *Le Lyrial*, a relatively small ocean-going ship (which we will not board until the day after tomorrow) owned by *Compagnie du Ponant*, a French company. In Tauck's promotional materials, we are advised that many of our fellow passengers will be French and may have limited (or no) English; we are also admonished to be nice to them, because experience suggests that they can become jealous when they see the quality of our tours, our Tauck-only lectures, and other perks. I say, "In your face, French swine!" - except that I'd never, ever say such a thing.

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indicating how many suitcases we want to have transferred to the ship on Tuesday. Following that, we return to our room where we read and use the internet, prior to the 6:00 reception and dinner in the Marco Polo Banquet Room, located on the ground floor (0<sup>th</sup> floor?) of Danielino.

As we descend the last few stairs to the reception, we note something ... unusual. On the steps in front of us are a man and woman, probably in their 70s (although Lee guesses 80s) who are wearing very casual clothes, too casual for a formal dinner. But what's truly striking is that each of them sports a tiara! And each has a sash like those that are worn by beauty contest winners! We learn no more about them this evening, but over the next several days facts (at least we think that they are facts) come to our attention. Apparently the story is as follows.

They come from the Virgin Islands, but had to take four flights (first to Miami, then JFK, then somewhere in Europe, and finally Venice). Somewhere along the way, their luggage has been lost, hence the casual clothes. All that they have is their carry-on luggage; but since they wear the tiaras and sashes everywhere they go, these survive as well. The luggage does catch up with them eventually, which is a wonderful thing since the woman told another passenger that she has packed 15 pairs of shoes and countless evening dresses. And why the tiaras and sashes? The woman claims that by wearing them, she gets all sorts of special treatment when they travel: upgrades at hotels, on airplanes, in restaurants, etc. She also claims to have entered dozens of pageants (of what kind, I have no idea) and has won nearly every one; her husband has entered only one pageant and was the winner - hence his sash which reads Best American Man 2015. At the various stops that *Le Lyrial* makes, I manage to get photos of them - these are scattered throughout the Picasa albums for Venice/Murano/Burano and Croatia/Montenegro. On p. 4 of this travelogue, I said that I'd refrain from using people's names, so in the photos I've simply called them the "Queen" and the "King." As we never spoke to them directly, the only other thing that I can add is that he is a heavy drinker (we watched him at the bar on more than one occasion) and a foul-mouthed spoilsport when the bartender isn't quick enough or a reception line doesn't move quickly enough. Amazing!!

The room for the reception is exceedingly crowded and noisy. We have some wine and snacks; and we talk with two couples from Kentucky and Florida (the women were childhood friends). When we sit down to dinner, we are joined by couples from California and Canada. During the reception and continuing throughout the dinner, a three-piece chamber ensemble is playing classical music and valiantly trying to be heard over the din of conversation. This proves to be impossible and it's a shame. The three musicians are dressed in period costumes from the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century (silks and velvets, high-heeled shoes with buckles, three-cornered hats, etc.) and are, we are told, a family group (father on flute, son on cello, daughter on violin). One of the women at our table is a graduate of Northwestern's music program and an instructor in various stringed instruments; she, too, strains to hear the music but to no avail.

The fixed\* course menu has: *Ravioli di magro con pomodorini ciliegia e basilico* (which sounds much

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\* This reminds me of the time that a restaurant with a *prix fixe* menu opened in Knoxville and a newspaper reporter described it as a "prefix" menu. Oh, well, as the French say "*chacun à son goût*," - although the newspaper person would probably have understood it to be "goo," n'est-ce pas?

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more exotic than Meatless Ravioli with cherry tomatoes and basil); *Filetto di dentice con battuto di pomodoro* (which does not translate as "The dentist is wearing a pompadour as he files the teeth" but rather as Fillet of red snapper with crushed tomato sauce); *Controfiletto di vitello alle erbe* (Marinated veal



sirloin in balsamic sauce); *Patate, zucchini e carote* (Potatoes, zucchini, and carrots); *Tiramisù con frutti di bosco* (which probably needs no translation except to note that this does not mean that it's covered with Bosco Chocolate Syrup); *Caffè, tè* (you can figure these out).

At about 10:30, we are back in our room and shortly thereafter in bed.

### Monday, September 7

Again, we have breakfast in Terrazza Danieli, but take a table indoors as the outside terrace is too windy. Nevertheless, I do have my camera and so, before eating, I walk around the terrace to take pictures of the lagoon and on the many buildings both on our shore of the lagoon and across it.

Our schedule tells us that Carmen's group will meet in the hotel lobby at 8:40 (we are the earliest to begin our tour). Even our numbers (about 35) are too many for one guide, so we are divided into two groups and we are also issued "vox boxes" so that the tour guides can be heard. Our goateed guide (Michaeli in his name, I think) is dressed in a blue blazer and he sports a scarf about his neck - a very foppish look (see Picasa) - but his English is superb and he is very well-informed, not only about the locales we visit but about answering questions that come up concerning the history of the city, the flooding that occurs each winter, the art and politics throughout Venice's storied history, and so on. We have two destinations today, each a short walk from the hotel: the Doge's palace (*Palazzo Ducale*) and St. Mark's Basilica (*San Marco Basilica*), where we will spend about one hour and three-quarters of an hour, respectively.

Dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the survivor of several fires, the palace has been a museum since 1923. The Doge (probably rendered in English as Duke) was the ruler of the Republic of Venice. He was elected and served at the pleasure of his council. There was no right of succession, as with the royal thrones throughout Europe. Our tour through the massive building takes us to the Doge's apartments (consisting of several adjacent rooms whose functions varied from private to public). One Doge or another reigned from the 700s through 1797 when the last Doge resigned as Napoleon swept into the city.

The institutional rooms were for government meetings, state dinners and receptions, diplomatic meetings, and all of the other affairs that involved the Doge. According to Wikipedia, the various rooms are:

*The Council Chamber:* the Full Council was mainly responsible for organizing and coordinating the work of the Senate, reading dispatches from ambassadors and city governors, receiving foreign delegations and promoting other political and legislative activity ... *The Senate Chamber:* was also known as the *Sala dei Pregadi*, because the Doge asked the members of the Senate to take part in the meetings held here. The Senate which met in this chamber was one of the oldest public institutions in Venice; it had first been founded in the 13th century and then gradually evolved over time, until by the 16th century it was the body mainly responsible for overseeing political and financial affairs in such areas as manufacturing industries, trade and foreign policy ... *The Chamber of the Council of Ten:* takes its name from the Council of Ten which was set up after a conspiracy in 1310, when Bajamonte Tiepolo and other noblemen tried to overthrow the institutions of the State ... *The Compass Room:* is dedicated to the administration of justice; its name comes from the large wooden compass surmounted by a statue of Justice, which stands in one corner and hides the entrance to the rooms of the Three Heads of the Council of Ten and the State Inquisitors.

The walls of these rooms are decorated with large paintings and frescoes by Tintoretto, Titian, Tiepolo, Veronese, and others. There are also carvings, sculptures, and ceiling decorations throughout.

**PUN ALERT:** Ron: "Do you know what Titian's first name was?" Lee: "No." Ron: "It was "Mort."

**PUN ALERT REDUX:** Alternative answers to the question above: Mathema, Poli, Op, Die, Beau, Tac, and Theore - but I still like Mort best.

A separate structure houses the prisons and it is connected to the main buildings by The Bridge of Sighs. According to Wikipedia, "The famous name of the bridge dates from the Romantic period and was supposed to refer to the sighs of prisoners who, passing from the courtroom to the cell in which they would serve their sentence, took a last look at freedom as they glimpsed the lagoon and San Giorgio through the small windows."

St. Mark's Basilica, dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, was originally the private chapel of the Doge. Exterior pictures are permitted but photography is forbidden inside (even though one of our fellow Tauck tourists disregarded this restriction - undoubtedly his transgression has been recorded in the Book of Naughty Deeds). I do, however, get a picture of a sign at the entrance: SILENZIO, NO PHOTO, NO VIDEO, NO CELL, NO SELFIE (the latter undoubtedly a recent addition to the list). We are also admonished: "Please remember to cover your shoulders and wear attire to the knees ... NO backpacks are allowed." Well, that's hardly very welcoming - and the place is so crowded (even though we are escorted to the front of the line) that we are marched through at a rapid pace and have little chance to appreciate the art and architecture. Well, *somebody* must have been allowed to take pictures, as this entry in Wikipedia proves: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St\\_Mark's\\_Basilica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark's_Basilica)

I recall an article from *The New Yorker* (it turns out that it was in the April 23, 1984 issue) about Yale music professor and French horn player Willie Ruff. One of his ambitions was to play the music of Gabrielli on his horn inside St. Mark's. Ruff's rationale, as related to the writer of the article: "Venice was the center of the musical world in the fifteen-hundreds and sixteen-hundreds. And that was mainly because of the remarkable acoustics of St. Mark's ... The great innovative composers of the period were the Venetians - the Gabriellis (Giovanni and his uncle Andrea), Zarlino, Monteverdi - and what inspired them was this church that gave incredible richness and clarity to what they wrote. I want to know what that sound is like." After having been rejected by one church functionary after another, he finally received permission. So one morning at 7:30, just after parishioners had left from early mass and before the tourists arrived, he set up his tape recorder and played music from several different locations inside the church: Gabrielli, Gesualdo, African-American spirituals, and Bach. The article is a long one, but it's worth your effort to seek it out.

We return to our hotel room, remove the "vox boxes," and head downstairs for a gondola ride, as promised by Carmen. Most gondolas hold six passengers. We and another couple (from Australia) are in the final group and number but four, but that's OK because after we climb in we are joined by two Venetians: a heavy-set bald guy with an accordion and another sporting a full head of black hair and sunglasses who turns out to be a singer (tenor, of course). As the gondola makes its way (over about 30 minutes) up and down the various canals, from time to time the singer dude would stand and begin singing, accompanied by the accordionist. People in the apartment buildings on either side of the canal would hang out their windows and shout *Bravo!* We are fascinated, not by the music, but by the dexterity with which the gondoliers navigate the narrow canals and right-angle turns. They are remarkably good at it, using the long oar to propel the boat and a well-placed foot to kick at the side of a building and change the direction of the vessel for a sharp turn. Quite amazing! (See Picasa for details.)

We are back in our hotel room before noon. We rest a bit and I take a nap - I tell you, this tourism shtick is tiring!! Earlier in the day, on our return from St. Mark's, Carmen leads us on a route to the hotel that avoids the broad esplanade and proceeds from one narrow street or alleyway to another; on the way, she points out restaurants that we might want to try (we are on our own tonight) and others that we should avoid. We decide on *Antica Sacristia*, based on her recommendation. The reviews at TripAdvisor are very good, so I ask the hotel's concierge to reserve a table for us. Alas, the restaurant is not open on Mondays! So, I ask him to suggest someplace else and he recommends *Ristorante Carpaccio* on the Riva Degli Schiavone (<http://www.ristorantecarpaccio.com/>), about a 10-minute walk from our hotel (roughly double the distance that we walked to the Wildner two days ago). Back in our room, we check TripAdvisor and find some unsettling comments about this restaurant. Two reviewers from Washington, our home state, were most unhappy: one, from Bellevue, wrote "Awful food and service all at very high price. The food was the worst we have eaten ever and the service was terrible" and the other, from Chelan, said "I asked twice to confirm it was Cod. It wasn't. It was Cuttlefish, about as far away from Cod as it gets, and the consistency of mussels. It came in about a liter of black goo that looked like (google this) 'anaerobically digested sludge.' I

forced down a couple bites, but was nearly gagging." Other reviewers complained that the restaurant was hard to find.

So, Lee's iPad in hand, I return to the concierge to show him these comments. He says that he has never heard a negative comment from any of the dozens of hotel guests whom he had sent to this restaurant. So we decide to take a chance - and are rewarded by an excellent meal.

But that's getting ahead of the story. It's still early afternoon, so we walk to find the celebrated Rialto Bridge\* (over the Grand Canal) and the nearby vegetable and fruit market (*Rialto Mercato*). The day is

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\*There had been bridges over the canal as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to Wikipedia: "The present stone bridge, a single span designed by Antonio da Ponte, was finally completed in 1591. It is similar to the wooden bridge it succeeded. Two inclined ramps lead up to a central portico. On either side of the portico, the covered ramps carry rows of shops. The engineering of the bridge was considered so audacious that architect Vincenzo Scamozzi predicted future ruin. The bridge has defied its critics to become one of the architectural icons of Venice."

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hot and the crowds are ... well, crowded. Making our way (map in hand) down narrow twisting alleys and dead-end roads, we have difficulty locating the streets named on our map. Yes, there are upscale shops that cater to rich tourists alongside cheap souvenir shops that cater to the rest of us. And yes, there are (occasionally) helpful signs pointing us to *Ponte di Rialto*. Finally, we are rewarded but it's a disappointment because the bridge is covered in scaffolding and tarps as it is undergoing renovation repair. But it *is* a very busy place, with shops of all sorts lining both sides of the steps that one ascends and then descends when crossing the bridge. And after we cross, we wander about looking for the market but don't find it. (Back in the U.S., a glance at a Google map suggests that we turned in the wrong direction for the market, something that's easy to do in this city.)

#### **MORE UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS:**

- In contrast to what I wrote yesterday, there are many cigarette smokers among the throngs of tourists. And, of course, they partake of particularly foul-smelling European brands.
- Among those walkers with non-Italian accents are a large number of German-speaking tourists. We suspect that a German cruise ship has docked in Venice today. These visitors are slow-moving, wide in the beam, and oblivious to the fact that others (i.e., Lee and I) might be trying to pass them.
- But on a positive note, we see many more dogs than we did yesterday.
- And as was true yesterday, one of the principal reasons that the crowds of pedestrians are so slow-moving is that a significant number of them are engaged in ... you guessed it ... taking selfies.
- The crush of humanity, much of it reeking of body odor, on these narrow streets is incredible. At times we are stopped cold, much like the cars trying to enter Seattle at rush hour on Interstate 5. Were Adam Gurkey (who does weather and traffic updates for KPLU-FM) observing it, he would be talking about severe blocking problems on the roads.

We wend our way back to the hotel, stopping along the way at a café to eat an apple tart and drink some coffee. We sit at an outside table just to be able to watch the madding crowd that passes before us. We make it back to our room at 3:00 (mercifully still icy-cold from the air conditioning) and spend the next couple of hours reading and using the internet (the hotel's connectivity is very good, something that will most certainly not be true on the two cruise ships).

One of the complaints about *Ristorante Carpaccio* on TripAdvisor is that it's hard to find. That proves to be an understatement! Google maps identifies where it *should* be, but Google maps can sometimes be inaccurate. A reviewer wrote that it was in front of Hotel Gabrielli. So at 6:45 we leave our hotel, cross the

requisite two canals, and stop just before the bridge over the third canal. To the left, tucked in between the bridge and a building (perhaps the Gabrielli, perhaps not) is a small outdoor place with an awning but with no identifying marks, no name, no nothing, nowhere. But it does have food, so we decide that this must be it - and we are right. We are taken to a tiny table for two in a corner, right at the edge of the canal. Lee, brave soul that she is, takes the seat that is precariously close to the edge - were she to slide her chair backwards, she would plunge into the water.

I start with *Zuppa di Pesce*, a delicious fish broth swimming with (presumably deceased) clams, mussels, calamari, and pieces of unidentified fish. For my main, I choose from the list of classic Venetian plates *Fegato alla Veneziana* (which is helpfully translated on the menu as Venetian-style veal liver); it and the accompanying onions are delicious. Lee and I share a carafe of Pinot Grigio. The service is also excellent. One wonders what those two malcontents from Washington State found to complain about in this very fine restaurant.

We return to the hotel at 9:45. It's amazing how many people are still meandering on the esplanade and how many vendors are still displaying their faux-Parisian handbags, selfie-sticks, laser pointers, and what not. We pack our suitcases so that they can be placed outside the door for pick-up at 7:30 tomorrow morning. For me, that includes both the hard-side Delsey suitcase and my small carry-on, so that the only thing I'm left with is my briefcase. To minimize on weight I transfer Lee's laptop from the briefcase to the Delsey. Lee also chooses to carry one small bag; in case the weather turns cooler, she graciously packs my zip jacket in her bag. We get to bed at 10:45.

## Tuesday, September 8

Well, I guess that I'm not over my jet lag. During the night, I awake at 3:00 and, unable to sleep, get up and read from 3:30 to 4:15. Back in bed, still awake, I get up at 4:45 and read for 30 minutes. Finally, I get some sleep from 5:15 until the alarm goes off at 6:15, but I expect that I'll be getting quite tired later today. After dressing, we place the suitcases outside the door and head to breakfast. The winds are negligible, so we sit on the outdoor patio with a nice couple from Pennsylvania.

Unlike yesterday when Carmen's group was the first to depart, today we are the last. We're not scheduled to leave the hotel until 10:45, so we take advantage of the time to go to our room and read. I finish the Jo Nesbø book and work some NYT crossword puzzles.

You'd think that by this time we would have figured out the workings of the tiny elevator that takes us to Floor 2 (really floor 3) in the *Casa Nuova* wing of the hotel. But you'd be wrong. For example, if we enter the elevator on the ground floor and press the button for 2, but then someone else enters and presses 3 or 4, the "brains" of the elevator forget the 2 and takes us directly to the higher floor before descending to 2. Similarly, if we enter the elevator on floor 2 and press the down button to descend to the ground floor, but if someone on floor 3 or 4 (not yet in the elevator) also presses the down button, the elevator (again) forgets our command and, instead, goes to 3 or 4 before finally descending. Maybe this elevator is anti-Semitic? That's one possibility. Or maybe it's manufactured by some Italian "artisans"? Nope, it's an Otis. So why does it hate Lee and me?

The schedule for today calls for us to board a small boat that will take us to the islands of Murano and Burano. Following that, we'll travel by the same boat to the dock where cruise ships come in. Granted *Le Lyrical* is dwarfed by some of the monstrosities that arrive, but still it needs to berth at the deep water pier. Murano and Burano are both islands (actually clusters of islands) in the Venetian Lagoon, north of Venice. Murano (consisting of seven islands that are connected by bridges) is quite close, about 1.5 km north of the northern shore of the old city. Burano, a cluster of five islands, is a further 4.5 km to the north. The former is noted as a center of glass-making, the latter for lace-making and brightly colored houses.

Accompanied by Carmen and Francesca, today's tour guide, we walk across two pedestrian bridges to our waiting boat. Francesca is very knowledgeable about the region and describes each of the small islands

as we make sail to our first destination. She also tells us that the Italian dialect spoken in Venice is not understood by people from Rome (and vice versa) and that "standard Italian" (the kind spoken by TV news readers) comes from Florence. Who knew? On the boat, we sit with and talk to a delightful couple from Portland, OR, with whom we will spend much time during the remainder of the tour; he is a retired medical school professor with a specialty in obstetrics.

Murano has been a center of glass-blowing since the 13<sup>th</sup> century: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murano> . Many of the techniques used by 21<sup>st</sup> century glass artists were developed here. There are numerous shops and galleries devoted to the craft. We are invited into the hot shop of one of them to watch one of the "masters" make a simple vase.\* Following this, we go to the adjoining studio where finished glass

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\*Not to be too haughty, but those of us who live near Tacoma and Seattle have had the opportunity to watch world-class glass artists in action at the Tacoma *Museum of Glass* and other venues. Thus, this demonstration is not as much of a treat for us as it is for others on the tour.

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pieces are sold. The ground floor has mostly simple, mass-produced objects, but the second floor boasts some magnificent pieces, both modern and traditional, all of them fetching huge prices (typically greater than €10,000). Alas, picture-taking is not permitted, but Lee and I do enjoy walking around and admiring the art. We are tailed by a short man who is either eager to make a sale or afraid that we're going to break or steal something; we disappoint him on all counts. He tells us that any item we buy and have shipped home can be ours for 40% off (after, probably, having already raised the price by 40%). We then have the opportunity to stroll along the canal next to the glass works. There are small pleasure boats along with delivery boats (the Murano equivalent of UPS) loaded with supplies (fresh food, groceries, electronic devices, whatever). At the end of the boardwalk is a spectacular glass sculpture called *Cometa Di Vetro* (Comet Glass Star) (see Picasa) by a Murano glass master named Simone Cenedese <http://www.simonecenedese.it/site/en/azienda/simone-cenedese/>

Back on the boat, it's about 30 minutes to Burano (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burano>). As we arrive at the dock, we are struck by the brightly colored houses (blue, yellow, orange, red, purple, and some that I can't even name), all of which have laundry drying on lines, either on the lawns or attached to the buildings. The upstairs windows have brightly-colored fabric awnings; and the front doors are all "protected" by what can only be called very large bath towels. The many pictures at Picasa tell the story better than my words can. And although we are not in Pisa, this small city has a leaning tower of its own. We see a few women sitting outside their homes making lace (are they placed there by central casting or are they legitimately lace-makers?) and there are many shops displaying lace in the windows. Francesca leads the procession of Tauck visitors and points out restaurants and cafés that she likes. We are on our own for lunch, having been enriched by Carmen's passing out lunch money (€40 for each of us). Alas, the most highly recommended place is booked solid, so Lee and I choose a outdoor bistro named Bar Sport. Its specialty is pizza, so I order one with ham and mushrooms (€ 7) while Lee has one with shrimp and crab (€ 9); from the price, we expected to get single slices, but in fact each of us gets a 10-inch pizza. I eat about half of mine (plus the toppings off the other half); Lee does about the same. There is an awning over the tables, but the sun is low enough that I'm getting baked on the back of my neck; sweat, sweat, and more sweat run down my back. Following this, we find another place (in the shade) where we have coffees and we then return to the ship at 3:30.

It's about an hour's boat ride to the dock from which cruise ships depart. We are directed to a large building where customs and border agents check our IDs and issue magnetic cards that serve both as room keys and as cards to be scanned when leaving or returning to the ship. It would be nice to report that this operation proceeds smoothly, but it doesn't. There are several lines open for passengers on the various ships that are about to depart. We choose one of three that's assigned to passengers on *Le Lyrial*, but it is moving much too slowly (a family at the front of the line are having troubles, perhaps with the language) so we switch to another line and stand behind a group of French nationals, who are not Tauck cruisers and who also move very slowly, so we switch to the third line, also (as you might guess) slow-moving while we watch the first two lines speed up; we note that passengers in our original places are already through the process while we're still waiting. It's the story of my life!

But the check-in procedure is not yet complete, because now we have to pass through security. The equipment resembles the conveyor belt and magnetometer that are typical in airports, but there are no instructions (written or oral) about what items to remove from one's person. It turns out that this is not a magnetometer but a full-body scanner and so I find myself rejected and forced to go through a second time for not having removed my watch ... and a third time (belt) ... and a fourth time (wallet in my pocket). By the time we're finally through the damned thing, we are nearly the last people to make the rather lengthy walk to the ship's gang plank. (There had been an offer of a van to take people to the ship, but we reject it figuring that walking will be faster. Not only does that prove not to be true but we are also sweating quite profusely by the time we've finished the trek. Did I mention something about "The story of my life"?)

