

Travels with Anzie – So. France – Bits and Pieces

March 2019

Medical Care:

Seems like every time we go somewhere on an extended trip, one or both of us has some sort of medical or dental problem. Fortunately, each experience has turned out positive. Each experience has also confirmed two things: 1. The U.S. does not have a corner on quality medical/dental care. 2. Everywhere we go the doctor care and the medicine is considerably cheaper than in the States.

Back in our Costa Rica days (2007-09) we discovered cheap, yet professional dental care. As a result, travel companies were offering special vacation packages called “Medi-Vac” and “Denti-Vac”. Most of the doctors were trained in the U.S. In Mexico we experienced terrific dental care at 30% of the cost back home. Dr. Laura, our dentist, became a personal friend.

Here in southern France we’ve had both medical and dental issues. Last year in Narbonne Anzie developed a blood clot behind her knee. With the help of a pharmacist we were able to find a doctor, who saw her the next day. Dr. Bacha, Lebanese, could speak some English. He attached Anzie to ultrasound equipment right in his office. We could see the clot and how it moved as he squeezed her leg. He gave her a prescription for Xeralto, a blood thinner, which cured her in a few weeks. When Anzie called the doctor, she was put right through – no leaving a message and waiting hours or days for a response. Cost per visit? About \$85. Cost of the Xeralto? About 30% the cost in the States. BTW, it’s made in the States.

Anzie and I both lost a filling while we were in Senegal. We decided to wait until we got to France to get them repaired. Anzie went to a woman dentist she had used last year in Narbonne. Turns out she needs a crown. The earliest she can get it done is late May. Estimated cost? \$760. She put in a temporary crown that feels permanent. Cost: \$55.

Our landlord, Claude, introduced me to his dentist. The next week Dr. Fabre repaired my filling. Cost? \$51.00. At home a cleaning cost \$75. Claude tells me that the French go to Bulgaria for cheap, but good, dentistry. I think I’m going to introduce Anzie to Dr. Fabre. Maybe he can do a crown quicker and cheaper.

Sunsets:

Damn the French! Ever since I can remember – which goes back to 1960 – the sunsets in France have been extraordinarily beautiful. Is it the atmosphere? Whatever. There’s an extra brilliance to the reds, oranges and purples that we never rarely see in the States. Perhaps they found a way to “photoshop” a natural phenomena?

Spring in the South of France:

Here it is, the end of March, and the trees are almost in full leaf. The leaves are a tender green. They look like they’d make a delicious salad. The vineyards surrounding us are beginning to sprout tiny leaves. Last week the vendor who sold me a long-sleeved sweat shirt said that next week the long sleeves are gone: it’s short-sleeve season. Many restaurants are touting asparagus specials, asparagus being a harbinger of Spring. Chuck wore shorts for the first time the other day. Can a thong be far behind? If you see a man in shorts around here, he’s probably a Brit or American. The French men aren’t really into shorts, called “culottes”. The

only thing we're short of is rain. Haven't had a drop this past month. Still, everything is greening up quite well.



Yellow Jackets:

The "Gilets Jaunes" are in the news every day. You've probably seen clips of them creating a ruckus in downtown Paris. They are also demonstrating in all the major French cities. It all began with demonstrations against President Macron's attempt to raise the tax on fuel. They were successful. Now they are finding other topics to demonstrate about, like inequality of the income tax system based upon income.

In other words, the rich possess more loopholes than the working class. The downside of the movement is that hooligans have joined in, and have damaged historic sites and works of art. We notice many cars around here with a folded-up optic yellow jacket on the dashboard to signify their support.

Canal du Midi:

In the 1600's Pierre Paul Riquet, a collector of salt tax, had a vision: a canal that connected the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean. He convinced King Louis XIV to fund the project. Starting from a river in Toulouse, the Canal extended for over 170 miles, entering the Mediterranean at the town of Sete. Remember, this was done with only pick and shovel. When it opened in 1681, it was used for commercial transport. These days, bowing to the competition from trucks and railroads, its primary use is tourism.

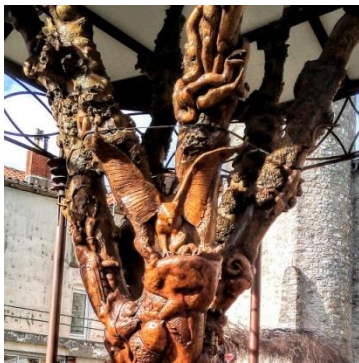
We visited the **Ecluses de Fonserranes**, nine locks – one after the other – that lower or raise a boat a total of seventy-one feet over a span of almost 1000 feet. A museum on the site includes a clever animated film about the Canal's history.

And yes, one of these days we will rent a barge and cross off a canal tour from our bucket list. How about joining us?



What Do You Do With a Dead Tree?

Normally you cut it down. Not in the village of **Le Caylar-en-Larzac**, located north of us in Haute Languedoc. When a beautiful elm tree died right in the middle of town, the townspeople just left it, for many years. One day a wood sculptor approached the village elders. He showed them his plan for turning this dead tree into a work of art. Here's the result



Lastly, check this out. These fields shaped like a pie-chart are on the site of a former swamp. The edges of each field are irrigation ditches, which all drain down to the center. The drainage is then piped several kilometers to an area that needs the water. I took the photo from the top of the **Oppidum d'Esterune**. An "oppidum" is a Roman fort, constructed in the late BC's.



That's all for now.

A la prochaine,

Chuck & Anzie