The ship is new, having been put in service just the preceding April, and is the latest addition to the *Compagnie du Ponant* fleet ( <http://lyrial.ponant.com/english.php> ). It carries about 220 passengers (half of whom will be Tauck cruisers) and has a crew of 139, two restaurants (one full service on Deck 2 and one buffet-style on Deck 6), a theater, two lounge/bars, a small pool, and other amenities. In past years we had sailed on river boats (most recently with Uniworld on the Rhine) and on larger ocean-going ships (with Regent Seven Seas to the Baltic; to Alaska; from Iceland to Norway; and along the Norwegian coast to the Svalbard archipelago); you can read about all of these at any of my course websites (e.g., <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/index2.html> ) by scrolling to the bottom of the page. The Regent ships are examples of relatively understated elegance, in striking contrast to Uniworld's S.S. *Antoinette* (on the Rhine cruise) whose decor was so flamboyant that Louis XVI and his bride, the eponymous Marie Antoinette, would have blushed. We are hoping that *Le Lyrial*, despite its French origins would be more subdued. And so it turns out to be, as pictures at the ship's website and in my Picasa album will demonstrate.



After ascending the gang plank, we have our pictures taken (for security reasons, not to post on Facebook we hope) and surrender our passports, the rationale being that "Surely you don't want to be awakened in the middle of the night when we enter another country." Because our first choice (Deluxe Suite, 290 sq ft) was not available when we booked our passage, we were forced to take a more expensive Prestige Suite (398 sq ft). Our cabin on Deck 5 is huge because it consists of *two* adjoining Prestige Staterooms, 200 sq ft each: one room has the bed, whereas the other has the couch, reading chairs, and table; the identical dresser is in each, as are identical showers, sinks, and toilets. So, we take advantage of all of this space by each using his/her personal bathroom and his/her personal dresser and closet; we do, however, share the bed.



As we enter the room, I'm sweating profusely (so is Lee) following the walk from the border control building, so I take advantage of the room's excellent air-conditioning by stripping down to my unmentionables. Just as I finished shedding my wet exterior clothing, an announcement over the intercom summons us (in French and in English) to the theater for introductory and humorous remarks about the details of the ship, safety procedures, amenities, dining facilities, etc., by Cruise Director Glenn O'Neill;\* he then sends us

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\*The name does not sound very French. In fact he grew up in Quebec, the son of a French mother and an Irish father. Because he works for a French company and makes all announcements in French as well as English, I assume that his accent is not the sort of French that is spoken in Canada and is looked upon with disgust by French people. He is the ship's overall cruise director; our *troika* of Carmen, Laura, and Steve will be making presentations for the Tauck cruisers throughout the trip. As part of his remarks, Glenn introduces the captain, Regis Daumesnil, who is very very French, and some of the rest of the crew.

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back to our cabins to get and put on our life jackets for the lifeboat drill which also takes place in the

theater, *sans* lifeboats. The ship sets sail and proceeds past the Danieli and the restaurants where we ate. We see two spectacular yachts, identified by others as Paul Allen's *Octopus* (a strange name) and Rupert Murdoch's *Vertigo* (even stranger); according to internet accounts, each is available for rental, but if you would like to purchase either one it would cost several hundred million dollars.\* Finally, I get to discard my

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\*According to various accounts, *Octopus* is the largest yacht in the world. It costs some \$350,000 a week to operate, carries a crew of 60, and sports two helicopter pads, two submarines, and seven tenders.

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soggy clothing (but only after getting back to our room) and we unpack our suitcases and store our clothes in our own individual personal nobody-else's closet and dresser. Such luxury!

Dinner tonight is in *Restaurant le Céleste* (the *Restaurant Gastronomique*) on Deck 2. At our table is a congenial couple from Las Vegas; others are also present, but I fail to note their names. At the table next to us is the weird couple, first mentioned on p. 8; he is excessively loud, much in keeping with the flamboyant style of both of them - and, no, they and their checked luggage are not yet reunited; another passenger tells us, at some point, that to make up for having no dressy clothing, they hired a private car in Venice and went shopping at a mall on the outskirts of town. Yes, the "king" and "queen" are quite a pair. The meal is not very impressive, much less tasty and tastefully presented than what we've encountered on our Regents cruises. I fail to note what we eat, but I do recall that others at the table have the same relatively negative impression of the dinner. Perhaps the buffet restaurant will be better?

We return to our room to read and use the internet. We had been warned that the WiFi connection would be slow, but this is beyond slow, almost to the point of being unusable. It will not prove to be any better when we make it to our various ports of call. We go to bed at 11:30; I'm pleased to report that I sleep until 3:00, lie awake for about 30 minutes, and then fall asleep again until the alarm clock goes off at 7:00.

### Wednesday, September 9

Our ship left Venice in the early evening, yesterday, but it is not expected to reach its first Croatian port of call, Korčula, until 1:00 this afternoon. The distance traveled will be the greatest of all of the legs of this cruise, 266 nautical miles\* (NM). The ship will anchor off the coast and tenders will be used to convey

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\*\*"What is a nautical mile?" I hear you ask. Well, Wikipedia gives this extremely clear answer: "A nautical mile (symbol M, NM or nmi) is a unit of distance that is approximately the length that spans one minute of arc on the surface of the Earth, measured along any meridian. By international agreement it has been set at 1,852 metres exactly (about 6,076 feet)." Now aren't you glad you asked? Perhaps it would be clearer if I told you that 1 NM is 1.1507794480235 mile? (The conversion calculator doesn't know about significant figures. does it?) I think it would be safe to say, simply, that a nautical mile is a bit longer than a mile by about 15%.

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passengers to the island. The tenders operate on a 30-minute schedule; the last one to return to the ship will be at 10:15 tonight and the ship will then sail to Šibenik at 10:30.

The morning is pleasant, as we cruise along the coast of Croatia. Breakfast is served in the buffet restaurant on Deck 6; we eat on the outdoor deck, as the temperatures and winds are moderate. A wide variety of cold and hot dishes are on offer, but I am determined to eat modestly; most days I have only some smoked salmon, a bagel, juice and coffee. We are joined by a couple from Dunn, NC, a small town (population a little over 9,000) about 40 miles south of Raleigh. She does most of the talking; he is quite taciturn (perhaps an expected outcome for a person who had been in the army's Special Ops; I assume that it's "our" army).

We return to our room to read and (try to) use the internet. It's warm enough that Lee sits on our balcony; I join her after a while. By late morning, we are fairly close to the Dalmatian Coast\* and are sailing by many

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\*The name derives from the geographical region called Dalmatia which encompasses several significant cities that we will visit: Split, Dubrovnik, and Šibenik. The origin of the name is the Dalmatae tribe of the Illyrians who populated the region around 1,000 BCE.

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small islands. At 10:45, we go to the ship's theater to watch a History Channel film called "The True Story of Marco Polo." Historical records show that he was born in Korčula and lived much of his life in Venice. There are historians who are skeptical about his claims of having traveled on a 24-year long journey through Asia and to China. According to Wikipedia:

Skeptics have wondered if Marco Polo actually went to China or if he perhaps wrote his book based on hearsay. While Polo describes paper money and the burning of coal, he fails to mention the Great Wall of China, Chinese characters, chopsticks, or footbinding. Responses to skeptics have stated that if the purpose of Polo's tales was to impress others with tales of his high esteem for an advanced civilization, then it is possible that Polo shrewdly would omit those details that would cause his listeners to scoff at the Chinese with a sense of European superiority. Marco lived among the Mongol elite; foot binding was rare even among Chinese during Polo's time and almost unknown among the Mongols; the Great Walls were built to keep out northern invaders, whereas the ruling dynasty during Marco Polo's visit were those very northern invaders; researchers note that the Great Wall familiar to us today is a Ming structure built some two centuries after Marco Polo's travels; and that the Mongol rulers whom Polo served controlled territories both north and south of today's wall, and would have no reasons to maintain any fortifications that may have remained there from the earlier dynasties. Other Europeans who traveled to Khanbaliq during the Yuan Dynasty, such as Giovanni de' Marignolli and Odoric of Pordenone, said nothing about the wall either.

Well, there having been no video record of the journey (a lack of foresight by the intrepid travelers) we are left with the likely (but not proven) idea that Marco and his father and uncle really made the trip.

We have lunch in the buffet restaurant: for me, shrimp salad, fish soup, and a roll. At 1:00 the ship drops anchor. Carmen's group is first off the ship, going to the tenders (♪ *Love me tender* ♪) at 1:30. From our reading and from the guide whom we'll acquire on shore, we learn a bit about the history of Korčula (which is both the name of the island and of the main town). The island is only 108 sq mi in area and has a population of about 16,000. It is the second largest island in the Adriatic, surpassed only by Krk.\* It has

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\*During the Balkan wars of the 1990s, we noted how many cities and regions were almost unpronounceable words consisting mostly (or entirely) of consonants. The joke at that time is that the U.S. was going to airlift shipments of vowels to the deprived population. Lee and I are familiar with Croatian names because our hometown, Gig Harbor, was settled by Croatian fishermen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of our streets and parks and residents have Croatian names (Dorotich, Skansie, Bujacich, Janovich, Malich, etc.) and many of the descendants of those early settlers still own the fishing fleet that travels to Canada and Alaska. In September, 2014, Zoran Milanović, Croatia's Prime Minister, visited Gig Harbor; the Croatian families came out to greet him in Skansie Brothers Park.

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had a long and often violent history. According to legend, it was founded by a Trojan hero in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, then settled by Illyrians around 1,000 BCE. The Greeks subsequently arrived followed by the Romans. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, Slavic tribes began to arrive. By 1000 AD, Venice controlled the region followed by Hungarians followed by Genoese followed by Turks. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, France was in control, then Britain, then Austria. Following the first world war, it was joined with Slovenia and Serbia under the banner of The Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Following Tito's death, Slovenia and Croatia broke away and became independent republics, although not without turmoil and horrible warfare; this will be described later in this journal.

As we leave the tender (*Tender is the Night?*), we see a sign welcoming us to Korčula and informing us that the "correct" name of the country is not Croatia but *Republika Hrvatska*. Well, at least the name has two vowels, unlike one of the most popular wines of the country: Grk! (Maybe that's the sound one utters



after drinking too much of it?) We are met our tour guide, a woman named Zelska, who takes us through the old town and then to the Revelin Tower, whose many steps we mount for a view of the city. We wander through narrow alleyways, stop to admire St. Mark's Cathedral (adorned with "interesting" sculptures of Adam and Eve - see Picasa). We see the (alleged) birthplace of Marco Polo. The day is very hot and humid, but (according to Zelska) not as bad as last week when the temperature reached 40°C. After exploring the cafés and restaurants along the shore, we are invited indoors to see a performance of the Moreška Sword Dance. Originally it depicted a battle between the Moors and Christians, but more recently has been stylized as a battle between the White King (who, along with his men, is dressed in red - don't ask) and the Black King, who has captured the White King's bride.

We enter the darkened room, but are cautioned not to sit in the first two rows as the sword fighting can get out of hand. The swords are not sharp, but rather bludgeons or broad swords that could do great damage to one's cranium. As the lights go down, an onstage band of teenage musicians (behind the large space where the action will occur) plays some introductory music (including traditional Croatian melodies like *Oh! Susanna* and *Suwanee River*) and then the imprisoned bride shows up. All of the dialog is in Croatian (we're given "cheat sheets" with translations but it's hard to follow it). She cries and pleads her case to the audience. The Black King then arrives and argues with her (in Croatian, of course). Then to a very hypnotic drum beat, the Red King and his army arrive and proceed to march in a counter-clockwise direction around the floor; they are led by a flag-carrying old guy who, mercifully, takes a seat when the action begins. The Black army arrives and proceeds in a clockwise direction around the floor. After some trash talking (in Croatian, of course) between the two kings, the fighting begins.

Each soldier has two of the heavy swords and the Red army circles around the Black army with each warrior doing battle with one person and then another and then another. The clanging of the swords is in perfect coordination and rhythm, a very eerie sound. They stop. The drum beat begins and the procession resumes (counterclockwise for the reds, clockwise for the blacks) and then the sword fighting starts again. This sequence of events occurs several times, but by the end all of the black men are lying on their backs and the red men are victorious. Of course, the bride is returned to her true love and there is a very passionate kiss to seal the end of the story. (I suppose that it was just a fairy tale because following the kiss, all of the dead black soldiers stood up and they, along with the reds, resume their processions about the floor.) I wish that I could have captured the band (its drum beat) and the clanging of the swords; I also wish that my camera were fast enough to capture the action, but (as it turned out) the men move so fast that I record only blurs. Nevertheless, the best of these pictures are posted at Picasa. Prior to the performance, I thought that I would hate it. I was dead wrong!

Even though I was not able to capture the sound and sights properly, others have done so and posted their work at YouTube. There are many such videos. If you want to invest only six minutes, Part 3 of the proceedings (in an outdoor venue) can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch> . Parts 1 and 2 of the same performance are at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzRGT6F0XPE> (nine minutes) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzR4ME4sR0Y> (six minutes). What is truly delightful is a group of little children who are learning the dance routine under the watchful and authoritative encouragement of adults: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtlwiLRYINY>

It's 4:30 and following some free gelato, courtesy of tour director Steve, and a stop at an ATM to acquire 500 HRK (Croatian Kuna), about \$75, we take the 5:15 tender back to the ship. We hang out in our room and attempt to use the pitiful WiFi connection, "free" for Tauck passengers\* but very costly for others. At

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\*"Free," to be sure, but of limited value as each ticket "buys" only 1 hr 40 min. This requires several return trips to the reception desk to ask for additional chits.

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7:00, we go to the pool deck for the captain's welcome reception. Captain Regis Daumesnil introduces the ship's officers (in French and English, of course, although his English is quite strained). Following this, we make our way to Deck 2 and *Le Céleste* for dinner. Our dining companions are an interesting couple from Lorton, VA, about 20 miles southwest of Washington D.C. He's employed by the Marines (ours, I assume) in operations research; he and his wife are seasoned travelers - this is their *sixteenth* Tauck tour (both land

and sea). We return to our room at 10:00 and are in bed by 11:00.

### Thursday, September 10

Aside from two brief waking periods, I sleep until the alarm goes off at 6:15. Hooray! We head to breakfast early because our group is scheduled to disembark at 8:00. The ship arrives in Šibenik at about 7:30, a trip of 83 NM from Korčula. We are docked at the city pier; from our balcony window, we see several tour buses just waiting for us. According to Wikipedia:

Šibenik (population 35,000) is a historic town in Croatia, located in central Dalmatia where the river Krka flows into the Adriatic Sea ... Unlike other cities along the Adriatic coast, which were established by Greeks, Illyrians and Romans, Šibenik was founded by Croats. Excavations ... have since proven that the place was inhabited long before the actual arrival of the Croats. It was mentioned for the first time under its present name in 1066 in a Charter of the Croatian King Petar Krešimir IV and, for a period of time, it was a seat of this Croatian King. For that reason, Šibenik is also called "Krešimirov grad" (Krešimir's city). It is the oldest native Croatian town on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.

On the pier, we meet today's tour guide, Ajlin (pronounced Eileen), an energetic and eloquent speaker with a wonderful sense of humor.\* After a short bus ride to the town center, she leads us on a short walk to the

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\*She tells us that she has two children, a boy and a girl. Her son's name is Hrvoje, pronounced, according to a web site, as Har-wo-yeah (maybe). As he was born during the Balkan Wars, she gave him this patriotic name (derived from *Hrvat* meaning "Croat"), but she claims that he was seven years old before he could pronounce it. For that reason, she gave her daughter a more reasonable name (but neither Lee nor I remember what it was). Ajlin tells us that she, herself, was born in 1966 when bestowing foreign names on babies was popular: "I'm lucky that I was female, otherwise I might have been named Elvis." (It's interesting, then, that the guide whom we'll meet in Dubrovnik, tomorrow, is named Elvis!)

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16<sup>th</sup> century Cathedral of St. James (on the UNESCO World Heritage list). Along the way, she stops and shows us how fibers can be pulled from the cactus-like agave plant which flourishes in this climate. The Benedictine nuns use the fiber to make very fine lace. The cathedral is "guarded" by two stone lions (the symbols of Croatia); high above are statues of anatomically-correct Adam and Eve, each with a fig leaf to ensure modesty (or something). In a courtyard, we see a statue by Croatia's most famous sculptor, Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962); we'll encounter many more of his works and will visit his museum and birthplace later on this trip. According to a tourist's blog, "[There are] 72 human heads carved in stone on the external part which belong to unknown individuals, passers-by, sailors, merchants and peasants who posed as the cathedral was being built. Statues of Adam and Eve are also curious; Adam is covering his breasts, and Eve is covering not her breasts, but her stomach." These can be seen at the Picasa site.

At about 10:00 we are back at the dock where we meet Carmen and board a bus. Tauck's policy is to assign seats and rotate passengers through them so that everyone gets a chance at a prime viewing spot. Lucky us - we're in the front seat with an excellent view through the large front windows as we drive about an hour into the mountains and to the Krka National Park and its waterfalls. For the final ascent to the park, the road is very narrow and replete with hairpin curves; the entry of buses is controlled by the park authorities. So we sit in a parking lot and wait, while a few buses come down from the mountain and several *park-owned* buses are allowed up. Finally, we get permission to ascend the final section to the park. Along the way, Ajlin keeps us her entertaining patter.\* After walking a bit through the park and

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\*In addition to the dearth of vowels, what makes Croatian difficult for foreigners (and even for Croatians) is that the language has *seven* cases for its nouns. At the park, we ask her what they are, but she has trouble remembering their names. Fortunately, Wikipedia does not. They are: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, locative, and instrumental. This font of all knowledge also tells us that in addition to three genders (as in German), nouns are classified as a-type, e-type, or i-type,

depending on their ending in the genitive singular. This is getting a bit top thick for me, but you can indulge your curiosity at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbo-Croatian\\_grammar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbo-Croatian_grammar)

My erudite friend, Al Vazquez, found a *Wall Street Journal* article which states "... that there is a language used in Botswana that has a hundred consonants, whereas the Rotokas language spoken on the Pacific island of Bougainville has - according to which dialect one encounters - either nine consonants or a mere six. In the Tsez language used in parts of Dagestan (a Russian republic on the Caspian Sea), nouns have 64 grammatical cases, 56 of which are to do with location and direction. Less bewilderingly, Dothraki has two different words for fresh and dry animal droppings - a distinction adopted from Mongolian." So maybe Croatian is not so impenetrable?

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observing the cascade of the waterfall, we enter a plaza where Carmen, Laura, and Steve are busy setting out a "feast" of wine, crackers, and cheese. (This will be a regular occurrence on the trip. Lest we tourists perish from our arduous travels, there will almost always be wine and food by 10:30 in the morning. Life is good!)

We then re-enter the bus and drive for about 1.5 hours to the city of Split. Wikipedia informs us:

Split (population of the metro area 300,000) is the second-largest city of Croatia and the largest city of the region of Dalmatia. It lies on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, centered on the Roman Palace of the Emperor Diocletian. Spread over a central peninsula and its surroundings, Split's greater area includes the neighboring seaside towns as well.

As we enter the city, we pass some truly depressing Soviet era housing, but we also see whimsical things on the roofs of various buildings: an elephant, a rainbow, a mermaid (see Picasa).

It is now 1:30 and, *mirabile dictu*, during our absence our ship has sailed to Split and we board it for lunch (just in case we've gotten hungry since our earlier snack); our companions are the nice Australian couple. With our tummies now completely full, we disembark at 3:00 (Carmen's group is first again) and get on a bus (we're in front again - maybe they forgot to rotate us?). Ajlin gets on the bus, but walks to the rear. A young man, at the front of the bus, says "I'm the one you heard about this morning." Yes, he's Ajlin's son, Hrvoje. The bus will take us to two destinations: the Ivan Meštrović Museum and Diocletian's Palace.

**Fun Fact** (from Wikipedia): "Baseball in Split is one of the city's longest traditions. Although the sport began semi-officially in December 1918, when a group of US sailors from a ship in port here introduced the game to some young Croats, it wasn't until 1972 when a pair of teachers at a local school formed the Salona Baseball Club. Salona is a town about 5 km (3 mi) from Split, the site of the capital of the Roman Empire in this part of the world more than 1,700 years ago. The first actual game played in Split was on Sept 9, 1978 between Split (the new team moved here and was called Nada) and Jezice from Ljubljana – a 20-1 romp for the locals! A schedule of games began in earnest and by 1980 there were regular league games. The next major milestone was in 1983 when the World Baseball Federation (IBAF) accepted Yugoslavia as an official member. A Croatian National Baseball Federation was established in 1989. Today the Croatian national team (with 10 or more members coming from Split's Nada team) is ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in the world, ahead of Russia and France!"

Both Ajlin (in the morning) and Hrvoje (in the afternoon) entertain us with jokes about the Yugo. If you've forgotten it, the Yugo has been described as the worst car ever built. Under its official name, Zastava Koral, it began life in 1978 and was allowed to "die" thirty years later. Here are a few of the jokes that everyone in former Yugoslavia seems to know:

Q: Why do Yugos come with rear window defrosters? Ans: So you can keep your hands warm when pushing it.

Q: What do you call a Yugo with brakes? Ans: Customized.

Q: What do you call the driver of a Yugo? Ans: A crash test dummy.

Q: Where does the name Yugo come from? Ans: You go, the car stays.

Q: What's on pages 7-8 of the Yugo manual? Ans: A bus schedule.

Q: What do you call a Yugo at the top of a hill? Ans: A miracle.

Q: What's the difference between a Yugo and a golf ball? Ans: You can drive a golf ball 300 yards.

Our first stop is at Galerija Meštrovic, the museum dedicated to the sculptures, monuments, and paintings of Ivan Meštrovic, whom we first encountered this morning in Šibenik. He tells us that as a young man, Meštrovic married Ruža Klein, a wealthy Jewish woman; they divorced but Ruža remained on the scene even when Ivan was married to Olga with whom he had four children. Meštrovic referred to Ruža as "the love of my life" and to Olga as "the mother of my children."

Because our group is large, we split into two: we are with Ajlin, the others are with Hrvoje. As the images that I've posted at Picasa will reveal, Meštrovic's creations are powerful and, more often than not, unconventional (as in showing the Virgin Mary with *two* babies). We wander through the indoor and outdoor galleries, guided by the superbly well-informed Ajlin. For a much more extensive set of images than I've posted at Picasa, take a look at this web site: <http://tinyurl.com/o4g54x4>.

Back on the bus, we are driven to Diocletian's Palace. Ajlin is still with us; we'll not have Hrvoje as our guide until we reach Hvar on September 13. Wikipedia informs us:

Diocletian's Palace is an ancient palace built by the Roman emperor Diocletian at the turn of the fourth century AD, that today forms the center of the city of Split. While it is referred to as a 'palace' because of its intended use as the retirement residence of Diocletian, the term can be misleading as the structure is massive and more resembles a large fortress: about half of it was for Diocletian's personal use, and the rest housed the military garrison. Diocletian built the massive palace in preparation for his retirement on 1 May 305 AD.

Amazingly, some 3000 people live in the palace today. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian's\\_Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian's_Palace) I've posted many pictures at Picasa, but here are a vast number more: <http://tinyurl.com/pny6r52>

So who was this dude, Diocletian? Again we turn to Wikipedia:

Diocletian (Latin: Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Augustus), born Diocles, (245–311), was a Roman emperor from 284 to 305. Born to a family of low status in the Roman province of Dalmatia, Diocletian rose through the ranks of the military to become cavalry commander to the Emperor Carus. After the deaths of Carus and his son Numerian on campaign in Persia, Diocletian was proclaimed emperor. The title was also claimed by Carus' other surviving son, Carinus, but Diocletian defeated him in the Battle of the Margus ... Diocletian's reforms fundamentally changed the structure of Roman imperial government and helped stabilize the empire economically and militarily, enabling the empire to remain essentially intact for another hundred years despite being near the brink of collapse in Diocletian's youth. Weakened by illness, Diocletian left the imperial office on 1 May 305, and became the first Roman emperor to abdicate the position voluntarily. He lived out his retirement in his palace on the Dalmatian coast, tending to his vegetable gardens. His palace eventually became the core of the modern-day city of Split. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian>

**Klutzes 'R' Us, Part One** The plastic cards that Tauck issued and that we have to scan each time we leave or enter the ship also serve as keys to our room(s). (I write room(s) because we have two possible entrances in our double suite.) Well! During the course of the cruise both of our cards lost their magical magnetic properties (more than once) and had to be re-activated at the front desk. Other travelers had similar problems when they tried to open the door to their cabins. My guess is that the identification pin (called a "handshake," by Carmen) that Tauck issues and that affixes to one's clothing by a strong little magnet is the cause of the problem.

We return to the ship at 5:30. I am drenched with sweat, so we cool off in our cabin until going to dinner on the Deck 6 buffet restaurant. Back in our room, we read and attempt to use the very very very very slow internet. At 8:15, *Le Lyrial* sets sail for Dubrovnik, a distance of 121 NM where we expect to arrive at 7:15

tomorrow morning. If you've looked at a map of Croatia, you'll have noted that we are not traveling a straight path along the coast. Korčula (the island) is somewhat to the south along the coast. From there to Šibenik we sail northward and then proceed a little bit south to Split, either by bus (as our tour group did) or by sea. Dubrovnik, tomorrow's destination, is at the southernmost tip of Croatia, almost to the Montenegro border. Close inspection of the map reveals an unusual feature: Dubrovnik is on a narrow strip of Croatia (not more than 5 miles wide) that is separated from the rest of Croatia by a small finger of Bosnia that juts out into the Adriatic Sea.

### Friday, September 11

Again, we are up early (6:00), not because of an early departure but because there is a special Tauck lecture at 8:00 by Milo Mihocevic, now an actor and patron of the arts, but formerly the liaison officer of the Croatian Residence (see below for details of the talk). Before heading to breakfast, I take pictures from our balcony of the walled city of Dubrovnik (population 42,000) as the ship sails into port. Because the Deck 6 buffet restaurant does not open until 7:30, we have breakfast at 7:00 in *Le Céleste* on Deck 2.

This lecture is one of several "perks" available to Tauck travelers but not to the other passengers on board the ship. Others are: excursions at no extra cost (which is not the case for non-Tauckers); other on-board lectures and a wine tasting session; superb travel guides on land; free liquor and wine, no matter the label (Ponant cruisers get some liquor for free, but not the best); free WiFi (well, it would be nice if the internet connections were just a wee bit *faster*); and, according to the brochure, "All gratuities for restaurant, hotel, and ship staffs, local guides and drivers are included" (even though we do choose to tip each of the guides).

We are assembled in the theater on Deck 4 but there is no speaker. It seems that he had trouble getting to the ship by tender. After about 10 minutes he arrives, out of breath and sweaty, but he proceeds with his talk. It's an impassioned discussion of the early days of the 1992 Balkan war, but (of course) only from the perspective of a Croatian patriot. Because I didn't take notes on his talk, I'm relying on Wikipedia for the following discussion (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dubrovnik>):

In 1991 Croatia and Slovenia, which at that time were republics within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, declared their independence. At that event, the Socialist Republic of Croatia was renamed Republic of Croatia.

Despite demilitarization of the old town in early 1970s in an attempt to prevent it from ever becoming a casualty of war, following Croatia's independence in 1991, Yugoslavia's Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), by then composed primarily of Serbs, attacked the city. The new Croatian government set up a military outpost in the city itself. Montenegro, led by president Momir Bulatovic, and prime minister Milo Đukanovic, coming to power in the Anti-bureaucratic revolution and allied to Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, declared that Dubrovnik would not remain in Croatia because they claimed it historically had never been part of Croatia. This was in spite of the large Croat majority in the city and that very few Montenegrins resided there, though Serbs accounted for 6.8 percent of the population.

On October 1, 1991 Dubrovnik was attacked by JNA with a siege of Dubrovnik that lasted for seven months. The heaviest artillery attack was on December 6 with 19 people killed and 60 wounded. The number of casualties in the conflict according to Croatian Red Cross was 114 killed civilians, among them poet Milan Milišić. Foreign newspapers were criticised for placing heavier attention on the damage suffered by the old town than on human casualties. Nonetheless, the artillery attacks on Dubrovnik damaged 56% of its buildings to some degree, as the historic walled city, a UNESCO world heritage site, sustained 650 hits by artillery rounds. The Croatian Army lifted the siege in May 1992, and liberated Dubrovnik's surroundings by the end of October, but the danger of sudden attacks by the JNA lasted for another three years.

Following the end of the war, damage caused by the shelling of the Old Town was repaired. Adhering

to UNESCO guidelines, repairs were performed in the original style. Most of the reconstruction work has been done between 1995 and 1999. The inflicted damage can be seen on a chart near the city gate, showing all artillery hits during the siege, and is clearly visible from high points around the city in the form of the more brightly coloured new roofs. ICTY indictments were issued for JNA generals and officers involved in the bombing. General Pavle Strugar, who coordinated the attack on the city, was sentenced to a seven-and-a-half-year prison term by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for his role in the attack.

To these sketchy details, Mihocevic adds many personal insights. He contends that Dubrovnik was of absolutely no strategic or military importance and was attacked merely to demoralize the people. He also says that the resistance, which he joined and for which he fought, was essentially a volunteer army of citizens, desperate to break the blockade so that food and medicine might be brought in.

For further details about the siege of Dubrovnik, its origin, its aftermath, the political ramifications, etc. see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Dubrovnik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Dubrovnik)

Carmen's group is scheduled to leave the ship in second place at 9:15. We take a tender to the pier where we're met by today's guide, Elvis. Really - he insists that that is his real name. Like the other guides, he is knowledgeable, fluent in English, and (like Ajlin) very funny. We wander through the town square to the Church of St. Blaise, built in 1715 and named after Dubrovnik's patron saint. From there, we head to the Rector's Palace, begun in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but not completed until 1808; built originally for defense and as the site of government, it is now a museum. We walk past a statue of the playwright Marin Držić (1508-1567); his nose is a bright yellow from the people who've walked by and swept the soot and grime off it.

We proceed to the Franciscan Church and Monastery, begun in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but repaired and added to many times over the years to fix the damage from earthquakes and war. We visit the Dominican Monastery with its beautiful interior courtyard/garden. Elvis leads us through narrow streets and alleyways, up many stairs, past outdoor cafés, and finally to an ancient synagogue. According to Wikipedia, it "is the oldest Sefardic synagogue still in use today in the world and the second oldest synagogue in Europe. It is said to have been established in 1352, but gained legal status in the city in 1408. Owned by the local Jewish community, the main floor still functions as a place of worship for Holy days and special occasions, but is now mainly a city museum which hosts numerous Jewish ritual items and centuries-old artifacts."

I can also report that it is very hot and stuffy indoors. Finally, Elvis provides us with tickets so that we can walk along the city's ramparts; we ascend some 85,000 steps (by rough count) and take many pictures, but the winds are fierce and, when confronted by yet another set of very steep stairs, we abandon the idea of circumnavigating the entire wall and, instead, do some shopping. Of course. We buy a tchotchke for our neighbor Lois, who is watching our home; Lee also tries on a dress, but decides not to buy it. On our own, but at Elvis's suggestion, we visit a Serbian orthodox church, but are forbidden from taking pictures\* inside.

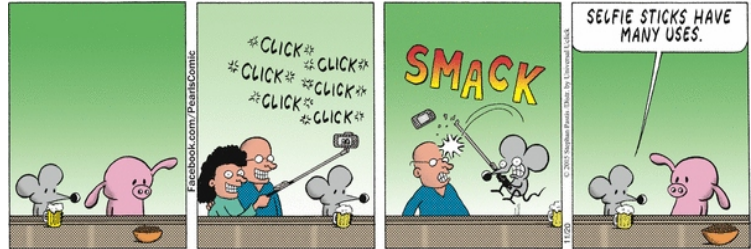
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\*This was also true in all of the other churches we visited this morning and in the Rector's Palace. What are they ashamed of, I wonder.

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**Klutzes 'R' Us, Part Two** To punish me for even carrying a camera into the church, an outside step violently and with extreme malice rises up and trips me, causing me to fall. Several people gather around, offering a hand to help me up. They are disappointed, I think, that I don't suffer a grievous wound; in fact, aside from a small abrasion on my palm, I'm none the worse for wear. Such "accidents" seem to be a common occurrence for me on our overseas journeys. In 2014, I tripped on (was tripped *by*) an aggressive brick in the sidewalk in Sydney, Australia and badly bruised my knee; you can read about my doctor's visits (in Adelaide and Melbourne) on pp. 11, 28, and 45-46 at <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/Australia2014.pdf> And earlier this year, I was tripped by malicious tall grass in a moor in Devon, England; the details can be found on pp 33-34 at <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/London-Devon2015.pdf>

We head to an outdoor café to get a local beer (very refreshing) with the unpronounceable name of Ožujsko Pivo; this label, recommended by Elvis, "... is the flagship brand produced by Zagrebacka pivovara, the biggest brewery in the country." The cost, 36 HRK (about \$5) each. We head to the tender dock at 2:15 to return to the ship. While waiting for the tender to arrive, I take several pictures of young 'uns lost in the art of taking pictures of themselves with their selfie-sticks (or, as my friend Al Vazquez prefers to call them, Narcis-Sticks); several of these are posted at Picasa. To the right is Stephan Pastis's view of these blights on civilization, published on November 20, 2015. While waiting for the tender, we have a nice discussion of books with the woman of the Portland couple.



We relax in our room until 3:00, then head to a "private" (i.e., Tauck only, limited to 30 guests) wine and cheese tasting event, lorded over by a rather pretentious staff person who is a wine and cheese maven. But what do I know? We sit with a delightful couple from Miami - he is a retired professor of immunology in the medical school; we will have several additional meetings with this pair over the succeeding days. At 3:30, our ship sets sail for Kotor in Montenegro, a distance of 43 NM; arrival is expected at about 7:00 tomorrow morning.

At 4:30, we go to the theater to watch a late 1990s film, narrated by Mike Wallace, "The Death of Yugoslavia." It's some 50 minutes before someone figures out how to start the video; one hopes that the captain's navigation equipment is not similarly clock-challenged. The film turns out to be a devastating reminder of the terrible things that happened in this part of the world as Yugoslavia began to fragment into individual self-governing countries. I've already described some of this when talking about the siege of Dubrovnik. Here (in very much abbreviated form) is the rest of the story. Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in 1991. Bosnia-Herzegovina lies between Serbia (to the east) and Croatia (to the west and north); a census revealed that its population consisted of 44% Muslim (Bosniak), 32.5% Serb and 17% Croat, with 6% describing themselves as Yugoslav. Under the pretense of "protecting" their minority populations within Bosnia, both Serbia and Croatia attacked.\* The fighting went on for three years, and

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\*The same rationale has propelled Russia to "protect oppressed Russian nationals" living within Crimea and Ukraine by invading and capturing territory. There are also many Russian nationals in the small Baltic countries. As of this writing, Russia has not yet invaded Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia.

gave us such atrocities as ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population, concentration camps, mass killings of men and boys, genocide, rape of women, and bombing of cities that were under UN protection. NATO bombing drove the Serb forces out and peace agreements were signed. Later, Serbia attacked Kosovo (which was largely Albanian) and was stopped only when NATO bombed Belgrade and other parts of Serbia. At the conclusion of hostilities, Serbian president Slobodan Milošević along with Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadžić and Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic were all eventually arrested and brought to trial for war crimes, along with these: 45 Serbs, 12 Croats and 4 Bosniaks. There are many good accounts of the war and its brutality. Among these, I would recommend that you read: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_War) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia\\_in\\_the\\_Yugoslav\\_Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia_in_the_Yugoslav_Wars)

Following the movie, we return to our cabin for a while. From the balcony, I take some pictures of kayakers and of a "pirate" ship that's flying the Croatian flag and doesn't look especially threatening. For dinner, we go through the Deck 6 buffet line; our dining partners are a rather dull couple from Athens, GA. We return to our room to read, work puzzles, and curse at the molasses-like internet. We are in bed by 10:45, but not before taking a nice picture of the setting sun.

**Saturday, September 12**

Dubrovnik, in southern Croatia, is close to the border with Montenegro, so it's a fairly short journey (either on land or by sea) to arrive in Kotor (population 13,000), a coastal town tucked into the Gulf of Kotor. Unlike Croatia, which is part of the European Union but issues its own currency, Montenegro is not part of the EU but uses the Euro as its medium of exchange. For details on how this came about and what Montenegro's prospects are, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montenegro\\_and\\_the\\_euro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montenegro_and_the_euro) Because Carmen's group is the last one scheduled to leave the ship (9:00), we had planned to sleep late. Alas, that did not work because I awoke at 6:00 and was unable to return to sleep. So I get up and read some of *The Sportswriter* by Richard Ford, which I had begun reading a day or two ago. It is as well-written and absorbing as the second and third books in the trilogy.\*

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\*This novel is Part One of Ford's trilogy about the aging of one Frank Bascombe who moves from sports writing to selling real estate while engaged in a marriage separation, love affairs, and mourning of a son who had died. Several years ago, I had begun by reading Part Three, *The Lay of the Land*. Then in December, 2012, when in Germany, I read Part Two, *Independence Day*. Because all three volumes are in paperback, they are light enough to pack for overseas trips; thus I carried *The Sports Writer* with me to England and a Rhine Cruise in 2013, to Australia in early 2014, to a Norwegian cruise later that year, and to England earlier this year. On each of those occasions, I read other books and magazines. Finally, I tackle it now - and it's as good as the other two parts of the series.

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Following breakfast, we return to our cabin to await the nine o'clock hour. We are docked at the pier, near a huge cruise ship (from Germany, I think); it has to use tenders to get its passengers to shore, and they arrive in droves\* as we can see from our balcony.

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\*One of the nastiest clues that Will Shortz inserted into a *New York Times* crossword puzzle was "It comes in droves." When I solved the puzzle, the crossing words gave the answer as LONGO. Certain that I had a mistake, I checked the answer online and discovered that it was correct. Uncomprehending, I put LONGO into a Google search, but came up with nothing useful. And then it hit me (maybe you've already figured it out): the answer is LONG O. Oh. This goes along with similar clues: "Start of psychiatry" = SILENTP; "Beginning of citrus" = SOFTC; "End of the argument" = FINALT; and so on.

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**PUN ALERT (part one):** Well, not really a pun, but it occurs to me that the boats that convey passengers between shore and ship are not considered legal tender.

**PUN ALERT (part two):** Perhaps this is a real-life example of the tender trap?

Our tour will begin with a bus ride up the side of a mountain (3,000 feet), featuring no fewer than 27 hairpin turns (or, as they call them, switchbacks). Carmen had warned that if anyone is afraid of heights, those poor souls should shun the bus trip in favor of a morning of shopping in downtown Kotor. As "exciting" as the prospect of shopping is (well, it *is* exciting to the woman of our marriage), we are eager to get on the bus and begin the ascent. From our balcony, I take a picture of the town wall which zig-zags up the side of a hill. Carmen also tells us that unlike the ascent to the Krka waterfall, in which the entry of the buses is controlled by park authorities, no such protocol occurs here. If two buses should meet head on, one will have to back up until a wide enough space is found for the buses to pass one another safely.

Our tour guide is Ana\*; she is excellent, as we've come to expect for the Tauck-employed guides. On the

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\*I think it was Ana, but it might have been Zelska (p. 16) - my handwritten notes are incomplete - who uses an unusual figure of speech. Despite her perfect command of relatively unaccented English, she would interject "What can I tell you?" frequently into her touristic spiel. It is used in the sense of "Hey, I don't make these things up." I found it charming.

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way up, I'm able to take some wonderful pictures of the town below us (and even of the huge German



cruise ship and our much smaller one). When we reach the summit in the village (population 515!) of Njseguse (spelled Njegos by Google; well, who can tell which is correct?), we go to a small country restaurant and because it is already 10:30 Tauck figures that we are famished and so we are treated to some wine and the local prosciutto, accompanied by dried beef, goat cheese and grapes; the red wine is far too sweet for my tastes but the Chardonnay is enjoyable. Nearby is a large decaying Tito-era building that was constructed to serve as a hostel to reward workers who met their production goals; alas, it had an unfortunate fire and now just sits there, charred. Carmen takes a picture of the entire group and, after the trip, shares it by email; sad to say, it's in pdf format, so I can't import it for this document. We head down at about 11:30; from the bus window, I get several pictures of the hairpin turns, each of which is numbered from 27 down to 1. Our bus driver negotiates this descent with great skill.

We begin our tour of Kotor, under the superb guidance of Ana. Wikipedia gives this brief introduction:

The fortifications of Kotor are an integrated historical fortification system that protected the medieval town of Kotor containing ramparts, towers, citadels, gates, bastions, forts, cisterns, a castle, and ancillary buildings and structures. They incorporate military architecture of Illyria, Byzantium, Venice, and Austria. Together with the old town and its natural surroundings the fortifications were inscribed in the list of World Heritage Sites.

Over the centuries, Montenegro has been under the control of the Romans, the Ottomans, the Hapsburgs, the Russians, and (during World War II) the Nazis. Kotor was liberated by allied forces on November 21, 1944, a date that is carved in stone over a gate to the city. We walk through the old city, through large public squares and narrow alley-like streets, past the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas, and the Cathedral of St. Tryphon. I return to the ship at 1:30 while you-know-who remains in town to do some shopping. When Lee returns, we skip lunch and have only some ice cream and coffee; we are joined, briefly, by a couple from Edgewater, MD; he is a Yale graduate, class of 1962 (three years after me). We'll have a longer discussion at breakfast, tomorrow.

At 2:45 in the main lounge on Deck 3, Tauck tour director Steve gives an excellent talk about the history of the European Union, the Eurozone, and the euro.\* Then at 5:00 in the theater, an all-female group of

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\*Concise analyses of the creation of the EU (28 members in 2015) and the euro (19 countries) can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Union) and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurozone>

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Klapa singers (in traditional attire) perform a concert for the Tauck group; alas the language is impenetrable, except for one or two songs sung in English. From Klapa, I know nothin' - but Wikipedia comes to the rescue: "Klapa music is a form of traditional *a capella* singing in Dalmatia, Croatia. The word klapa translates as 'a group of friends' and traces its roots to littoral church singing. The motifs in general celebrate love, wine (grapes), country (homeland) and sea. Main elements of the music are harmony and melody, with rhythm very rarely being important. In 2012 klapa was inscribed in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." We then repair to the lounge and order Taliskers from a bartender who either doesn't know that good whisky should be doled out in relatively small portions or, perhaps, is an employee of Talisker and is eager to drum up business for them.

We have dinner in the Deck 6 buffet restaurant with the Miami couple mentioned earlier. While there, our ship sets sail at 6:30 to Hvar, Croatia, a distance of 133 NM where we expect to arrive at 7:30 tomorrow morning. Hvar is at the tip of a narrow island, not far from the narrow island where we began our journey, Korčula. We head to bed (nice rhyme, eh?) at 10:45.

### **Sunday, September 13**

Again, Carmen's group is scheduled to be first off the ship (at 8:00) so we have breakfast on Deck 2 at *Le Céleste*, which opens at 7:00. We eat with the couple from Edgewater, MD whom we had met a day or two ago. The Lorton, VA people had told me that the man is a Yale graduate, which is confirmed by his

wearing a blue baseball cap with a block Y on it. It turns out that he completed his undergraduate degree in 1962, three years after I got my B.S. and while I was still in graduate school. At breakfast, we reminisce about our days in New Haven; I'm disappointed that I recognize none of his professors nor he of mine.

It's another bright, sunny day (with a suggestion that the afternoon will be hot, again) when we board the 8:00 tender to shore. And who is our guide? Why none other than Hrvoje, son of Ajlin, whom we met briefly in Split. He takes us on a short walking tour of Hvar, past the impressive array of yachts and cabin cruisers, past the resort hotels, and past the many outdoor cafés where people are already enjoying their (probably alcoholic) libations.

After about a half-hour, we board a bus and drive to Stari Grad, the second largest city (population 2,800) on the island of Hvar (the biggest city is Hvar itself, population 4,200); the total population of the island is only 11,000. Hvar (the city) is at the southwestern tip of this elongated island; Stari Grad is 25 km away on the northern coast. Stari Grad is the oldest settlement on the island, having been settled by Greeks in 384 BCE. But its history goes back even further; according to Wikipedia, "The area around present day Stari Grad was settled by the neolithic tribes of the Hvar culture who occupied the island between 3500 and 2500 BC, and who traded with other settlements around the Mediterranean. Remains of their pottery and other artifacts have been found, along with that of the Illyrian tribe that succeeded them." The region is best known as a supplier of grapes, olives, and lavender. We walk to the Dominican Monastery of St. Peter the Martyr, built in 1482; it houses an impressive collection of artifacts (stone sculptures, friezes, urns, etc.) from its time as a Greek settlement; it also has a library with early printed books preserved under glass. Nearby is the tomb of Petar Hektorović (1487–1572), one of Croatia's most revered poets.

**Fun fact** (courtesy of Hrvoje). We had noticed in several Croatian cities that large outdoor clocks showed the numeral 4 as IIII, not (as we would do it now) as IV. The reason? In Latin, Jupiter (the supreme god) is spelled IVPITER, there being no J or U in Latin; so it was considered sacrilegious to put IV on the clock face. Is this true? Who knows? But it's plausible.

Hrvoje leads us to Stari Grad's harbor where, as in Hvar, there is an abundance of very expensive pleasure crafts; and, as in Hvar, there are many cafés with most of the table filled with patrons. We are in a market with lavender for sale in every possible mode. From a commercial web site, "Lavender was highly appreciated from olden time for its healing properties and intoxicating fragrance. It is recommended as a stress-relief, for head-ache, high-blood pressure, flu, rheum, some skin diseases, burns, insect bites, and for protection from moths and mosquitoes. These are just some of many other applications. Etherical lavender oil is produced by distilling lavender flowers, and it is used for warm baths, aroma lamps, as massage oil or for face and body care. If you want an original Hvar souvenir, a remedy and fragrance in one, then an ideal solution for you is a fragrant bag of 'Lavandula Croatica' or a bottle of lavender oil."

Whew! Lavender is also put in vinegar or honey, which can be spread on toast. Lee, of course, buys some jars. It's about 10 km into the countryside to reach the town of Vrisnik; and now it's 10:30 and, of course, time to eat and drink. We are taken to a restaurant, Konoba Vrisnik (<http://www.konoba-vrisnik.com/>) where we are served wine, cheese, prosciutto, and bread. Thank Heavens! I was worried that we were going to collapse from hunger. We are seated outdoors with the delightful Australian couple whom we met on the gondola ride in Venice and other places. As a book publisher, he was instrumental in bringing to Australia John Wiley and Sons (a venerable company well known to all chemists for its journals and for monographs such as Cotton and Wilkinson, Eliel, March, and many others).

Back on the bus, we return to Hvar town and visit the Spagnola Fortress (*Tvrđava Španjola* in Croatian, translated as Spanish Fort). Wikipedia informs us:

The town walls date from the 13th century and, with later additions and renovations, stretch from the fortress down to the square where they join the third wall in an east-west direction. This wall is practically camouflaged by a series of patrician houses built into it. The walls are interspersed with four-cornered side towers, the construction of which lasted, with essential repairs, from the 13th to the 16th century. The current fortress was constructed following the gunpowder explosion in 1579 which

devastated the old fortress. Today, the fortress includes a modern tourist complex, and provides a superb view of the town and its surroundings.

Indeed, we climb to the top of the walls and are rewarded with spectacular views of the town, the sea, and our ship. (Alas, the temperature has now climbed to 32°C; well, I suppose it could be worse.)

At 12:30, we are at the Cathedral of St. Stephen. Because interior photography is prohibited (as it has been in nearly every Croatian church), I give you this description from Wikipedia,

The present Cathedral was built in stages during the 16th and 17th centuries, while the interior was not completed until the 18th century. It has a Renaissance-baroque style, and a façade with three-cornered gable and a Renaissance Bell Tower in Romanesque style from the 16th century. The sanctuary of the nave is the nave of the former Gothic church: the two pulpits, the stone polyptich with "The altar of the Apostles", and reliefs "The Scourging of Christ" and the "Annunciation", from the workshop of Juraj Dalmatinac in the 15th century.

Hrvoje leads us to other places of interest in Hvar (a large square, narrow streets, wall sculptures) and finally back to Carpe Diem Beach near where our tenders are ... well ... tendered. With the palm trees, bright sun, and crystalline blue water, this area reminds me of South Florida, but without the mosquitos, alligators, and other pests. At 1:30 we are back on board *Le Lyrial*. The dining rooms are still open, so I indulge in a fruit cup (healthful) and ice cream (not so healthful).

Back in our room, we use our computers (to the extent possible) and read, both indoors and on our balcony. I get a sizeable portion of *The Sportswriter* read. At 6:00, the ship sets sail for Pula, 173 NM away which we expect to reach at 7:30 tomorrow morning. Also at 6:00, the entire Tauck group (all 132 of us) are herded onto the outside deck behind the swimming pool for a group picture. We receive a copy of the picture, but (sad to say) not in computer form, so I can't show it here. But it is taken from the top of a staircase by one of the professional photographers on board who manages to get in all of the Tauck tourists and our three wonderful tour guides. Following this, we head to the lounge for our daily "flagon" of Talisker. We have dinner on Deck 6 in the buffet restaurant, then retreat to our cabin at 8:30 and, eventually, to sleep.

### **Monday, September 14**

The morning is overcast, perhaps an indication that the day will not be as hot as the last few have been. At 7:15 the ship drops anchor in Pula (population 58,000) which is almost as far north as one can go and still be in Croatia. As in other ports, we'll need to use tenders to get to shore. This time, Carmen's group is the last scheduled to leave the ship (8:40) so we have the opportunity to use the Deck 6 restaurant even though it doesn't open until 7:30.

CORRECTION - Tauck's daily program, distributed the evening before, said that we'd be using tenders, but my eyes distinctly tell me that we are, in fact, docked at the city pier. So should I trust the other things that are in the program? Apparently the reason for the change is that the seas are too rough for the tenders to negotiate them. (Indeed, at one of the ports in the past two days when tenders were used, we did experience rough seas that rocked the little tender left and right during our short trip to the land.) Honesty also compels me to say that Pula has a very ugly commercial port, with construction vehicles, cranes, and several rusted vessels of various sizes and shapes on nearby piers.

We meet our guide, Ratko, a very energetic man with a style of delivery that is uniquely his own. It is impossible to mimic it in print, so I'll not even try, except for the following. Whenever he decided that we had been long enough at a particular site, he would say "OK, peoples,\* it's time to goooo" or "OK, peoples,\*

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\*I am reminded of a totally irrelevant story, but one that also employed the incorrect plural *peoples*.

Lee and I visited Scotland in 2001 and met a guide at Edinburgh Castle who told this joke (in his thick

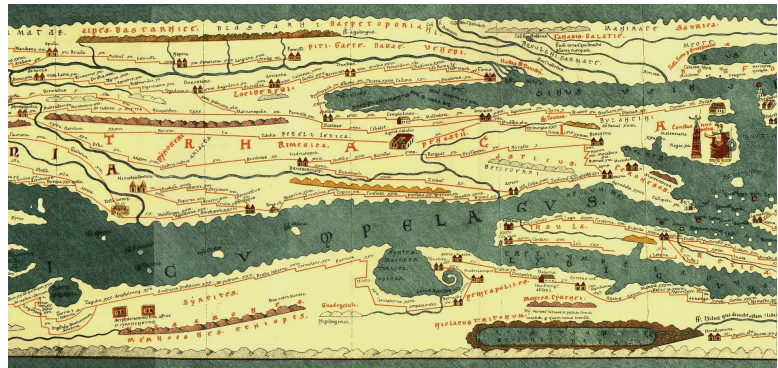
Scottish accent). "Peoples: d'ye know what's woorrn oonderrr a Scotsman's kilt? Nothin' is woorrn oonderrr a Scotsman's kilt. All of the equipment is in perrrfect worrrking orrrderrr!"

this wayyyy" and would indicate the direction either with his Tauck lollipop or (in the afternoon) his umbrella.

Pula is very old. There are artifacts from the Neolithic period (6000–2000 BCE) and from the Bronze Age (1800–1000 BCE). It was subsequently settled by the Greeks, the Illyrians, and (in 177 BCE) the Romans. Wikipedia makes it sound very much like a Shakespearean drama, as all of our favorite characters from *Julius Caesar* play a role:

During that time the town grew and had at its zenith a population of about 30,000. It became a significant Roman port with a large surrounding area under its jurisdiction. During the civil war of 42 BCE of the triumvirate of Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus against Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius, the town took the side of Cassius, since the town had been founded by Cassius Longinus, brother of Cassius. After Octavian's victory, the town was demolished. It was soon rebuilt at the request of Octavian's daughter Iulia and was then called Colonia Pietas Iulia Pola Pollentia Herculanea. Great classical constructions were built of which a few remain. A great amphitheatre, Pula Arena, was constructed between 27 BCE – 68 AD, much of it still standing to this day. The Romans also supplied the city with a water supply and sewage systems. They fortified the city with a wall with ten gates. A few of these gates still remain: the triumphal Arch of the Sergii, the Gate of Hercules (in which the names of the founders of the city are engraved), and the Twin Gates. During the reign of emperor Septimius Severus the name of the town was changed into "Res Publica Polensis". The town was the site of Crispus Caesar's execution in 326 AD and Gallus Caesar's execution in 354.

Indeed, the first stop on Ratko's itinerary is the afore-mentioned amphitheatre, an easy walk from the pier. It is a magnificent structure, largely intact with only a few missing pieces or pieces that have been repaired. The mood, however, is ruined by workmen who are clearing chairs, stands, and the stage from a recent concert (see Picasa). Below ground level (in what were the dungeons) is a museum with Roman artifacts, the most interesting of which might be the map (*Tabula Peutingeriana*) of the region that travelers rolled up and tucked under their arms when visiting. Totally wrong in scale and laid out with north on the left, it shows a very narrow Adriatic Sea and an extremely narrow Mediterranean separating Italy from Africa. The red lines that proceed horizontally indicate the distances that a person could travel in one day; when the segments are short, this is because the terrain is difficult and mountainous. (The map shown here is different from the one that we actually saw in Pula; for that image, see Picasa.)



We walk to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Twin Gates (*Porta Gemina*) in the wall that surrounds the old city. Then we encounter the Arch of the Sergii, described by Wikipedia as "an Ancient Roman triumphal arch ... The arch commemorates three brothers of the Sergii family, specifically Lucius Sergius Lepidus, a tribune serving in the twenty-ninth legion that participated in the Battle of Actium and disbanded in 27 BC . This suggests an approximate date of construction: 29-27 BC."

Shortly after, we come upon a modern bronze sculpture of a man, sitting with his legs crossed and sporting a fedora. I ask Ratko who this is and his reply could not have been more surprising: it's James Joyce. Now I know that you have the same question that I do - what in the hell is a sculpture of James Joyce doing in Pula? Well, Ratko explains it but *Rough Guides* is more complete <http://tinyurl.com/pgy6pe2> :

In October 1904 the 22-year-old James Joyce eloped from Ireland to mainland Europe with his girlfriend (and future wife) Nora Barnacle. He sought work with the Berlitz English-language schools in Zürich and Trieste, but the organization found him a post in Pula instead, where he was paid £2 for a sixteen-hour week teaching Austro-Hungarian naval officers (one of whom was Miklos Horthy, ruler of Hungary between the wars). Despite their straitened circumstances, the couple enjoyed this first taste of domestic life – although Joyce viewed Pula as a provincial backwater, and, eager to get away at the first opportunity, accepted a job in Trieste six months later.

Though Joyce had a productive time in Pula, writing much of what subsequently became *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the city made next to no impact on his literary imagination. In letters home he described it as “a back-of-God-speed place – a naval Siberia”, adding that “Istria is a long boring place wedged into the Adriatic, peopled by ignorant Slavs who wear red caps and colossal breeches.”

There are few places in modern Pula that boast Joycean associations: the Café Miramar, where Joyce went every day to read the newspapers was, until recently, a furniture store; there are current plans to turn the building into a luxury hotel. You can always, however, enjoy a drink in the café-bar Uliks (“Ulysses” in Croatian), situated on the ground floor of the apartment block which once housed the language school; the terrace boasts a life-size bronze sculpture of the artist himself sitting on one of the chairs, and there’s a small glass cabinet containing Joyce memorabilia inside.

We next visit a market that not only boasts a wide variety of fish and seafood but also has fruits, vegetables, flowers, and cheeses. It’s a shock that there is no mid-morning “snack” but we are happy to get back to the ship at 10:45 where we can cool off in our air-conditioned cabin. And it’s a good thing that we’re on board because the ship leaves at 11:30 for the short trip (21 NM) to Rovinj (population 14,000), arriving at 2:30. Rovinj is north of Pula, almost at the Slovenia border.

But first, a light lunch followed by a 2:00 meeting with the three tour directors who explain the disembarkation procedures; we will need a ride, tomorrow, from the Venice pier where *Le Lyrial* will dock to the Marco Polo airport for a 2:45 flight. According to *today’s* schedule, Carmen’s group is the last to go ashore (3:15) ... and who is our tour guide? Why none other than this morning’s Ratko. (Apparently he has traveled from Pula to Rovinj on his own: according to Google maps, it’s only a 45-minute drive.)

We stroll at a leisurely pace through parts of the city, stopping at a fruit market, admiring the excellent dog scene (although I only manage one photo), and then ascending some 10<sup>5</sup> slippery steps to the Church of St. Euphemia. And “Who?” I hear you ask “Is this St. Euphemia?” Ratko fills us in on her life and her adventures after death, but I fail to take any notes. However, to the rescue comes Wikipedia with a spewing of purple prose:

Saint Euphemia, “well-spoken [of]”, known as the All-praised in the Orthodox Church, is a Christian saint, who was martyred for her faith in 303 AD. According to Christian tradition, this occurred at Chalcedon. According to tradition, Euphemia was arrested for refusing to offer sacrifices to Ares. After suffering various tortures, she died in the arena at Chalcedon from wounds sustained from a bear. Her tomb became a site of pilgrimages. She is commemorated on September 16.

Killed by a bear? Yes! Here’s the story in more detail:

According to Christian legend, the governor of Chalcedon, Priscus, had made a decree that all of the inhabitants of the city take part in sacrifices to the deity Ares. Euphemia was discovered with forty-nine other Christians hiding in a house and worshipping the Christian God, in defiance of the governor’s orders. Because of their refusal to sacrifice, they were tortured for a number of days, and then handed over to the Emperor for further torture. Euphemia, the youngest among them, was separated from her companions and subjected to particularly harsh torments, including the wheel, in hopes of breaking her spirit. She was placed in the arena where lions were sent out to kill her but they refused, and, instead just licked her wounds. It is believed that she died of wounds from a wild bear in the arena.

But that's not all!

According to the Synaxarion of Constantinople, a collection of hagiographies, both parties wrote a confession of their faith and placed them on the breast of the saint Euphemia within her tomb. Then, in the presence of the emperor Marcian (450-457), the participants of the Council sealed the tomb, putting on it the imperial seal and setting a guard to watch over it for three days. During these days both sides imposed upon themselves strict fasting and prayer. After three days the patriarch and the emperor, in the presence of the Council, opened the tomb and found the scroll with the Orthodox confession was held by St Euphemia in her right hand, while the scroll of the heretics lay at her feet. St. Euphemia, as though alive, raised her hand and gave the scroll to the patriarch. As a result of this miracle, many of the heretics accepted the Orthodox confession, while those remaining obstinate in their heresy were consigned to the Council's condemnation and excommunication.

It's getting a bit hard to believe, but wait - there's more! (Note the writer's use of "tradition" and "legend" as if to say that these are not hard and cold facts.) So to conclude:

Around the year 620, in the wake of the conquest of Chalcedon by the Persians under Khosrau I in the year 617, the relics of Saint Euphemia were transferred to a new church in Constantinople. There, during the persecutions of the Iconoclasts, her reliquary was said to have been thrown into the sea, from which it was recovered by the ship-owning brothers Sergios and Sergonos, who belonged to the Orthodox party, and who gave it over to the local bishop who hid them in a secret crypt. The relics were afterwards taken to the Island of Lemnos, and in 796 they were returned to Constantinople. The majority of her relics are still in the Patriarchal Church of St. George, in Istanbul.

And what has all of this to do with the town of Rovinj where the church is located? Well, according to another "authoritative" source <http://www.inforovinj.com/eng/rovinj/znamenje/legenda-sv-eufemija.asp>

There are no historical data about the life of this saint, but it is known that she died on March 16, 304. Christians from Chalcedon preserved the body of the martyr until 620 when the town was captured by the Persians. The sarcophagus with the body of St. Euphemia was then transferred to Constantinople, and placed in a magnificent church which was built in her honour by Tsar Constantine. In 800 the Iconoclasts (icon-slashers) came to power, and the Christians were forced to remove the relics of St. Euphemia.

It is hard to say what happened next. People say that a marble sarcophagus came floating in the sea to the coast of Rovinj after a big storm at dawn of July 13, 800. It is said that many people of Rovinj tried to haul the sarcophagus to the Church of Saint George, but no one succeeded. Finally, answering to St. Euphemia's call, a small boy with two little cows managed to haul the sarcophagus up the hill.

The people of Rovinj considered it a miracle, and they proclaimed St. Euphemia the patron-saint of the town. St. Euphemia's Day is celebrated on September 16. Many visitors come to Rovinj to participate in the grandious (*sic*) celebration with rich program which takes place on the main square in Rovinj. Traditionally, on St. Euphemia's Day people eat mutton with sauerkraut ('*ovca z kapuzom*') and '*fritule*' an Istrian delicacy.

Our guide, Ratko, says that if you believe this story of the boy with two cows, you'll believe *anything*. (I wonder if he would have included the bizarre tales and the lies being issued by the 2016 Republican presidential candidates.)

I quote all of this, not to be cynical (which I am) but because the story is now complete and I want to express my revenge - this church, like every other one that we visited in Croatia and Montenegro does not allow picture-taking inside. But we do get a nice picture of the town which lies below the hill that we ascended. Carmen appears (not a miracle like Euphemia's but probably planned) and shows us an easier path down to ground level; it avoids the many many steps that we used in coming up, but it does have irregularly placed stones that tend to be slippery. Also it has begun to rain, but fortunately I have an

umbrella. The real miracle, *pace* Euphemia, is that I don't trip and fall. When back in the town square, we stop at the Finlandia Money Exchange (Finlandia??) to convert our remaining kuna into euros. The "exchange office" turns out to be a table in the corner of a seedy bar; the barmaid, who is also the exchange clerk, doesn't have the right denominations, but an off-duty Tauck local guide comes to the rescue.

We're back on board the ship at about 4:30 where I have the chance to strip off my soggy clothes (from sweat and rain) and relax for a while. We go to the observatory lounge for a drink. The regular bartender is a very generous pourer, as I've mentioned earlier, and the ship has a good stock of Talisker. Alas, neither he nor anyone else is on duty (they've been pressed into service for the captain's farewell reception) so we head to the pool bar where there is a much less generous pourer who has no Talisker and can provide only Glenmorangie in *plastic cups*. While waiting for our drink, the tiara-clad "King" (remember him?) butts in, demands a refill on his glass, and mutters a few curse words when the service proves to be slow. How uncouth! Especially for royalty!

At 7:15, there is a "command performance" scheduled for the pool on Deck 6 but it has been moved (because of rain) to the theater on Deck 4. Cruise Director Glenn O'Neill (remember him?) explains the disembarkation procedures, in French and in English, and does so with great wit and humor. For example, he says "Be sure to remove your valuables from the safe, because if you don't then the next time that you'll see them will be on eBay." Captain Regis Daumesnil thanks us, wishes us well for our departure, introduces (again) several of his staff, and is supported by occasional songs by the ship's onboard chanteuse, one Anna-Rita (whom we had avoided until this time). Then it's down to Deck 2 and the Captain's Gala Dinner in *Le Céleste*. The captain stands at the entrance to the restaurant, shaking hands with everyone (Anna-Rita is also there) and so the receiving line moves slowly; behind us is the "King" and he is cursing that the lines is moving so damned slowly. Where is the "Queen"? I see her not.

At 10:00, we are allowed to retrieve our passports (recall that we surrendered them when we first came on board) and then we make it back to our cabin where we pack our suitcases (in airplane mode, no dangerous liquids in the carry-ons, please), and are in bed at 10:30. And it's at that very time that the ship departs for Venice (67 NM) which we will reach at 6:15 tomorrow morning. The total distance traveled over these seven days is 927 NM.

## Tuesday, September 15

We set our alarm for 5:30 so that we can have breakfast, finish packing, and get to our bus which departs at 9:00. Looking to the right from our balcony we see a "convoy" of baggage carts, much like those used at airports, and we see luggage being loaded onto them from a chute. In the other direction is the gangplank with the omnipresent and eternally gregarious Captain Daumesnil shaking the hand of each departing guest. We make the same long walk that we did on September 8, but in the opposite direction, to the immigration/passport building where we are re-united with our suitcases and ushered to the bus. We arrive at Marco Polo airport, well ahead of our 2:45 departure, but this was the latest bus available.

It's too early to check in, and there is precious little seating, but finally we spot two high chairs at a counter where we plop our bods and order a couple of drinks: coffee for me, orange juice for Lee.

**STILL MORE UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS:** We are in the midst of a multitude of Italian-speaking passengers, many of whom are befouling the air with cigarette smoke and/or body odor, and who are carrying on loud and enthusiastic conversations accompanied by the flailing of arms and hands for emphasis. At a long table nearby, a family (three generations of them) are having loud discussions, each person raising his/her voice in an effort to drown out the others. And in addition, a woman sitting near me is having an animated discussion with her daughter while flossing her teeth! (I realize that dental hygiene is important, but in an airport?)

OK, not everyone in our area is uncouth. In fact, several passengers from the ship are sitting nearby: the

Australian book publisher and his wife, the Miami professor and his wife, and others. Well, maybe they are also uncouth, but in a much more refined way. Oh, yes, the "King" and "Queen" also make an appearance and, yes, they are wearing their sashes and tiaras, and, yes, they are drinking alcoholic beverages (at 9:30 in the morning?).

We did not expect it this soon, but an information panel reveals that the Swiss\* gate is open at 11:00 for

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\*This is the successor to the airline formerly known as Swissair, which was in business from 1931 to 2001. In 2001, facing financial problems, it reestablished itself as Swiss, was subsequently rebranded with other names, and now is owned by Lufthansa. But the name Swiss, standing by itself, makes it sound as if it modifies whatever follows it, such as "gate" above.

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check-in. Security is surprisingly efficient and fast, even though U.S. rules seem to apply: i.e., we need to remove liquids, laptops, e-readers, belt, wallet, coins, pens, handkerchiefs, condoms ... everything. We head to the Marco Polo lounge to await our plane's departure, still 2.5 hours away. In contrast to the boisterous and bustling waiting area downstairs, the lounge is quiet, uncrowded, and (miracle of miracles) well air-conditioned. Our fellow Tauckers are also here in the lounge with us, but having spent so much time with one another for the past week we are happy to keep large spaces between us.

At 2:25, we board the plane, an Airbus A320 with three seats on each side of a central aisle. We've been on other such short-haul European planes in which Business class is distinguished from Economy by having one passenger seated at the window and the other at the aisle with nobody in the much despised middle seat. When Stefan booked our flight, we were assigned Seats 3A and 3F, which seemed to be a strange way to designate a window and aisle seat. In fact, it is strange - both of them prove to be window seats, so Lee and I are as far as possible from one another, and nobody occupies Seats 3B, 3C, 3D, and 3E. Weird! And unlike the lounge, the airplane's cabin is very hot; and in the panel above the seats in Row 3, there are no air vents!

Announcements by the captain and flight attendants are in English and, sometimes, German but never in Italian. Our flying time is 50 minutes. A snack is served (a small ham-and-Swiss cheese sandwich on a roll, a croissant, and coffee). We take off at 3:00 and land in Zurich at 3:50 - typical Swiss precision. The outside temperature is a chilly 50°F.

We had requested an Audi A3 Sportback diesel\* from AutoEurope, but when we arrive at the desk we learn

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\*We were eager to drive the A3 as a test of whether we might want to buy one as our next car. We were also excited about getting a diesel for its good mileage. Had we known that Audi and VW diesels were to be in the news, just a few weeks later, for cheating on their emission-control testing and for producing 40 times the permitted levels of nitrogen oxides, we'd not have been so eager.

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that it has morphed into a Skoda Octavia. A what? This is a five-door hatchback and uses gasoline (*benzin* in this part of the world) rather than diesel; benzin is also more expensive: €1.40 per liter as opposed to €1.19. (Oops, I misspelled the name of the car - the first letter should be Š.) It is a Czech-made car, but its body, chassis, and engine are the same as in cars made by Volkswagen. It seems a bit large, but the man at the desk assures us that we'll enjoy driving it and, besides, it will allow us to store our two large and several smaller suitcases out of sight, something that would not be possible in the A3. He also tells us that it's a "free upgrade" because the less expensive car is not available. We are doubtful, but Lee sits in the driver's seat and declares it "satisfactory"; indeed, it will turn out to be more than satisfactory as both of us put it through its paces over the next four days. Seat adjustment is done manually (as on our Passat but not electronically as on our Audi) but the door locks and windows are electric and the air conditioning is excellent.

It is now 5:00 when we drive away from the airport and head toward Baiersbronn, Germany where the Hotel Bareiss is located. Google maps says that the journey is 173 km and will take about 2.25 hours. We hope to get to the hotel in time to have dinner in their restaurant; Lee had already written to them and said that



we might be arriving as late as 8:00 - but they assured us that we'd be able to get food. We hardly notice the border\* between Switzerland and Germany, although we do see some border guards standing nearby

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\*Before embarking on this trip, I had registered with STEP, the U.S. Department of State's "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program." Yesterday, we received an email from the U.S. embassy in Berlin, warning that there might be disruptions at the border because of what it called "the ongoing refugee situation in the region." Well, we see no "disruption" - I guess that this border crossing point is not one that the refugees are using.

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and peering into cars. We head north on an excellent road with clear signage, a typical German Autobahn with many German drivers passing us at speeds of at least 190 km/hr. When we get to Freudenstadt, we are only 11 km from our destination, but even though we are "armed" with excellent Google instructions there are road closures and construction detours in Freudenstadt that cause us to waste precious time figuring out how to get through the city.

Finally, we are on the correct road through small towns and industrial sites and, in possession of excellent driving directions and a map supplied by the Hotel Bareiss, we find it. We arrive at 7:30. We'll be staying at the hotel for four nights, the minimum stay that they require, and will take advantage of their half-pension (i.e., breakfast and lunch included in the room price). See <http://www.bareiss.com/en/hotel.html> for spectacular views of the hotel and its grounds. (But do resist looking at the exorbitant tariff that they charge for a room. When we booked it, Lee argued that it was perfectly situated for touring the Black Forest and, besides, this is our vacation and we can be extravagant. I countered with "Retired people don't take vacations because they have no work responsibilities to be relieved of" but she, who is known as She Who Must Be Obeyed, as always, prevailed ... and here we are.)

The hotel is a magnificent building and its grounds will require exploring when there's more daylight. Although much of our correspondence with them was *auf Deutsch*, every employee proves to be fully conversant in English. An attendant takes the car key (the car will be parked in an indoor garage) and fetches the suitcases; and the suitcases are carried upstairs to our room on the "first" floor (i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup> floor); there is also an elevator that we, the aging Americans, choose to take. We are given a tour of our room, which proves to be huge and very well-appointed, as my Picasa photos reveal. The bathroom is modern and the shower stall may require an advanced engineering degree for anyone to operate the controls (the photo of this doesn't show up at Picasa until the beginning of the day on September 17).

Instead of unpacking, we head directly to the dining room where we are assigned a table (with our names on a reservation card) that is to be ours for the remainder of our stay. On the back of the reservation card is this admonishment to turn off one's cell phone "... to be able to enjoy the harmonic ambiente as well as the company at your table. Thanks a million" Harmonic ambiente? We are eating in one of the "regular" restaurants and not Restaurant Bareiss, which has two Michelin stars and a price range consistent with it. The dress code is "Smart for dinner. For one's own pleasure. And for the pleasure of the other guests" - which reminds me of the manner in which many organizations tell us that "a handling charge is added for your convenience."

We are handed an eight-course menu from which we can choose only those dishes that we want. We both start with potato leek soup. For starters, Lee orders candied rabbit and I have a sausage salad (slices of bologna in a horseradish sauce). For our mains, we both have venison (I thought it fatty and grisly with a too-heavy sauce, but Lee enjoyed it). Accompanying the meal, Lee enjoys a glass of Pinot Noir whereas I opt for a glass of Riesling. Of course, there is also coffee and dessert from the buffet.

Following dinner, we head to our room at 9:00 to unpack for the four nights that we'll be here. The room is quite warm and the bathroom is even hotter, so we open the door to our balcony. This is one of those echt-European doors that can either open as a door or, by turning the handle in a different direction, open only at the top as in a window. We get to bed at 11:00 and sleep through until morning.

### Wednesday, September 16

The day begins cloudy and cool, with a hint of rain (which I hope does not actually materialize). From our balcony, I take several pictures of the valley below, with wisps of clouds at low levels. We head downstairs to "our" table for breakfast. This room, the next, and the one beyond are filled with tables bearing every imaginable kind of breakfast food. (I will take pictures of this tomorrow and post them at Picasa.) There are juices and fruit; bread, rolls, and sweet rolls; every conceivable (and some beyond) kind of cold cut; sausages; cheeses; pretzels; crepes, hot cherry sauce, and syrups; jams; cold and hot cereals; more fruits; vegetables; yoghurt; smoothies; wrap sandwiches; scrambled eggs; herrings; smoked salmon; filled donuts ... What have I left out? It's the most incredible spread I've ever seen in a European restaurant and I'm proud to say that I restrain myself, this morning and the next three, by *not* sampling one of everything.

At the table, we are given the opportunity to order fried eggs, omelettes, soft-boiled eggs, whatever. Lee asks for soft-boiled, so the waitress (attired in the costume of the region) asks if she wants them cooked for "vier oder fünf Minuten" and Lee, to her great sorrow, answers "drei." Well, they are really quite uncooked, but they do arrive in a knitted cozy. Tomorrow she'll know better.

At about 10:30, we ask to have our car delivered (tomorrow and the next day we'll walk to the garage to get it ourselves) and head to the town of Gengenbach\* (population 11,000), some 70 km and about an hour

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\*Peter Schickele is a noted composer and educator, but several years ago he adopted the persona of one P.D.Q. Bach, recorded several CDs, and gave concerts (or some semblance thereof) throughout the world. In this conceit, P.D.Q. (whose dates were "1807-1742?") was yet another of the 20 or 30 children of Johann Sebastian Bach and his exhausted wife Anna Magdalene Bach. Among P.D.Q.'s more memorable compositions are *Concerto for Horn & Hardart*; *Pervertimento for Bicycle, Bagpipes, and Balloons*; *Notebook for Betty Sue Bach*; and *Fanfare for the Common Cold*. Schickele's book, *The Definitive Biography of P. D. Q. Bach*, is still in print and is hilarious; so are the many CDs. Well, it got me thinking - could this Black Forest town that we are visiting be named after yet another of the Bach children, one *Gengen Bach*? None of the articles I've read about this most musical and fecund of all families mentions such a person, but I believe that he existed ... and that his music has survived, although in a much altered style, in our 21<sup>st</sup> century's Gangnam Style. Whaddya think? As Donald Rumsfeld once reminded us, "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

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away. Since Lee did all of the driving yesterday, I do this drive and find that the car is easy to handle and quite nimble; I bravely drive at 130-140 k/hr even though it is raining, sometimes quite hard on a scenic road called the Schwarzwaldhochstrasse, then onto an Autobahn. We arrive at about 12:30 and, despite the rain, we wander the streets of this beautiful old town, taking pictures of the half-timbered houses and other features. (Lee purchases a very expensive bracelet - well I think it's very expensive - but, as she has argued earlier and will do so again, she reminds me that we are on "vacation.")

From Gengenbach, it's only 30 km and 30 min to Wolfach, a spa town with fewer than 6,000 residents. Lee is driving now. We arrive at 2:30 and walk about, snapping pictures. We stop in a shop for coffee and pastries; when we come out the rain has stopped and the sun has come out. Two things that surprise: there are very few dogs in town; and many buildings, both in town and on the road, have numerous solar panels on their roofs. It takes some getting used to.

At 3:00, we drive to Oberwolfach, just 2 km away, but there's not much to see here and so we go on to Schiltach (population 4,000), a 10-minute drive away. It is a lovely little town with numerous half-timbered buildings. Already a stop on the Roman supply road from Strasbourg to Rottweil, the town was founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The 16<sup>th</sup> century town hall (Rathaus), built on a severe slope, has murals depicting important events in the city's history. For example, according to a web site, "in 1533 a service girl from Oberndorf was made responsible for the town fire and was accused of being in union with the devil. She was sentenced to death and burnt at the stake" and this is described in a mural at the lower left of the front face. As we walk the city, there are many lovely views of interesting half-timbered buildings, constructed (many of them) on very steeply sloped streets. The good news is that the rain has held off; the bad news

is that the sun is very warm, causing me to perspire profusely. (Whatever the weather, it would seem, I manage to get drenched.)

At 4:00 we return to our hotel, just 38 km away. Had you been following today's tourism on a map, you'd have seen that we traveled in a large loop: south and west from the hotel to Gengenbach, then east to Wolfach and Schiltach, and finally north back to the hotel. Of course things never go quite as smoothly as Google maps and our inherent sense of direction would suggest: in Freudenstadt, where we got turned around yesterday, the detours for road construction cause us to miss our turns two times. But we make it back to the hotel at 5:00. Because the "magic wand" that opens garage doors was left in the car, we park the vehicle ourselves and walk from the garage to the hotel front entrance. And what makes me ecstatic is that when I turn on the laptop and connect to the internet, I find that the connection is at least  $10^6$  times faster than on *Le Lyrial*.

We head to dinner at 7:15. I start with Black Forest ham (how appropriate!) with giant radishes followed by creamed zucchini soup; for my main, I choose a rump steak (much better than last night's venison) with potatoes, mushrooms, and cabbage; and for desert, sorbet (with three flavors: lemon/raspberry/cantaloupe) and fresh fruit. Lee gathers a mixed salad (from the salad bar), the same soup, and duck with honey and peppers and caramelized peach. Our wines: Riesling for me, Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) for Lee.

**ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION:** At the table next to ours is one Frau Oldfield, a rather dour older woman who studiously avoids eye contact with us, thus obviating any attempt of our greeting her with our best German. At one point, she gets up during dinner to chat with a party of Germans at a table for four, then returns to her seat and, as before, avoids us completely and sits there, glowering. One can get a complex when this sort of behavior is encountered. (There will be more about her in the entry for dinner time tomorrow.)

We return to our room, read and use the internet, then get to bed by 10:45.

#### Thursday, September 17

The alarm wakes us at 7:30. It is a very cloudy day. The pessimistic Lee tells me that the weather forecast is for heavy rain today. The view from our balcony reveals even thicker clouds in the valley than yesterday. But the pictures that I take of the sumptuous buffet offerings in the breakfast room tend to brighten my mood considerably (see Picasa). Our day is also brightened by the disappearance of Frau Oldfield from the adjacent table; for an explanation, see my comments at tonight's dinner.

Our travels today take us to the east, some 20 km and 30 minutes, to the town of Dornstetten (population 7,800). We walk about, take pictures, but it is raining, pretty hard on occasion. Still, the half-timbered buildings and churches are very attractive. After about a half-hour, we drive to Altensteig (population 10,000), 20 km to the north. It's another attractive town, but probably less so than Dornstetten and the three that we visited yesterday. Nevertheless, despite the rain (and temperatures that hovered around 12°C) and some very steep streets, we wander about the old city, taking pictures. There are some "amusing" pieces of public art (see Picasa), a wall plaque in Herbrew (that I can read about as well as I can German), and the 16<sup>th</sup> century Nikolaus Kapelle with its attached Pfarrhaus.\*

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\*With my abysmally poor knowledge of German, I had assumed that this meant that we were "*pfarr* from the madding crowd," but, in fact, it translates as "rectory" or "manse." My ignorance is further exposed by my thinking that a building sign "Kinder-Krippe" in Dornstetten referred to a home for crippled children, whereas it really means "kid's crib."

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We climb some 25 steps toward the oldest part of the city, only to be confronted by some 10,000 more steps that lead nearly straight up. It's raining, the steps are slippery, and my legs are tired, so I return to

our car (after withdrawing € 240 from a nearby ATM) and wait for Lee to explore the upper town and report back to me. Some 25 minutes later, Lee shows up, having hiked the many steps up and then down (she describes it as an "arduous" walk), and having taken many pictures.

**OBSERVATION ABOUT ROADS:** (1) Yesterday and today, we've been traveling on relatively minor roads, some of them quite curvy as they ascend and descend in valleys. But they are well-signed with appropriate speed limits (unlike the Autobahn) and (mercifully) not slippery in the rain. (2) We see no pickup trucks (an observation that we've made on other trips in Germany and France) of the type that are so common in the U.S. What, I wonder, does Germany's redneck population drive if not the Teutonic equivalent of a Ford F-150 or a Toyota Tacoma? (3) And among the passenger cars, we see very very few from Japanese manufacturers.

**A FAMILY VIGNETTE:** When driving from the hotel toward Freudenstadt this morning, the following conversation took place. Lee: "We'll cross another railroad track soon." Ron: "I think that there's only one crossing, the one we've already done." Lee: "No, I'm sure that there's another. But I may be wrong. I apologize." Ron: "That's out of character for you. You're *never* wrong - and when you are, you *never* apologize." [We drive on.] Lee: "I was right! There is another set of tracks!" Ron: "That makes three wrongs: apologizing for having been wrong about being wrong even though you were right." Lee: "What?"

We leave Altensteig at 12:50 and head northeast, 25 km, to the town of Calw (population 22,000). This name looks Welsh, but one of the women at our hotel tells us that it's German and is pronounced Kahlf. Oh. We had planned to take the Hauptstraße L348, but it is closed and so we take the alternative route via the highways 28 and 463. It takes only about 30 minutes to get there. It is a big enough city that we find a large, multi-level, indoor parking garage. Calw has had an interesting history. According to Wikipedia:

Calw was first mentioned in records in 1037. In the 11th century, the town grew around the older castle of the Grafen (Earls) of Calw. In the Middle Ages, Calw was an important commercial town, especially for the trade of cloth and leather. In 1345, Calw became part of Württemberg, and by the 16th century, it had become the summer residence of the Duke of Württemberg. In 1634 the town was taken by the Bavarians, and in 1692 by the French. In the 18th century, Calw flourished from the lumber trade and rafting of timber on the river Nagold ... During World War II, a small subcamp of Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp, where parts for aircraft were assembled by female forced laborers, was located here.

In every one of Wikipedia's entries for these Black Forest towns, it gives a list of the most famous residents of the town. None of the names have made any impression until this time when it is revealed that Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) was born here. Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, his most famous works were *Siddhartha* and *Der Steppenwolf*. The former became a cultural touchstone among U.S. college students of the 1960s (although I doubt that many had actually read it\*) and the latter became well-known if only

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\*As Mark Twain once opined, "A classic is something that everyone wants to have read but nobody wants to read."

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through the rock band that named itself Steppenwolf.\*

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\*Its most famous hits were *Born to be Wild* and *Magic Carpet Ride*. I learn from Wikipedia that the band changed its name from *The Sparrows*, although it's not clear that any of them had read the Hesse book either. The band lasted for only five years (really an eternity for many rock groups).

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The town, like the others of the region, features half-timbered houses and whimsical public art (see Picasa). A statue of Hermann Hesse is at one end of a small bridge that spans the river Nagold. We stop at Café am Markt for a nice piece of strudel and a cup of coffee, before heading back to our hotel, 60 km and one hour away. We take a short cut - rather than using the "major" highway, we head south on the 294, then take a very very very minor (very very very curvy) road, the L350, to the 462 and back to our

hotel; by this we manage to avoid Freudenstadt, with its many detours and confusing signs.

On the way back, having driven 533 km, we decide it's time to get fuel. We find an Esso station. And after doing the necessary conversions (km to mi, L to gal, euro to USD), we calculate that we've gotten 38.2 mpg and that the benzin cost the equivalent of \$5.55 per gallon.

Back in our room, we take advantage of the fast internet connection and do some book reading. And now, too late to be of help to us, the rain has stopped: a picture of the valley below, bathed in sunlight, is posted at Picasa. After a while, we head to the dining room.

**DENOUEMENT OF AN EARLIER UNCHARITABLE COMMENT:** Do you recall Frau Oldfield, now renamed in our minds as Frau Grumpy-Puss? This morning at breakfast, we saw a different name plate at her table. Perhaps she's checked out of the hotel? Nah. This evening, I spot her sitting alone at a different table in the most distant corner of the room (far from the despicable Americans!); whether she asked to be moved because of her hatred for us or because it put her closer to the buffet table, I do not know. So tonight, when I choose to get salad from the salad bar, I time my return to the very moment when she rises to fill her plate. "Guten Abend," say I, with a big smile. Trapped, she can hardly do anything but to return my greeting: "Guten Abend," she mutters.

For dinner, after "raiding" the salad bar, I order soup (mushroom and bacon) followed by veal fricassee (for which, as with an earlier meal, I find the meat fatty and the sauce too heavy) along with linguini and assorted vegetables (tomatoes and mushrooms); for dessert: strawberry sorbet with berries. Lee orders salmon trout "tartlets," then the same soup as I as well as the veal fricassee; for dessert, she has a chocolate tart with yogurt ice cream and sour cherries. Our wines are the same as last night's: Riesling for me, Spätburgunder for Lee. Following dinner, we go to our room to read and we are in bed at about 10:30.

### Friday, September 18

Contrary to our hopes, it is not bright and sunny; rather it is cool and cloudy but at least there is no rain and there are hints of a developing blue sky. We go to breakfast at 7:30, following which we wander the grounds outside the hotel, taking many pictures (see Picasa). Because the sun has made the room too warm, I open the combo door/window and manage to invite in (not by plan) some flies and other insects.\*

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\***PUN ALERT:** On our year 2000 trip through former East Germany, we were sitting on a bench in Dresden, alongside the Elbe, when we are assaulted by gnats. I ask Lee if she knows what little German gnats are called. When she replies that she doesn't, I inform her that they are called Gnatsies!

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So I close the door. At about 10:00 we are plotting our route southward to *Schwarzwälder Freilichtmuseum Vogtsbauernhof* (as its called in the native patois), an open-air museum near Gutach (population 4,000), some 60 km away.

We arrive at about noon and walk from the rather large parking lot, quite completely filled with cars (an indication that the place will be crowded today), enter through the admissions building *cum* gift shop, buy our tickets, and walk among the historic farm houses, chapels, bakery, mill, pastures, etc. Lee is in her element, whereas I can think of thousands of things I'd rather be doing. Nevertheless, I do enjoy the animals (donkeys, goats, chickens, cattle, geese, and sheep) that we see and that you can see at Picasa. During our stay at the museum, it has rained on and off.

At 1:30, having filled our senses (one of us having done so an hour earlier) we are on the road again, this time heading further south to Triberg (population 5,000), just 15 km away. It is, of course, raining. We are looking for the Cuckoo Museum and the world's largest Cuckoo clock, but (after getting hung up in a huge traffic jam caused by road construction\*) we manage to drive into and out of town without seeing any signs

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\*Only one lane of traffic can move but there is no flag person to control the flow of cars. Instead there is a little red light that turns green when each lane is allowed to move to the open lane and drive through. I'm certain that the cars proceeding in the opposite direction have hacked into the signal system such that they have lengthy green lights. For us, only a small number of cars get through on each green, so the wait proves to be very long.

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to the museum or clock.\* A little bit outside the city is the Triberg Waterfall, one of the largest in Germany,

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\*Later this afternoon, we will discover that the cuckoo clock museum is *north* of the city, not south as stated in the (sometimes) reliable *DK Guide*.

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but we struggle to find it as well. Desperate for a caffeine-fix, we continue southward, convinced that the next towns, Schönwald and Furtwagen, would have a nice café ... but we are disappointed. So we return to Triberg, park near the steep path that could (if we chose) take us to the waterfall, take a look at the 18<sup>th</sup> century church *Maria in der Tanne* (Mary in the Fir), which Wikipedia describes as baroque. It is *that* and then some, as the indoor pictures at Picasa will reveal. We then walk across the road to a café where we sit outside and have coffee and a pastry.

It is now 4:30 and time to return to the hotel, so we retrace our steps by driving northward through Triberg (and sitting in the same traffic jam for a much too long time) and then, just as we leave the touristic shopping region we see the museum and cuckoo clock that we had missed earlier. On one face of the museum is a large clock, but on the other face (the one nearer the highway) is the humongous clock with the biggest pendulum and weights for winding that one has ever seen. We return to the smaller clock - I had missed this feature, but another visitor notices that with a deposit of € 1 the clock will come to life and little figures will parade through the open door. I take pictures of this, even though I am taking advantage of another traveler's generosity. So be it.

**CLASSICAL MUSIC ON THE RADIO:** The car radio is digital and can pick up only certain channels, depending on our location. Over the past couple of days, we've been listening mostly to SWR2 (*Kulturradio für Baden-Württemberg und Rheinland-Pfalz*). It is mostly talk (*auf Deutsch, leider*) with occasional classical music. For a country and a people who are reputed to love serious music, the station certainly does a nice job of ruining it, in various ways. For example, when airing a Brahms violin/piano sonata, they play about one minute of the first movement, then engage in about 10 minutes of talk (*auf Deutsch, natürlich*), then one minute of the second movement, then more talk, *und so weiter*. And later in the day, we get a truly weird pastiche of unconnected musical selections interrupted by talk: 15 seconds of *Finlandia*; 15 seconds of "world music"; 15 seconds of a Vivaldi's *The Seasons*; 15 seconds of weird techno pop; and on and on and on.

We head north toward the hotel, but stop in Alpirsbach through which we had passed on our arrival from Zurich. On first impression, it looked like a lovely town that we might want to explore; on second impression, it proves to be anything but. So we continue northward, taking some pictures of solar panels on the traditional steep roofs of businesses and homes, and get back to the hotel.

For dinner I order the sausage salad that I had had the first night, mushroom soup, and Swabian lentil stew with pork sausage and Swabian noodles. I suspect that this meal is not Kosher. Lee helps herself to "Asiatic" salad from the buffet, then the same mushroom soup and lentil stew. For both of us, dessert is chocolate mousse with citrus fruits. And our wines, again, are Riesling and Spätburgunder.

**UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS RE-REDUX:** Remember Frau Oldfield? Well, she is still at the hotel, sitting alone in a distant corner of the room, near the buffet. Should I go over and tell her that we are leaving tomorrow and that she can rejoice? Nah, better not. But all is not well. On the other side of our table, there is a group of French women, one of whom announces her presence (well before being seated) by a combination of body odor and perfume. If the latter was supposed to mask the former, it didn't; if anything, each had a synergistic effect on the other.

We return to our room and get to bed at 10:45.

**ADDENDUM:** Two weeks after our return to the U.S., we received a letter from Martina Bulenda, Head of Reception at the Bareiss. It is a tribute to the U.S. Postal Service that the letter arrived at our mailbox because it was addressed as follows:

Mister and Misses (*sic*) Ronald and Linda Magid  
7496 North Geek (*sic!*)  
98335 Washington

I saw the envelope before Lee did and I had to assure her that I did not have a harem of unmarried women living with me. And for those who aren't aware, our street address is actually 7496 North **Creek Loop** and our city is **Gig Harbor**; also note that the country has been omitted but at least the zip code is right-on. The letter begins "We at the Bareiss are very appreciative of your fulminant (*sic!!!*) recognition of our whole team" undoubtedly a reference to the nice tip that Lee added to the bill; according to Wikipedia, *fulminant* refers to "any event or process that occurs suddenly and quickly, and is intense and severe to the point of lethality." Oh, well, the thought is nice and, besides, their English is a hell of a lot better than my German.

**ADDENDUM TO THE ADDENDUM:** On December 26, just as this journal is being completed, a large white envelope with a glossy 82-page brochure arrives. It is addressed the same way as was the letter, so once again huge props to the USPS for figuring out how to deliver it. Along with the brochure is a 20-page newsletter featuring interviews with the family members that make up the Bareiss management team. It would be tempting to make fun of the excessively flowery language, but I'll resist.

**ADDENDUM TO THE ADDENDUM TO THE ADDENDUM** On December 28, *after* this journal was completed and published to my web site, yet another letter arrived. It was addressed, as were the others, to 7496 North Geek. It was a birthday greeting for Lee and me (December 13 and 19, respectively) from Hermann Bareiss. In explanation of why he used regular mail rather than email, he wrote (and I quote verbatim): "But because we think that our digital lives are rapid and prompt enough. Not to say, breakneck! This is why we have - out of respect for your special day - shifted back a gear in order to wish you, unhurriedly, that you are not overtaken left and right by the rapidity of our virtual overdrive during your new year of life. But that, instead, you can take your path at your own speed an rhythm - as it suits you." And it concludes, "W hat happiness it is to be loved! And, Gods, live - what happiness!" Whew! No, I don't understand the choice of words or the syntax, but I do appreciate the attention. I wonder what tomorrow's mail will bring.

### **Saturday, September 19**

We rise at 6:30 to finish packing before going to breakfast. It is a sunny morning and I manage to photograph a rainbow from our balcony. But 15 minutes later, the fog rolls in (no pictures). Church bells are tolling in the valley. On Saturday? And then at 8:30, there is a long peel of bells from several churches for three minutes. And this is repeated at 9:30. Because we'll check out of the hotel before 10:30, we don't know if the chiming of the bells will continue throughout the day.

Having had very light breakfasts the first three mornings, today I go even lighter because I'm not at all hungry, although it's more than I eat at home. (Too much rich food yesterday and before, I guess.) Frau Oldfield is present, sitting alone at her distant table. And the French women mentioned yesterday arrive just as we're leaving, so I don't get to sample their aroma. *Tant pis* (which is French for "oh, well" and not for "Auntie is taking a leak").

The hotel's web site clearly states "No credit cards!" - so we had made our reservation, several months ago, by wiring our payment in euros. But now at check-out, we have some incidental charges (coffee and wine) so we saved enough money to pay in cash only to be told that visitors from the United States *are* allowed to use credit cards. Huh? Why?

We check out at 10:15, assisted by strong young men who bring our suitcases down from the first (i.e., second) floor. And the sun comes out as we set our path to Freiburg (population 230,000), 120 km to the south, first via the E28, a beautiful winding "up-and-down-hilling" drive in the fog to the west, joining up with the autobahn E35 which heads south to our destination. (We had stopped, initially, in Bad Peterstal-Griebach, hoping that it would be a picturesque village - but it disappoints as it seems to have only homely hotels for the tourists. So we continue on to Freiburg.) On the way, we are "entertained" by two idiots on motorcycles who do zig-zags about our car, wheelies to "impress" us, and other stunts; mercifully they turn off the highway, probably hoping to antagonize other drivers. We arrive in Freiburg at 12:30, but find all of the parking lots near the cathedral already full, so we park a fair distance away and walk to the cathedral ... in the rain (which has begun and which will become very heavy soon).

Because it is Saturday morning, the plaza (*Münsterplatz*) surrounding the cathedral is filled with vendors of all kinds. And, of course, there is a host of shoppers, many of whom are actually shopping but some of whom are merely taking the air by strolling about. Ordinarily, I love these European fruit/vegetable/meat/whatever markets, but this time I manage to get only a few pictures because a vicious squall has suddenly arrived, making it impossible to use the camera while holding an umbrella which desperately wants to turn inside out. We make it to the front door of the cathedral and get inside. Unlike so many of the churches we had encountered in Croatia, this one allows picture-taking indoors (although without flash). The building dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Both the exterior and interior are distinctly gothic.

The sun has now come out and most of the vendors have gone, so we get to stroll easily around the cathedral square, taking pictures of it and of the nearby historic buildings (e.g., the merchant's hall and the city hall, both dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century). We stop in an outdoor café for coffee and a snack: *apfelstrudel* and ice cream for me, and for Lee *Nuss-Becher* (hazelnuts, chocolate sauce, vanilla ice cream) - obscene!

**STILL MORE UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATIONS:** Germans are very determined when they walk. That is, they proceed straight ahead, no matter if another person is right in front of them. One suspects that they'd be similarly directional even if encountering an unmovable obstacle ... like a lamp post. But to be **charitable**, I need to add that we see no selfie sticks and encounter surprisingly little cigarette smoking.

Along the sidewalks (and often where you least expect them) are canals (*Freiburg Bächle*), about one-foot wide and quite shallow, with flowing water; originally used to bring fresh water to the city (and to act as a primitive sewer system) they are now merely a tourist attraction (and a good way to break an ankle if one suddenly steps into one of them). We encounter a nice shopping area in which the pavement outside each store has a mosaic design to indicate the nature of the business inside; alas, most of these designs are for businesses no longer at that address. But they do make for nice pictures. We also encounter several *Stolpersteins* (stumbling blocks) of the type that we had seen in Berlin; each commemorates a Jewish resident who had been sent to a Nazi concentration camp and murdered.

At about 2:00, we make our way back to the parking lot and set out to Badenweiler where tonight's hotel is located. It's but 50 km south of here, mostly on an excellent autobahn, but the final approach to Hotel Schlossberg (<http://www.hotel-schlossberg-badenweiler.de/en/>) presents a bit of a challenge. Yes, the hotel's web site did have a hand-drawn map and yes it did provide written instructions. After exiting the A5:

Follow the signs to "Badenweiler" through "Neuenburg" and "Mullheim". After having passed through "Mullheim" you will enter a circle with a "Aral" gas station. Drive straight through the circle direction "Badenweiler Ost". You will arrive to "Oberweiler" and turn right at the public pool, following the sign "Badenweiler".

Everything goes well until we miss the public pool. Actually, Lee was sure that she had seen it, but turning right at this faux-pool led nowhere. So we continue on the road. Then:

To the hotel: appr. 500m after having entered the town of "Badenweiler" you reach the first interesection (*sic*): the "Viteller Platz". Make a right there and follow the street "Romerstrasse" until it turns into the street "Schlossbergstrasse" (the street "unterer Kirchweg" continues to the right). After



appr. 200 meters you turn left to reach our parkings (*sic*) and the hotel "Schlossberg"

Well! Following these directions and with the hand-drawn map in hand, we find ourselves suddenly off the road and in what appears to be the pedestrian access for a small shopping center. Undaunted, we proceed further and finally find the hotel ... or more properly the hotel and similar buildings, all of which look alike. We park at the bottom of a hill and hike to the hotel's door ... which is locked! We are finally admitted by a clerk who has very little English; but we make clear who we are, that our car is too far away for us to drag suitcases up the hill (yes, we are given permission to drive up the hill but only for the purpose of unloading).

Using our best attempt at German, we ask him to make a reservation at the restaurant that is associated with the hotel. He assures us that it's merely a five-minute walk through the park behind the hotel into Badenweiler and the restaurant Winzerstube.

After doing a bit of unpacking, we head in the general direction of the restaurant. (Just in case it's pitch dark in the park when we return, I carry a small flashlight.) We emerge from the park and find ourselves in a small tourist-oriented city (i.e., there are hotels, inns, restaurants, and of course ATMs). But we do not see the Markgräfler Winzerstube. I stop in a hotel and ask directions but when we follow them we still do not see our restaurant. We do see others and are tempted to scrap the reservation and eat elsewhere, but we stop at a pizza place and receive more directions. And finally we find it. Not only is it more than a five-minute walk from the hotel, it is also not at all easy to find.

The hostess leads us upstairs and seats us at a table for six at which two other diners are already eating. They are nearly finished with their meal, so they leave the table giving us very little opportunity to talk with them. Shortly afterwards, a party of three replaces them. This group consists of a man, a woman, and a beautiful (and mercifully well-behaved) dog, a black labradoodle if you please. We never learn the names of the humans, but the dog is Tiger (yes he has an English-language name but is the very antithesis of a real tiger in his docile manner). The woman has a bit of English but the man is fluent, having lived and worked in the U.S. for several months. They live in Stuttgart and are here on vacation. Lee and I both begin with soup: potato for me, onion for her. For our main, we both have local sausages with fried potatoes. And, of course, Riesling for me, Spätburgunder for Lee. During dinner, Tiger remains quietly under the table, occasionally putting his muzzle on one's lap and looking soulfully hoping for a snack. With the man's permission, Lee gives Tiger a bit of her sausage - now they are friends for life!

We make our way back to the hotel (both the park and its paths are surprisingly well-lit) and get to bed at 10:30.

### **Sunday, September 20**

We set the alarm for 6:30, but I am awake at 4:00 and, unable to fall asleep, I rise at 5:00 to read. We're in a hurry to get going (I'll explain in a moment) but the breakfast room, which is supposed to open at 8:00, doesn't actually open its doors until 8:15. There is a decent spread of fruits, breads, cold meats, etc. but it pales in comparison to the lavishness of the Bareiss's version.

We are driving to Lyon (France's third-largest city, population 480,000), specifically to its Saint-Exupéry\*

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\*Named for Antoine Marie Jean-Baptiste Roger, Count de Saint-Exupéry (1900 - 1944), a French writer and aviator. Winner of several literary prizes, including the U.S.'s National Book Award, his most famous book is *The Little Prince*. During World War II, he flew reconnaissance missions for the French army, but on July 31, 1944, he took off on his ninth mission and disappeared.

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Aéroport. Why? Is it to meet another plane? No, not at all. We are trying to connect with Uniworld's "Burgundy and Provence" cruise on the Saône and Rhône rivers from Lyon to Avignon. When Stefan Bisciglia made the reservation in 2014, he was informed by a Uniworld representative that they would not

transport us from the airport to the pier if we were not arriving by plane. I wrote a letter asking why this was their policy. Not only did they admonish me for *daring* to communicate directly with them (instead of going through my travel agent) but they explained that a passenger arriving by car would be much more likely than a plane to arrive late. (Is she delusional? Has she never flown?)

So we decide to try the following. Our first plan: Lee and I could arrive at the airport, locate the Uniworld representative, and implore him/her/it to allow us to use their transport to the ship. If they refused, well then we could take a taxi. But the devious Lee, in collaboration with the equally devious Stefan, hatch an even more clever plan: Lee identifies a KLM flight from Amsterdam that arrives at Terminal 2 in Lyon at 1:15; Stefan gives this information to Uniworld (given that I'm forbidden from speaking or writing directly) and says that that would be our flight. Then, if we could time our arrival at the airport by car to coincide with the KLM arrival, they couldn't possibly deny us transportation. Could they?

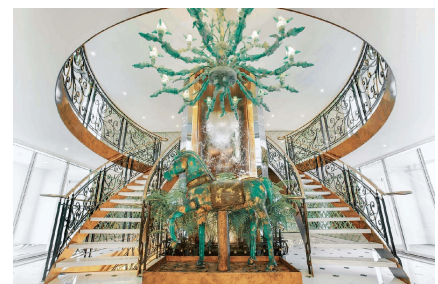
Thus we need to leave the hotel as early as possible for the 412 km drive which Google maps estimates should take us from 3.5 to 4 hours. To complicate things further, we had received an email from STEP and the U.S. Embassy in Paris alerting us to the possibility of delays at the border crossing because of the refugee crisis that was erupting all over Europe. Well, as it turns out, we needn't have feared. We retrace our drive from Badenweiler to the A5 (the highway on which we had arrived from Freiburg) and head south to the border with France, just 20 km away. We cross the Rhine without incident and proceed on excellent French highways to Lyon. We drive through Alsace, a region that we had explored north of here on the Rhine cruise of 2013. We fill with fuel after having gone 595 km and get a spectacular 40.0 mpg. We take the A36 in a southwesterly direction to the town of Dole, then head south to Lyon on the A40.

Not far from Lyon, we pass through the Bresse region, noted for its *poulet de Bresse*, a chicken which, like a fine wine, has its own *appellation d'origine contrôlée* and can be identified in markets by its slate-blue legs (as we will see several times on the upcoming cruise). There is an enormous steel sculpture of a chicken at the side of the road. We are not quick enough with the camera to capture a picture, but others have done so for us.



As we near the airport, we fill the fuel tank (as is required), this time getting "only" 33 mpg over the final 190 km. (For the entire trip, beginning at the Zurich airport, we drove 1337 km.) We arrive at the rental car return at 12:45 (*Non, monsieur*, we did not speed!). We make our way to the arrivals hall and wait for the Uniworld representative to arrive. And arrive she does, at about 1:00. I walk over, greet her, and give her our names. She looks at the electronic arrival board then at her clipboard and says, "But your plane is not supposed to arrive until 1:15!" "We're tricky," I reply. And so we do get free transportation to the pier, accompanied by a man and wife who are retired from working for the government (ours!), both in the State Department (he, specifically, in cyber security) and one of the ship's crew who had taken a brief holiday. I'm glad that we didn't have to take a taxi, as the ride from the airport took about 45 minutes.

The ship, as I had expected, is very long, very lavishly appointed (to the point of exceeding good taste), but it is comfortable. Here are some pictures of the S.S. *Catherine* taken from Uniworld's web site <https://uniworld.com/ships/s-s-catherine>



On board the ship, we have our pictures taken at the front desk. We then head to *Cézanne Restaurant\** for

\*Other "cute" names for the public areas are: Bar du Léopard, Van Gogh Lounge, Matisse Terrace, Serenity River Spa, Camargue Deck, and Saint Remy Deck. (I wonder if les Messieurs Cézanne,

Matisse, and Van Gogh gave permission for use of their names.)

a bit of lunch. Unlike *Le Lyrial*, this ship has only one dining room, but it is on the *Avignon* deck, the same level as our cabin. We sit with an interesting couple who live in Charleston, SC, he a retired lawyer. They've know one another for 45 years (he was her family's lawyer) and got married two years ago after both spouses died; one suspects evil doing, but ... We will eat several other meals with them over the course of the cruise. Following lunch, we are issued our room keys and are escorted to our cabin by a staff member who shows us where everything is, how the controls work, and where we can store our suitcases. It is smaller than our room on *Le Lyrial* (well, hell, we had a double room, a suite there) but this one is large enough for our purposes.



We get the code for internet use, then go to the Van Gogh Lounge for coffee and a small sandwich. Lee tries out the iPad and finds that she does have a signal, but I wonder how strong the connection will be once we're underway. Unlike on the Adriatic cruise, we will always be close to one shore or another, so surely (surely?) there will be cell phone towers in the proximity. Won't there be? We meet (and learn the names of) a few more fellow passengers in the lounge, but we don't stay very long because this is a difficult place for me to read: the resident pianist (Roberto) is "tickling the ivories" and playing golden oldies, which would not be so bad if he hadn't also been using his iPad to accompany himself with recorded sounds of strings and winds and drums, a veritable cyber orchestra!

At 5:30, we get the safety presentation along with announcements and explanations by the captain (Sebastien Humbert), house manager (Astrid Veldwijk), and cruise director (Piet Abbeloos) about how to sign up for excursions, how to pay for extra services on board, etc. Piet has excellent English and will address us every day concerning the next day's travels; Captain Humbert is not very comfortable in English and would undoubtedly rather be on the bridge, piloting the ship; he is also the only person I've met who shares a name with Humbert Humbert, the prototypical dirty old man in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Meanwhile, the ship has left Lyon and will go from the Rhône to the Saône\* as we make our way to

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\*The Rhône is a major river (over 800 km long), running from the Swiss mountains to Geneva and then to the south, emptying into the Mediterranean. The Saône is a tributary, 473 km long, rising in the Vosges mountains and heading south to Lyon where it joins the Rhône. Our ship is docked on the Rhône, so the captain has to head south about 4 km, then hang a right and proceed northward on the Saône.

Mâcon, about 70 km to the north. Shortly after leaving the pier, we pass some buildings whose architecture is spectacular and unusual; alas, I do not have my camera, but the buildings that I have in mind are the Musée de Confluences (<http://www.museedesconfluences.fr/>) and several office buildings. Although I am camera-less, others were more perspicacious and had cameras with them as the pictures to the right attest. We will arrive in Mâcon at 1:30 in the morning.



At 7:00 we head to dinner in the restaurant; we are seated with the Charlestonians and a couple from Naples, FL. By chance, our waiter is a Russian named Martin: he is funny, efficient, and accurate - we'll make it a point to sit at his table as often as possible (some of the other servers are quite surly). The menu lists several choices, but we make it easy on Martin by choosing\* the chef's recommendation. We start

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\*The details of the meal are ~~stolen~~ borrowed *verbatim* from Lee's handwritten journal.

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with a poached egg on a crouton with a red wine/onion/mushroom sauce; then cream of Dijon mustard soup; *Poulet de Bresse* with roasted peppers/zucchini/mushrooms/white wine cream sauce; a massive sweet crêpe with pear brandy and a berry coulis. Each evening, the Romanian female sommelier, Laurencia, will wax eloquent (and at very great length) about the wines that will be served. Tonight we

drink Chardonnay for Ron, Morgon for Lee. (Whew, when I first read her words, I thought that she had written Mogen David for her wine.)

We return to our room and get to bed at 10:30.

### Monday, September 21

We are up at 6:30 and enjoy a buffet breakfast; once again, I try to restrain myself but it's easier than it was at the Bareiss because the array of foods, while impressive, is not of Bareissian (a neologism!) splendor. Seated with us are newlyweds, she from Houston but now living in Zurich, and her mother (a *ménage à trois*?) and another couple from ... somewhere or other. We are rafted to a Viking\* river boat and the Swiss

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\*We cannot help remembering the fact that we were rafted to another Viking ship at the beginning of our Rhine cruise in 2013, said ship then managing to hit a bollard in a lock, causing a huge gash on her starboard side; the passengers were "escorted" off the ship and given the "opportunity" to continue their journey by bus. Lee found a web site that lists accidents to ships of all kinds, all over the world, and learned that this was just one of three Viking river ships that had had mishaps that year.

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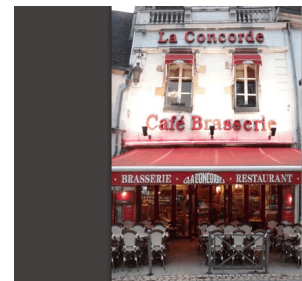
Gloria. At 9:00, we board a bus for the nearly 90 km ride to Beaune (population 22,000) where we arrive at about 10:45. Our tour guide is Véronique who will go on at length about the *terroir* for wine, the varieties of Dijon mustard, the seasonal foraging opportunities for mushrooms/berries/truffle, the hunting of game birds/ deer/wild boar *und so weiter* (oops, I shouldn't have used German, should I?).

Wikipedia informs us:

Beaune is the wine capital of Burgundy in the Côte d'Or Département in eastern France. Beaune is one of the key wine centres in France and the annual wine auction of the Hospices de Beaune is the primary wine auction in France. The town is surrounded by some of the world's most famous wine villages, while the facilities and cellars of many producers, large and small, are situated in Beaune itself. With a rich historical and architectural heritage, Beaune is considered the "Capital of Burgundy wines."

We head first to some spectacular vineyards where we take pictures and wander among the grape vines. (Lee, in her journal, devotes three pages to the vineyards; you can pester her if you want the details.) The weather is cooperating: sunny but a little too hot for my taste. From there, it's a short bus ride to the city of Beaune and for a short walking tour that takes us, down narrow streets, past wine vendors of all sorts, past restaurants and bistros, to attractive public squares, past food markets with wonderful goods on display (see Picasa).

At noon, we are on our own; we don't need to meet up with the tour group until 1:40. So we walk along the ramparts and explore other parts of the city, taking pictures of the most attractive and interesting sights. We stop for a little sustenance at *La Concorde*, sitting outdoors under the awning. Lee orders a *croque madame* and I a *soupe à l'oignon*. Not being able to see the clearly printed name above the awning (under which we're sitting), we try to discern the name of this restaurant from the script on the front of the awning, but the initial L and each of the C's are so "filigreed" as to keep their identity a deep dark secret; also the final E appears to end in an S.



When we rejoin Véronique and the tour group, we walk to the *Hospices de Beaune*, also known as *Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune*. Wikipedia tells us that it:

... is a former charitable almshouse ... It was founded in 1443 by Nicolas Rolin, chancellor of Burgundy, as a hospital for the poor. The original hospital building, the Hôtel-Dieu, one of the finest examples of French fifteenth-century architecture, is now a museum. Services for patients are now provided in modern hospital buildings.

From the inner courtyard, we marvel at the tiled roof (see Picasa) and the gargoyles. Inside, we wander through the large hall, the infirmary, and the chapel. The walls are hung with tapestries and paintings; and there are religious icons of every sort (well, not every sort, as they are all Catholic, of course) on the counter tops. Most interesting is the display of surgical tools (ouch!). The pharmacy has many pieces of laboratory equipment whose function can be guessed at, but only barely; on the walls are bottles of potions and elixirs and powders. Two are labeled *Theriaca* (a Greek potion to cure whatever ails ya) and *Elixir Catholica*, undoubtedly to disguise the fact that these bottles contain opium. Because the room is poorly lit, I capture only a blurred image of a multipanelled masterpiece *Polyptych of the Last Judgement* by 15th-century Flemish painter Rogier van der Weyden.

At about 3:00, we are on the bus and arrive at the ship at about 4:00. "Desperate" for a drink, we go to the Léopard bar where we discover that they have but one single malt, Oban. That's good enough for us, so we order two Obans, neat. Nearby is a table filled with noisy, foul-mouthed, former military types - they are almost as bad as golfers (which, sigh, we will encounter over the next few days). They make it hard to concentrate on reading, so we return to our room.

**Klutzes 'R' Us, Part Three** After our earlier mishaps (demagnetizing our key cards for *Le Lyrial* on September 10 and my clumsy fall onto the sidewalk the next day), we've been relatively mistake-free ... until now. The safe inside the closet of our cabin operates much like any others that are found in hotels and cruise ships: setting the code, locking the safe, and opening the safe all use the same (or similar) steps. *This* one, however, has a mind of its own. I had used it successfully two or three times, but the next time that I try it "refuses" to take the code and, instead, springs the two metal bolts that are supposed to lock the door but in this case prevent me from even closing it. So I fetch a crew member who comes to the room and "rescues" me. We (i.e., Lee) decide that it must be my ineptness that's at fault, so in the future *she* will be the one to enter the code. This works well until (you guessed it!) she has the same mishap that I did. So I fetch another crew member, but this time pay attention to what he does to get the bolts to recede because when the inevitable occurs again I'm able to fix it myself. Do I get a prize?

At 6:00, the captain introduces (in his halting English) nearly the entire staff. In addition to those from yesterday, we "meet" the restaurant manager, the executive chef, the purser, the concierge, and the housekeeper. Piet gives the information about tomorrow's excursions and then turns the floor over to Laurencia, the sommelier, who tells us this night (and on every succeeding night) which wines from the local region are being served at dinner. Seated with us at dinner are the Charlestonians and a couple who split their time between Hartford and Jupiter, FL; he is/was CFO of an insurance company. Once again, I have no record of what we eat; Lee has the gory details in her journal, but I choose not to ~~steal~~ borrow them again.

The diarist Samuel Pepys would conclude his day with "And so to bed" which we also do at 10:45.

## Tuesday, September 22

We rise at 6:45 and go to breakfast. We are docked in Lyon at the same pier from which we left the other day. Through our cabin window, we have an excellent view of an outdoor sports court where young people, probably from the nearby university, are engaged in various physical activities. I won't characterize these exercises as "sports" because there seems to be no score-keeping or winners and losers, although the events are organized and seem to have rules. One group of about 30 or so are getting their instructions for the next exercise from an older man who watches but does not participate. In one exercise, about six of the participants run as fast as they can from one fence to another, then run backwards; when they've finished another group of six do the same thing; and so on. Then the exercise changes to one of hopping or skipping or whatever. And nobody gets too tired because there are enough of these smaller groups to allow each contestant to get his/her second wind. (Well, I suppose that this is not the sort of tourism that we came to France to see.)

At 9:00 we leave the ship and meet our guide for the day, Camille. Her English is excellent, perhaps the result of her having lived in the Arizona as a young girl. As we walk to the bus that will take us to our first stop, we pass another sports court in which people (all male this time) are doing calisthenics or chinning or climbing. It's very impressive (and very tiring for us old folk to watch).

The bus takes us to *Les Halles de Lyon Paul Bocuse*. It is very much an upscale market (well, what does one expect when a famous chef's name is attached to it?), indoors, probably air-conditioned. Camille leads us down many aisles and arranges for us to get samples of the various foods. She tells us that she (and her friends) shop here only when they are putting on a special dinner and want to impress their guests; otherwise, it's the simpler markets for them. In fact, there are not a lot of people shopping; and those whom we encounter do seem well-heeled. At Picasa I post pictures of the beautifully arranged foods, whether fish and seafood (who knew that there were so many varieties of oysters?) or beef or pork or poultry or wines or cheese or desserts, etc. My mouth waters as I scan the pictures again. Of course we see *Vollailes de Bresse* with their blue legs and their heads still intact.

Camille reaches into her purse and extracts two hand puppets, Guignol and Gnafron. Both were created in the early 1800s by Laurent Mourguet, a silk weaver, who later turned to dentistry and used the puppets to distract patients during painful procedures. The former is described by Wikipedia as "clever, courageous and generous; his inevitable victory is always the triumph of good over evil." The latter "is traditionally represented with unshaven beard, nose and cheeks flushed, the toothless mouth wearing a galurin (floppy hat) wrong, scarf as a tie or a bow tie plaid or polka dots, a hat or cap and leather apron cobbler." You can see the puppets in action at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awTr5LrKBgl> (Gnafron makes his appearance at the 30-second mark, Guignol at 55 seconds).

As we will observe later, Gnafron's image is often placed on the window of a Bouchon Lyonnais.\* We will

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\*A Bouchon Lyonnais, according to Wikipedia, is "a type of restaurant found in Lyon, France, that serves traditional Lyonnaise cuisine, such as sausages, duck pâté or roast pork. Compared to other forms of French cooking such as nouvelle cuisine, the dishes are quite fatty and heavily oriented around meat."

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also see another shop with Guignol painted on one window, Gnafron on the other (see Picasa). Not to be outdone by Tauck, Uniworld also suspects that we need sustenance, so at about 10:15 Camille leads us to a table with cheeses, crackers, and wine on offer.

At about 10:30 the bus takes us across the Rhône and then the Saône to the old city. We park near the *Palais de Justice*, well-guarded by serious-looking soldiers (in the aftermath of the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris earlier this year). Camille leads us down increasingly narrow streets and introduces us to *traboules*. According to an online blog (and I wish that I could write so well):

Saturday afternoon, and the streets of Vieux Lyon, the city's old town center, are packed with shoppers and tourists. My guide and I stop by a heavy wooden door, right next to a convenience store. She taps the code into the keypad, the door swings open and we step from the busy street into a dark passage, barely three feet wide. As the light comes on, I see that the narrow alley opens onto an interior courtyard in a 15th-century house. We have suddenly ducked into a different world. A world of mullioned windows, Gothic galleries, ancient wells, fountains and a spiral staircase carved out of stone—a miracle of medieval engineering.

Lyon has several of these secret courtyards, stark contrasts between past and present, many of which can only be reached by one of the city's distinctive *traboules*—*passageways* that cut through a house or, in the case of the longer *traboules*, a whole city block, linking one street with another. If you know where to go, it is possible to walk around the Vieux Lyon and the Croix-Rousse districts via the *traboules*, avoiding the crowds—and sheltered from the rain.

Some of these interior courtyards are miraculous: one would never know that they were there, had not a knowledgeable person (Camille in our case) known to open the big wooden door. I take many pictures and post them at Picasa. Lyon is a city that's known for its silk weaving, so (of course) Lee has to visit a store to buy a silk scarf. I take pictures of some of the scarves (with their imaginative designs) and other items on display.

The bus takes us back to the ship at about 12:30. As we get off, I ask Camille if the Musée des Beaux Arts is worth a visit. "Yes," she says, "But it's closed on Tuesdays." So much for our preferred destination for this afternoon! We have lunch on board the ship, then take a Uniworld shuttle bus to *La Place Bellecour*, a

very large square in the center of town. It features, among other things, an equestrian statue of Louis XIV, but of more interest to us is a protest gathering by people in orange vests, complaining about something or other. Since we can't go to the museum, Lee says "Let's go shopping" and, in fact, has found a Saint James clothing store not far from here. So we head north, through *La Place des Jacobins* to the store where Lee makes a purchase and I remain outside, admiring the passing scene. We head back south, but discover that we're too late for the 3:00 shuttle, so ... why not go to *Printemps*, a large department store, where Lee makes still more purchases while I sit outside on a bench, watching (once again) the passing scene in the park just across the street. (I regret not having brought anything to read, but I didn't really expect to have all this "free" time.)

We do connect with the 4:00 shuttle bus to return to the ship. The Léopard Lounge with its Obans "calls" and we go there. At the pre-dinner announcement by Piet, we are introduced to a new captain, Pascal Resch. A change of officers during a cruise is, apparently, not unusual - there's no evidence that the previous captain has been fired for malfeasance (or his poor command of English). We have dinner, but once again I neglect to note what we eat and with whom we sit with (but most likely the Charlestonians are among the group). But I do recall that nearly every evening (and sometimes in the morning and afternoon) we are fortunate, once again, to have Martin who takes the six or eight orders (without screwing them up), delivers the food, keeps our glasses full, and all with good humor.

Purveyors of the rules of etiquette warn that there are two topics that it's best to avoid when dining with people whom one barely knows: politics and religion. In fact, we do steer relatively clear of these subjects throughout the trip. My notes don't reveal when the following incident occurred, nor whether it was at this dinner or last night's or tomorrow's, but we now can add a contentious third item to the forbidden list: politics and religion and **COMMAS!** "How so?" you ask. Well, the retired lawyer from Charleston, whom we have sat with at quite a few meals, somehow gets onto the subject of grammar, specifically commas. I don't recall how it came about; perhaps he was talking about reading and correcting another lawyer's writing. At any rate, he argues that the so-called Oxford comma (also known as the serial comma) is not only an affront to all persons of good bearing but has the possibility of causing the downfall of Western society (as if Donald Trump couldn't accomplish this by himself).

I, of course, take exception! For them what don't know what it is, the Oxford (or serial) comma is inserted after B in a series like A, B, and C. Those who oppose its use argue that it's unnecessary - and in many instances I would agree. But there are cases, many cases, in which the sentence would be ambiguous if the comma were omitted. Some examples cited by Wikipedia and other sources are: "I love my parents, Ayn Rand and God" and "Jeremy turned and faced Leslie, his sister and a police officer." Both sentences require a second comma unless the author intends to say that his parents are Ayn Rand and God, or that Jeremy's sister is also a police officer. From Robert Schoenfeld, author of *The Chemist's English*, comes the following example: "Reduction was attempted with Raney nickel, zinc and hydrochloric acid, and lithium aluminum hydride." Now I cannot expect non-chemists to appreciate this, but were the last comma omitted (i.e., were it to read "... hydrochloric acid and lithium aluminum hydride ...") this would be a recipe for the rapid evolution\* of heat and of hydrogen gas, undoubtedly resulting in an explosion. So I've contended for

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\*In 1996, the Tennessee Legislature, then, as ever, unwilling to do the people's business, debated a measure that would have made it a HEINOUS CRIME, punishable by a *fine* and a *jail term*, to "teach evolution as a fact" in any public school. Well! In my second-semester undergraduate organic chemistry class, I was talking about a rather dangerous chemical reducing agent called lithium aluminum hydride (abbreviated as LAH), and I referred to the risk of merely *writing* the words *LAH* and *acid* so close to one another on the blackboard, because, in the laboratory if there is any residual LAH in the reaction mixture when aqueous acid is added there is the danger of a violent chemical reaction involving the evolution of massive amounts of hydrogen gas and the evolution of huge amounts of heat, all of this in a highly flammable ethereal solvent. A student in the front row raised his hand and said, "Dr. Magid, I'm shocked!" "At what, Mr. Day?" "Well, you've just taught us evolution ... as a fact!" [loud laughter] To which I replied, "Mr. Day, you are absolutely correct. So let me rephrase what I said. One gets the CREATION of massive amounts of hydrogen gas and the CREATION of huge amounts of heat!" [raucous laughter] What is truly delicious is that on that very day, a professor of English was attending my class and observing me, because I was a finalist for The Chancellor's Teaching Award. I fretted that she'd be so offended by this (spontaneous!) outburst that my chances would be sunk. Well, it turns out that she must not have been offended, because I received the award.

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years that it's never wrong to use the serial comma and that there are cases in which its use can save one's life. (I also like to use it to mimic natural cadence; that is, where a pause exists in spoken language, I denote it with a comma - it may not be prescribed by grammarians but it makes me feel better.)

So now a "true story, ripped from life" (as they say in movie ads). One of my chemistry colleagues at Tennessee was on the opposite side (also known as the *wrong* side) in this matter. For years we had argued the point, I in favor of the comma, he against. On my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, I walked into my office and saw a banner tacked to a bookcase. It read (in upper case letters) "FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR YALE" - that is, my alma mater had omitted the comma where I would have placed it (after country). In this case, obviously, there's no ambiguity whether the comma is or is not inserted. But for consistency, I always insert it in all cases and so I cut a little comma out of a piece of cardboard and inserted it in its upright and locked position. That "corrected" banner hung proudly in my university office until my retirement in 2006 and hangs proudly, still, in my home office in Gig Harbor.

So back to the Charleston lawyer. He is aghast (even though he was also a guest) that anybody, let alone someone who is sitting next to him, could possibly be an advocate of the comma. And at every subsequent meal (whether breakfast, lunch, or dinner), he would tell anyone at our table what a miserable, sinful, despicable human being I was. (I think it's said in jest, but one never really knows ... especially with lawyers). Jumping ahead to the afternoon of September 24, the lawyer's wife will be laid low by a nasty bug; she is sneezing, coughing, and suffering from vertigo. By the next day, she has a miraculous recovered, but her spouse (the aforementioned lawyer) has become quite ill, to the point that he is unable to stand without someone to hold him up (as I do on one occasion). A doctor, who is brought onboard, diagnoses pneumonia. So a trip to a local hospital (I think we were in Avignon at the time) and the administering of massive doses of antibiotics stops the illness in its tracks; by the next day he is much better, although not 100% of the way to recovery and not chastened in his ridiculous campaign against the serial comma. Now I need to tell you that I don't believe in supernatural beings (e.g., the devil, god, Ted Cruz)\* but I'd like to think that some external force struck him down for his stance on commas. (A final

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\*Paul Krugman says that the senator "wants to Cruzify mankind upon a cross of gold."

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footnote: by the last day of the cruise, nearly everyone onboard is sniffing or coughing or sneezing or wheezing; this includes me. So maybe the malevolent supernatural force is taking vengeance on all of us. Upon my return to Gig Harbor, my physician diagnoses my hacking cough as bronchitis.)

Back to the travelogue: During dinner it has begun to rain, so we decide against going on the evening tour that would have taken us in a double-decker bus (with no roof for the upper deck) to see the spectacular 12<sup>th</sup> century *Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Lyon*, high above the city and lit up at night. So no pictures by me, but here is one taken by someone else. Instead we go to our room to read and then to bed at 10:30.



### Wednesday, September 23

Our ship had been scheduled to sail to the twin cities of Tournon and Tain l'Hermitage at 4:00 in the morning; and perhaps it did set sail, but when we awaken in the morning and look outside our window we see that we are docked at the *same* pier in front of the *same* sport court in the *same* city (Lyon) that we had supposedly left. (The players on the sport court do look different, I suppose.) The story, as we hear it later in the day, is that the lock (or locks) that we were supposed to have entered either were not operating at all or that the schedule for entering them had changed.

So, a new schedule. Following breakfast, we board a bus that takes us some 90 km south, arriving at about 10:30 in Tain l'Hermitage (population 6,000) and Tournon (10,000), sister cities on the east and west banks, respectively, of the Rhône and linked by the *Pont Grand* (Great Bridge) which, according to Wikipedia "features a span of 49.20 m, one of the largest bridge arches in the world before 1600." The bus ride was, obviously, longer than it would have been had the shipped sailed to the twin cities, but we do get to speak with a couple from the Los Angeles area; she is of Croatian descent and has relatives in



Anacortes. Our guide on board the bus and on the subsequent walking tour is Pierre, who is not as witty or fluent as was Camille (and who often gives the impression that he'd even favor walking barefoot on hot coals than having to do his touristic spiel for disaffected Americans). Both of these towns have seen better days, I think. We finish our tour, not with wine-tasting (because of the change in schedule) but with chocolate-tasting (which, when you think of it, is not really a bad trade-off) at one of Tain l'Hermitage's most famous chocolateries, *La Cité du Chocolat Valrhona* where one's smelling senses are assaulted by the aroma of different chocolates (<http://www.citeduchocolat.com/en>). There are open bins with chocolates from all over the world; sampling is encouraged (not that I really need any encouragement). Some of the products are treated like fine wines, with both an *appellation* and pedigree. We buy some goodies to take home. (I write "we" and not "Lee" because the purchase of several kinds of chocolate was actually a joint effort, not the sole provenance of the woman who is usually doing the shopping.)

While we have been touring the two towns, the ship has actually left Lyon and will meet us in Vienne, 80 km north of here and just 30 km south of Lyon. We get back on board at about 1:00 and the ship sets sail almost immediately to Viviers (population 4,000), nearly 130 km to the south (it would have been a trip of only 80 km had we actually docked in Tain l'Hermitage). After lunch, we retire to our cabin where we read and I take pictures of the vineyards that we pass. "Exhausted" by the picture-taking, I take a nap at about 3:00, something that I might not have admitted to but my spouse decides to immortalize (and immortalize) the event with a picture that is posted at Picasa. During my snooze, we enter a lock and Lee takes several pictures; there will be a more spectacular lock tomorrow.

An unfortunate consequence of the ship's revised itinerary is that a lecture on Van Gogh, scheduled for this afternoon, does not take place - for the simple reason that the ship never made it to Tain l'Hermitage where the lecturer was planning to come on board. The *good* news is that it is rescheduled for the afternoon of September 25 when we are in Arles; the *bad* news is that Lee and I are doing a tour at that time. All of our other excursions had been "free" (i.e., they were included in the price of the cruise) but this one to the *Pont du Gard* is one that we paid for in advance.

**PUN ALERT:** In the morning we note that the air is chilly as we leave the ship. Lee asks, "Are you wearing your jacket?" to which I reply, "No. I'm wearing my Côte du Rhône." (Well, I thought it was funny.)

**PUN ALERT:** As we are on the bus heading south to Tain l'Hermitage, we pass a double truck loaded with bales of hay. My first thought was to relate it to "The Say Hey Kid" (Willie Mays, of course) but then I changed to the 1960s chant, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" Perhaps "Hey, Jude"? Yeah, I know, all of them are week. So deal with it!

At 6:00, we are invited to a River Heritage Cocktail Party in the Van Gogh Lounge where I sip an Oban and Lee has the same *plus* a glass of wine. Apparently, Lee and I are official *members* of the River Heritage Club, having sailed once before with Uniworld. Who knew? Whoopee! Well, as it turns out, everybody (not just us *exclusive* club members) is getting free drinks in the lounge (as on every other day) but the special part (just for us!!) is that we get to sit near one another. Whoopee! We have a nice conversation with the State Department couple whom we met on the van from Lyon's airport.

At dinner, we sit with the Charlestonians and the State Department retirees. Martin, of course, has the distinct honor of serving our table; and Laurencia, we learn, is a level-three sommelier. Following dinner, we read in our cabin and retire to bed at 10:30.

#### Thursday, September 24

We sleep a little bit later than usual, rising at 7:00; breakfast is not served until 7:30 today. We leave the ship at 9:00 and meet our guide for the day, Claire, whose English is superb because ... well, because she's from England, although she lives in the hills outside the town with her husband and son. She is witty, knowledgeable, and eager to engage with the tour group, unlike our guide yesterday.

Viviers (a small town of about 4,000) does not have much of an online presence, but it is a very pleasant place to walk through and to admire its many narrow passageways and ancient buildings (see Picasa). In the center of town is the *Cathédrale Saint-Vincent de Viviers*, described as "the smallest active cathedral in

France." We take seats and Claire introduces Valery Imbernon ( <http://valeryimbernon.blogspot.com/>) who treats us to an organ recital. Cats seem to be welcome visitors to the church ... but has anyone checked to see if they are Roman Cat(holic)? Claire then leads us up a series of narrow streets until we reach a place where there is a panoramic view of everything below: vineyards, rooftops, the city center. And then we head down down down to the "business district" where we observe a local potter (Jean Luc Allonneau) at work. There are many whimsical creations and plaques in his showroom (see Picasa), in addition to conventional pottery of the sort found all over the world.

We are back onboard the ship at noon. I check with the desk staff about my missing laundry - it had been picked up two days earlier and was supposed to be returned within 24 hours. The clerk checks his file and finds the original of the order form that I had filled out, but no laundry associated with it. Maybe it's been thrown overboard? Maybe someone else is wearing my unmentionables? (The good news is that the tidy-whities are returned to our room in the evening, so all is well.)

**PUN ALERT:** At lunch Lee asks if we should go on an optional excursion in search of truffles. Ron demurs, saying "♪Nobody knows the *truffles* I've seen.♪"

**PUN ALERT (PART DEUX):** In recognition of the hidden passageways in Lyon (see p. 46), I could conclude "♪ Nobody knows the *traboules* I've seen.♪"

Following lunch, we go to the Van Gogh Lounge to read, but it's difficult to concentrate because Roberto (doesn't anyone on this ship have a last name?) has programmed his iPad so that we are "entertained" with a pastiche of new age music, Beatles songs, Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (snippets thereof), world music with pounding drums, and other musical *dreck*. So why are we sitting here in the lounge? Because at 2:45 (or thereabouts) we are scheduled to enter the Bollene Lock, the deepest (75 ft deep) on the river.

Just a few minutes ahead of schedule, we enter the lock. I step outside onto the Matisse Terrace (I love these names!) to take pictures, a few of which I've posted at Picasa. A gate closes behind us and the water level sinks until we're at the proper height to exit. The front gate opens by lifting straight up, unlike at the Hiram Chittenden Locks in the Ballard section of Seattle ( <http://www.seattle.gov/TOUR/locks.htm> ) in which two large "doors" swing open to let water in. The operation takes about 45 minutes.

**YET ANOTHER UNCHARITABLE OBSERVATION:** While standing on the Matisse Terrace to take pictures, I listen in on some of the conversations among my fellow travelers. Most are male and the only topic of any consequence is golf: what country clubs they belong to, which of the world's great courses they've played, which well-known professional golfers they've met, and so on. While I'm at the front rail taking pictures and eavesdropping, Lee has come onto the Terrace and is standing toward the rear, listening to other conversations. Among the assertions made by several women is that they always take guided tours overseas because they'd never be able to find restaurants and hotels, never know which touristic sites to visit, and never be able to drive a car, what with all of the road signs in a foreign language. And on that topic, several complained that they found Véronique, our guide in Beaune, impossible to understand. Sigh. I admit it - I'm an elitist, a supercilious prig, a pretentious highbrow, but I find such comments ludicrous and bordering on the xenophobic. They remind me of the Atlanta-based women, whom we encountered on our Danube cruise in 2000, who were offended that every announcement on board the German river ship was made in both German and English. "After all," they said, "Everybody speaks English" (see p. 7 and other pages in <http://web.utk.edu/~rmaid/europe00.pdf> )

I finish Richard Ford's *The Sportswriter*, as enjoyable as the other two parts\* of the trilogy, and I begin

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\*I referred to the three parts of the Frank Branscombe saga on p. 24. There is a fourth book, *Let Me Be Frank With You*, published just this year (eight years after the last of the trilogy) in which the storyline advances to the devastation of the New Jersey shore by Superstorm Sandy. It, too, is wonderful.

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reading Kurt Vonnegut's sixteen-year old book of acidic opinions and shrew observations, *Wampeters, Foma & Granfalcons*. At dinner, we are (again) seated with the Charlestonians. As mentioned on p. 48, the woman is nearly recovered from her respiratory flu but he is in bad shape, groggy, and incoherent; for

the first time on the cruise, he doesn't heap abuse on me for my use of the serial comma (see pp 47-48).

Following dinner, we read in our room and then get to bed at 10:30 to be refreshed for tomorrow's activities.

### Friday, September 25

The ship arrived in Avignon (population just under 100,000) at about 9:00 last night and has remained at the dock. When I glance out the window in the early morning, it seems that the day will be cloudless but very windy. Alas, it also looks as if rain will not be coming; i.e., it will be very warm.

Following breakfast, we leave the ship at 9:00 for our walking tour of the city with today's guide, Jérôme. Avignon has had an "interesting" history, filled with popes and anti-popes and an assortment of characters and events that could have come from the mind of Charles Dickens: Kings Raymond VI and VII, Kings Louis VIII and IX, Alphonse of Poitiers, Charles of Anjou, the Marquis of Provence, Popes Clement V and Benedict XII, Philip the Fair, and (for all I know) Athos, Porthos, Aramis, d'Artagnan and Brigitte Bardot; and later the French Revolution and the Second World War. 'Tis much too complicated for my poor brain, but you can read all about it at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avignon> The good news is that Avignon survived its bloody history and is now at peace, or so it seems.

Jérôme meets us as we disembark and leads us past the impressive 14<sup>th</sup>-century town wall; according to "reliable" sources it is three miles long and has 39 towers and eight gates. We pass the 19<sup>th</sup> century Opéra Grand Avignon with statues of 17<sup>th</sup> century playwrights Molière (whose real name was Jean Baptiste Poquelin) on the left and Pierre Corneille (whose real name was Pierre Corneille) on the right, flanking the entry steps. We stroll through lovely streets and neighborhoods, finally coming to the 14<sup>th</sup> century Papal Palace (*Palais des Papes*) where Avignon's Popes (Benedict XII in 1334, Clement VI in 1342, Innocent VI in 1352, Urban V in 1362, Gregory XI in 1370 and Antipope Benedict XIII in 1394) resided. It is an enormous building; one can say that these men of the cloth lived pretty damned well. According to Wikipedia, "With 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, the Palais is the largest Gothic palace in all of Europe and, due to its many architectural merits, one of the most important in the world." I take many interior and exterior pictures, all of which are posted at Picasa.

We visit the nearby cathedral (*Cathédrale Notre-Dame des Doms d'Avignon*). Most surprising is that its main door is flanked by wooden sculptures of what appear to be half-dressed Native Americans. Can this be? From there, we go to an indoor market, *Marché les Halles d'Avignon*, with gorgeous displays of fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, breads, nuts, fish and seafood, chickens (Bresse, of course, with heads and blue legs intact), and huge open displays of spices from all over the world - the aroma is extraordinary, but I worry that the air may be saturated with cumin, a spice to which I am allergic. We return to the ship at 12:15 after a very busy morning.

In addition to its having been the site of the Roman Catholic papacy for a considerable period, Avignon is also well known from the song "Sur le pont d'Avignon / L'on y danse, l'on y danse..." This referred to a 12<sup>th</sup> century arched bridge that was destroyed by time and floods; only four of the original 22 arches remain intact. Alas, we do not see it, as we are docked too far away.

Earlier, I mentioned how windy it seemed from inside our cabin and how windy it really was as soon as we stepped outside. In fact, this is the Day 2 of the mistral. Wikipedia tells us that it ...

... is a strong, cold, northwesterly wind that blows from southern France into the Gulf of Lion in the northern Mediterranean, with sustained winds often exceeding forty kilometers per hour, sometimes reaching one hundred kilometers per hour. It is most common in the winter and spring, and strongest in the transition between the two seasons. Periods of the wind exceeding thirty kilometers an hour for more than sixty-five hours have been reported ... The mistral has the reputation of bringing good health, since the dry air dries stagnant water and the mud, giving the mistral the local name *mange-fange* (Eng. "mud-eater"). It also blows away pollution from the skies over the large cities and industrial areas.

Well, maybe. What we hear from the guides is that the mistral is blamed for all sorts of illness and

malaises that are brought in from goodness-knows-where. In fact, another web site says "Le Mistral can cause tiresome headaches. Many a mother will claim this wind incites a general restlessness in children – even pets are said to be affected!" So, ya pays yer money and yer takes yer chances.

After lunch, we relax in our room until 2:30 when we take a bus ride to the *Pont du Gard* aqueduct, the only tour that we selected that was not free of charge. The trip takes approximately thirty minutes; our guide is Ghislaine. Wikipedia provides the following information:

The Pont du Gard is an ancient Roman aqueduct that crosses the Gardon River in the south of France. Located near the town of Vers-Pont-du-Gard, the bridge is part of the Nîmes aqueduct, a 50-kilometer system built in the first century AD to carry water from a spring at Uzès to the Roman colony of Nemausus (Nîmes). Because of the uneven terrain between the two points, the mostly underground aqueduct followed a long, winding route that called for a bridge across the gorge of the Gardon River. The Pont du Gard is the highest of all elevated Roman aqueducts, and, along with the Aqueduct of Segovia, one of the best preserved. It was added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 1985 because of its historical importance.

The bridge has three tiers of arches, standing 48.8 m (160 ft) high. The whole aqueduct descends in height by only 17 m (56 ft) over its entire length, while the bridge descends by a mere 2.5 cm (0.98 in) – a gradient of only 1 in 3,000 – which is indicative of the great precision that Roman engineers were able to achieve, using only simple technology. The aqueduct formerly carried an estimated 200,000 m<sup>3</sup> (44,000,000 imp gal) of water a day to the fountains, baths and homes of the citizens of Nîmes. It continued to be used possibly until the 6th century, with some parts used for significantly longer, but lack of maintenance after the 4th century meant that it became increasingly clogged by mineral deposits and debris that eventually choked off the flow of water.



After the collapse of the Roman Empire and the aqueduct's fall into disuse, the Pont du Gard remained largely intact, due to the importance of its secondary function, as a toll bridge. For centuries the local lords and bishops were responsible for its upkeep, in exchange for the right to levy tolls on travellers using it to cross the river, although some of its stones were looted and serious damage was inflicted on it in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It attracted increasing attention starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became an important tourist destination. It underwent a series of renovations between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, commissioned by the local authorities and the French state, that culminated in 2000 with the opening of a new visitor centre and the removal of traffic and buildings from the bridge and the area immediately around it. Today it is one of France's most popular tourist attractions and has attracted the attention of a succession of literary and artistic visitors.

Ghislaine leads us from the parking lot past the ticket window and through a visitor center (a large pavilion, with rest rooms, restaurants, and a museum - which we will visit later). We continue on a pathway, past olive trees and sycamores, when suddenly the aqueduct comes into view. The closer we get, the more spectacular it becomes, as the Picasa pictures will attest. The lower level has six arches, the middle eleven, and the top thirty-five (no, I didn't count them, but I found these figures in Wikipedia). After passing under the structure, there's a set of steps that lead down to the river bank. I go down halfway, but Lee (brave girl!) descends to the bottom for some more spectacular shots. On the way back up, we encounter a man and his gorgeous, shaggy, grey and white sheepdog (there are two pictures of him at Picasa). The man tells us, "*Il s'appelle Hugo. Il a trois ans. Il est très gentil.*"

We have some free time, so we return to the plaza at 3:15 for some ice cream. At 4:00, Ghislaine gathers us for a tour of the museum. It is cleverly laid out and tells the story, in words (alas, French) and pictures (universal) of the construction of the bridge, the tools that were used to calculate the gradient\* that allowed

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\*According to Wikipedia, "The straight-line distance between the two [termini] is only about 20 km but the aqueduct takes a winding route measuring around 50 km." So maybe the Romans weren't so clever after all? Read on. "This was necessary to circumvent the southernmost foothills of the Massif Central, known as the Garrigues de Nîmes. They are difficult to cross, as they are covered in dense vegetation and garrigue and indented by deep valleys. It was impractical for the Romans to attempt to tunnel through the hills, as it would have required a tunnel of between 8 and 10 km, depending on the starting point. A roughly V-shaped course around the eastern end of the Garrigues de Nîmes was therefore the only practical way of transporting the water from the spring to the city."

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water to flow, how the Romans lived, and so on. We then board the bus and get back to the ship at 5:00. And, yes, the mistral is still blowing its damned head off.

We have our Oban in the lounge, joined by a couple from La Jolla, golfers who are familiar with Chambers Bay and Canterwood in our part of the world. They are also at our table (for the captain's farewell dinner) where the woman, perhaps feeling very mellow or perhaps having lost her glasses, tells both of us that we have "perfect" skin. (My dermatologist might beg to differ with that assessment, having told me recently that I have out-lived my skin.) The Charlestonians take a table in the back of the room, so as not to spread their infection (even though many passengers are already coughing and wheezing). Also at our table is a younger couple from Southern California; her cousin is the widow of Billy Frank, a noted Nisqually tribal leader and environmentalist who died in 2014; President Obama will award him, posthumously, the Medal of Freedom, in November of this year.

Following dinner, we read, use the internet, and get to bed at 11:00.

### **Saturday, September 26**

Oh, dear, I wake up and immediately start sneezing. I fear that I've caught the bug that seems to be affecting many of the passengers on this ship (see p. 48); so I take two cold/sinus pills in the vain hope that a miracle cure will come to me. (At 5:00 am, the ship had left Avignon and arrives in Tarascon, 25 km to the south.)

We *could* have taken a tour of Tarascon's undoubtedly fascinating sites, but an opportunity arises to visit a Saturday morning open air market in Arles. The choice is easy, so at 10:00 we board a bus that takes us to Arles (population 53,000), 20 km to the south. (A map shows that the Rhône runs to Arles, so I wonder why we travel on roads rather than on the river.) Arles is, like many places in France, an ancient town, settled first by the Ligurians in 800 BCE. It became an important outpost of the Roman empire; an amphitheatre, triumphal arch, Roman circus, and theatre are reminders of Roman times. To many of us, its fame resides in its having been the residence (for a short while) of Vincent van Gogh (more about this later).

It is also a warm, sunny day, but the mistral has calmed down ... somewhat. Because this is Saturday, there is an enormous open-air market that we are encouraged to explore. We are told that it has 16 km of stalls ... and I believe it. As the Picasa pictures reveals, products of all kinds (edible, wearable, whateverable) are on display. Most intriguing to us are the live animals (rabbits, ducks, chickens, turkeys) that can be purchased, not for use as pets but (eventually) to appear on the dinner table. One of the vendors removes a goose (who had been peacefully snuggled up with another of his/her/its species) and puts the unlucky bird in a large cardboard box with breathing holes punched in it. We encounter a lovely goat (named Brigitte Bardot, we're told) who I'd like to think was there on display and not destined for slaughter. This place is such a welcome contrast to the pristine, well-ordered, air-conditioned markets that we visited in Beaune, Lyon, and Avignon. This is where "ordinary" people shop; indeed, many have come with shopping carts that they use to clear the path when the American tourists are slow in moving away. We roam the aisles and admire the cheeses, breads, seafood, spices, etc. etc. etc. for about an hour-and-a-half before the bus returns us to our ship at 12:15.

To amuse us on the bus ride, tour director Piet explains how the *S. S. Catherine* found her way from the Dutch shipyard where she was "born" to the Rhône River. She came down the Atlantic and then the

Mediterranean to Marseille on a sinkable container ship which sailed up the Rhône as far as Arles. The mother ship was then sunk and the *S. S. Catherine* floated to her destiny, as a luxury cruise ship for rich (or at least well-to-do) foreigners. (One assumes that the container ship was then raised, although how this was done is not explained.)

Following lunch with the Charlestonians (now nearly 100% recovered from their illnesses) and another couple from Toronto, we are on a bus at 2:00 to return to Arles. On the bus with us is this afternoon's guide, Janet, who is English. Nevertheless, she has an annoying habit of beginning every sentence with "And ..." as if the sentences were not related to one another except by the conjunction. She also tells of a biblical tale that has Mary Magdalene and Lazarus coming to the south of France and baptizing people here; their relics are found in local churches. There seems to be some historical credence for this, but ... who really cares? Right?

When we exit the bus in Arles, we are divided in two groups. My group, the *unlucky* one, is assigned to a young guide named Gabrielle. Sad to say, her English is poor and very halting; her knowledge seems limited; and her experience in doing tourism seems minimal. Several times she asks, "What do you want to see?" and one or another of us would answer, "I don't know. You're the guide." As the afternoon progresses, one by one our group diminishes in number as people decide to go their own way, to get a drink, to go shopping, but mostly to avoid Gabrielle.

She begins by taking us through a square where she points to some commercial building in the distance and says that it is on the site where van Gogh's yellow house stood. We approach the Roman amphitheatre and circumnavigate it. When I ask why we don't go inside, she says that it's not part of the tour. (I don't blame her for this - it's quite possible that there is an admission fee that keeps people on "free" tours from taking advantage.) From the outside, it's clearly in much worse condition than the structure in Pula. We see billboards advertising bullfights, which are held in the amphitheatre, a revelation that is not pleasing to many of us.

Along the way, she talks about a musical composition, *L'Arlesienne Suite*, which she mistakenly attributed to Charles Gounod. When I have a private moment with her, I tell her that the composer was Georges Bizet. "Oh, no," she replies, "He wrote the opera *Carmen*." "Yes, he did, but he also wrote *L'Arlesienne* as incidental music for a play; and subsequently published it in two suites." "No," she says, "When we get clear of the church bells, I'll whistle it for you." A few minutes later, she does whistle it - and I say, "That's by Bizet. Please check it out online or at a CD store - you'll be convinced."

I take many pictures of the small squares and narrow streets because, really, there's not a lot of interest to take pictures of. We visit The Church of St. Trophime (Saint Trophimus) which Wikipedia tells us "is a major work of Romanesque architecture, and the representation of the Last Judgment on its portal is considered one of the finest examples of Romanesque sculpture, as are the columns in the adjacent cloister." The interior is imposing and very stark.

Wikipedia also says that "The courtyard of the Old Arles hospital, now named *Espace van Gogh*, is a center for Vincent van Gogh's works, several of which are masterpieces. In fact, there is a monument with a reproduction of van Gogh's *Le Jardin de la Maison de Santé Arles* in front of the actual scene that he painted. Further on, there is another monument with a reproduction of his *Le Café le Soir*."

Wikipedia gives a comprehensive account of van Gogh's short (and tormented) stay in Arles:

Van Gogh came to Arles on February 20, 1888 and initially stayed at the lodgings at Restaurant Carrel. Signs of spring were evident in the budding almond trees and of winter by the snow-covered landscape. The scene seemed to van Gogh like a Japanese landscape. Arles was quite a different place than anywhere else van Gogh had lived. The climate was sunny, hot and dry and the local inhabitants had more of an appearance and sound of people from Spain. The "vivid colors and strong compositional outlines" of Provence led van Gogh to call the area "the Japan of the South." In this time he produced more than 200 paintings including *The Starry Night* [*Starry Night over the Rhone*], *Café de Nuit* and *The Sunflowers*.

Van Gogh had few friends in Arles, although through acquaintance with Joseph Roulin, a postman, and

Ginoux, the owner of Café de la Gare where he next roomed, he made many portraits of the Roulin family and of Madame Ginoux. Part of his difficulty in making friends was his inability to master the dialect specific to the Provence region, "whole days go by without my speaking a single word to anyone, except to order my meals or coffee." In the beginning of his time in Arles, though, he was so enthused by the setting in Provence that the lack of connection with others hadn't troubled him. In October 1888 Paul Gauguin joined van Gogh in Arles in the house, nicknamed The Yellow House, that he rented. Unfortunately many of the places that Van Gogh had visited and painted were destroyed during bombing raids in World War II.

Van Gogh's mental health deteriorated and he became alarmingly eccentric, culminating in an altercation with Paul Gauguin in December 1888 following which Van Gogh cut off part of his left ear. He was then hospitalized in Arles twice over a few months. His condition was diagnosed by the hospital as "acute mania with generalised delirium". Dr. Félix Rey, a young intern at the hospital, also suggested there might be "a kind of epilepsy" involved that he characterised as mental epilepsy. Although some, such as Johanna van Gogh, Paul Signac and posthumous speculation by doctors Doiteau & Leroy have said that van Gogh just removed part of his ear lobe and maybe a little more, art historian Rita Wildegans maintains that without exception, all of the witnesses from Arles said that he removed the entire left ear.

In January 1889, he returned to the Yellow House where he was living, but spent the following month between hospital and home suffering from hallucinations and delusions that he was being poisoned. In March 1889, the police closed his house after a petition by 30 townspeople, who called him "fou roux" (the redheaded madman). Paul Signac visited him in hospital and van Gogh was allowed home in his company. In April 1889, he moved into rooms owned by Dr. Félix Rey, after floods damaged paintings in his own home. Around this time, he wrote, "Sometimes moods of indescribable anguish, sometimes moments when the veil of time and fatality of circumstances seemed to be torn apart for an instant." Finally in May 1889 he left Arles for the Saint-Paul asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, having understood his own mental fragility and with a desire to leave Arles.

As I wrote earlier, most of the group abandons Gabrielle as the day wears on. Lee and I go to a café where we sit with others from the tour, waiting for Gabrielle to return (as she had promised) to lead us back to the bus. When she fails to show up, we go with the other guide who is willing to shepherd us "home." Back on the bus, we return to the ship at 5:30 which sets sail for Avignon at 6:30. We have dinner and then we pack our luggage (airplane mode, of course) in preparation for tomorrow morning's early departure. At 9:00 we are back in Avignon and at 10:30 we are in bed.

### **Sunday, September 27**

We arise at 4:45 to finish packing and grab an early breakfast. Throughout the night, I had frequent bouts of sneezing and coughing. I have visions of infecting everyone on our flight back to Seattle, just as I did last March when we returned from England. Oh, well, as the French say, *comme ci, comme ça*. We are scheduled to take the hour-long van ride that leaves at 7:25 for the airport in Marseille (population 850,000; France's second largest city), about 100 km to the southeast and on the Mediterranean.

We check in at the ticket counter and get through security amazingly rapidly, given all of the news reports concerning immigrants crossing the borders. We gain admission to the locked Business Class Lounge and take seats in the surprisingly small room. Only upon looking at our boarding passes do I realize that we've been assigned\* to Row 9, which is most certainly *not* Business Class. So I tell the man who is monitoring

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\*When Stefan was booking the cruises and the various airplane flights, Air France was adamant about not doing seat assignments ahead of departure. "They'll be done at check-in," the arrogant airline agent tells Stefan.

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the locked door of the lounge. He calls down to the Air France desk and then assures me that the tickets have been changed to Row 3. I'm dubious, but I certainly don't want to return to the check-in desk myself and have to pass through security a second time just to get new boarding passes. The lounge, by the way, is much too hot. I wonder to myself, "If Venice can offer a good air-conditioned space in its airport

lounge, why can't Marseille?" but I have nobody to ask. Because there is no bathroom in the lounge (which is also weird), the woman in my traveling party says, "Let's go to the gate area - maybe there will be a lavatory there." So we do this and, much to my surprise, the gate waiting area is blissfully cool.

At 9:05, boarding begins. And wonder of wonders, the woman who had checked us in at the Air France desk shows up in the gate and gives us the corrected boarding passes. Hooray! The plane, an Airbus A319, has a single aisle with 3-3 seating; Business Class, apparently, is just the first few rows. Our boarding passes are for seats 3A and 3B (that's very weird) whereas we would have expected 3A and 3C; but when nobody takes 3C, Lee moves over. Boarding finishes, the doors are closed, and we are air-borne in record time at 9:36, heading over the Mediterranean (which is the wrong direction for a flight to Amsterdam). My fears are assuaged when the plane makes a U-turn after a short while.

At 10:00, we are offered coffee and a sweet roll. At 10:20, another sweet roll is offered. I suppose that this constitutes privileged service for those of us in Business Class; when we booked the tickets, by the way, I argued for Economy Class for the three short flights within Europe, but this was not possible (or so I was told) if our trans-Atlantic flights are Business Class. We land at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport at 11:05 and are at the terminal just five minutes later, a good 20 minutes ahead of schedule.

There are long lines at passport control, but at least we need only walk from Concourse C7 to Concourse D1 (essentially the reverse of the long trek when we arrived on September 5). And then it's another very long walk to the KLM lounge which is near Gate 52, at the far far far end of Concourse D. (An observation: the Dutch are still very tall, maybe even a little taller than they were three weeks ago.) The lounge (which we have visited on several earlier trips) is large, comfortable, air-conditioned, but (surprisingly) lacking in healthy munchies: only a few cookies, nuts, and potato chips are available. Lee does find some soup which she gets out of a nearly empty urn. Also available are drinks: coffee, wine, soft drinks, beer, and juices. So I really shouldn't complain, except ... unlike an earlier visit, no KLM-blue-garbed female attendant comes by with a tray and asks, "May I offer you a herring?"

Lee may be getting my cold and I'm coughing but not sneezing as we wait to board our flight. At 1:15, I walk over to the electronic departure board inside the lounge and note that it is instructing passengers on the 2:20 Seattle flight to come to Gate 1 for the "profile." The *what??* Do we really have to go all the way to Gate 1 this far ahead of departure? So I ask the attendant in the lounge and am told that there is an agent, right outside the lounge, who can do the "profile"; turns out, this simply consists of some standard questions: How long were you in Europe? Did you buy anything? Did you have control of your luggage at all times? Will the Mets win the World Series?

What I find truly surprising is that there is no secondary security at the gate, as there has been on earlier flights: nobody to ask questions, no magnetometer, no search of carry-ons, no full-body scanner. So we board the Boeing 767-400 at 1:40 and find seats 3A and 3B; the first (for me) is at the window, the second (for Lee) is just across the aisle. Unlike the configuration in the Airbus on the flight from Seattle to Amsterdam, these seats are not angled but, in fact, face straight forward. There is the familiar problem of getting the bulky pillow and blanket, each in its own plastic bag, out of the way and remaining stuffed inside the forward cubby. There is a small elastic pouch on the back of the seat in front, not even large enough for me to stow my *Yale Alumni Magazines*.

While waiting for push back, I finish the Kurt Vonnegut book (*Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon*) and turn to various unread magazines. The doors close at 2:20, the wagon pushes us back at 2:37, and after a very long taxi we finally reach the runway and are air-borne at 2:55; the captain announces our estimated flying time as 9 hr 56 min (30 minutes shorter than what was published online). And of course I'm still coughing.

I'll not make as big a deal of the meal service as I did for the Seattle to Amsterdam flight, but I'll give brief descriptions (in English, not Dutch this time). Starting at 3:45, we receive: antipasto (cold meats, cheese, tomatoes); caprese salad; feta-crusted roast chicken; ice cream sundae. As we eat, the plane is making its way up the east coast of Great Britain, staying over the North Sea, finally turning W-NW away from the coast of Norway (near Bergen) and toward Iceland.

I finish reading my *Yale Alumni Magazines* and begin on Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. At 6:00 pm I re-set my watch nine hours earlier to 9:00 am, PST. I'm still coughing, despite having hoarded



some of the cough drops that our Charleston friend (who had had her own battles with coughing and sneezing and who obtained the magic pills from the ship's dispensary), but I don't like the taste nor do they seem to be helping. Well, the Hawking book is excellent but somewhat challenging (I'll finish it when we get home), so I set it aside in favor of the September 7 *New Yorker*.

At 9:20 am we're over Greenland but, alas, also over thick clouds so there's no opportunity to get pictures of the snow-covered mountains as I was able to do on the return from our 2013 England-Rhine trip. But so as not to disappoint, to the right is one of the pictures that I took two years ago. At 10:45 am, I doze off as we leave the western coast of Greenland and head toward Canada. How do I know this, given the cloud cover? Easy - I'm using the Flight Tracker program that's displayed on my monitor. And now we are crossing to the north of Hudson Bay.



Unable to sleep, I finish the magazine, work some puzzles, return to the Hawking book (while continually hacking and sneezing); one of these days, Delta will prevent me from returning to the U.S. while infecting the passengers and crew on their planes. One of the flight attendants, seeing that my tissue pile is reaching perilous heights, brings me another supply of tissues and, helpfully, tapes a disposal bag to the rear of the seat in front of me.

At 2:10 pm (just two hours before landing), the cabin lights are turned on and we are offered more food: I have coffee, orange juice, and a Cuban pork sandwich (of which I eat only half because I'm already well stuffed with food). Now we are just north of Edmonton and heading SW to Seattle. The clouds part for a short while, but then return just 15 minutes later; but at 2:55 the cloud cover dissipates and we have clear and spectacular views of the Cascades and then of Mount Rainier (as we are swinging south of the airport and will approach it from the Tacoma side). We land at 3:35, 20 minutes ahead of schedule.

Books read:

Nesbø, *The Devil's Star*  
 Ford, *The Sportswriter*  
 Vonnegut, *Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon*  
 Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*

Magazines:

Many issues of *TIME*, *The New Yorker*, *The Progressive*, and *Yale Alumni Magazine*

Puzzles:

A slew of daily and Sunday crossword puzzles from *The New York Times* and Sudoku puzzles from Seattle and Tacoma newspapers.