

would rather see the rooms as they would have looked when occupied by Marshal Von Bender.



**One of the cannon firing positions in the Bock**

We loiter about the city some more and find “la Musée d’ Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg” which seems to call itself a history museum but acts more like an art museum. This is a huge modern place with galleries devoted to Luxembourg’s chronological history (mostly portrayed by art objects rather than artifacts), galleries devoted to modern Luxembourg (this has the appearance of something the Chamber of Commerce would dream up), and galleries devoted to temporary exhibits. Today the temporary exhibit is entitled “Born to be Wild?” in French, German, Luxembourgish, and English; this exhibit uses art to provide a quick history of the metamorphosis of the culture of people in their teens and early twenties through the second half of the 20th century until today -Geoffrey accuses them of a failed attempt to attract youth by talking about youth - it is indeed a hodge podge of avante-garde art, sex-ploitation, and cultural artifacts with little depth. I am getting full of myself in my old age, am I not?

After all that intellectual stimulation we need some fresh air so we make our way to the edge of the plateau and throw ourselves down some 100 metres into the even older community of Grund where we wandered around the periphery (along the Alzette River) admiring the Wenzel Wall fortifications intermixed with construction cranes and some post-war subdivisions. It is an interested paradox. Geoffrey is tired out before I am able find my way into the interior of Grund where I hope to see the Vauban barracks and other religious and military

edifices. We return to the hostel which is close by both horizontally or vertically.



**The Alzette River flowing through Grund**

Upon our return to the hostel I decide to do some laundry while Geoffrey works on his net-book. I pay money to the desk clerk for the privilege and set out for the basement where I find the machines labeled only in German and completely unfamiliar to the likes of me. I load the front loading digital washing machine and push random buttons until it appears to start a wash cycle. A guy shows up who speaks only Italian who hopefully waits his turn. It takes nearly an hour to run the wash cycle. Geoffrey shows up and announces that it is long past supper time. The clothes come out of the washer in a surprising dry state so I announce to Geoff that the end is near, I load the German language digital dryer and push random buttons until it starts to run, I hopefully open the dryer after half an hour and dejectedly shut the door again, I hopefully open the dryer after half an hour and dejectedly shut the door again, I hopefully open the dryer after half an hour and dejectedly shut the door again. It takes three hours to dry the clothes so Geoffrey does not get supper until after 8:00PM... Again!

As for the dryer: I should not be surprised, the dryer does not have an air vent to the outdoors or anyplace else, it has a little hose that goes into the floor drain.

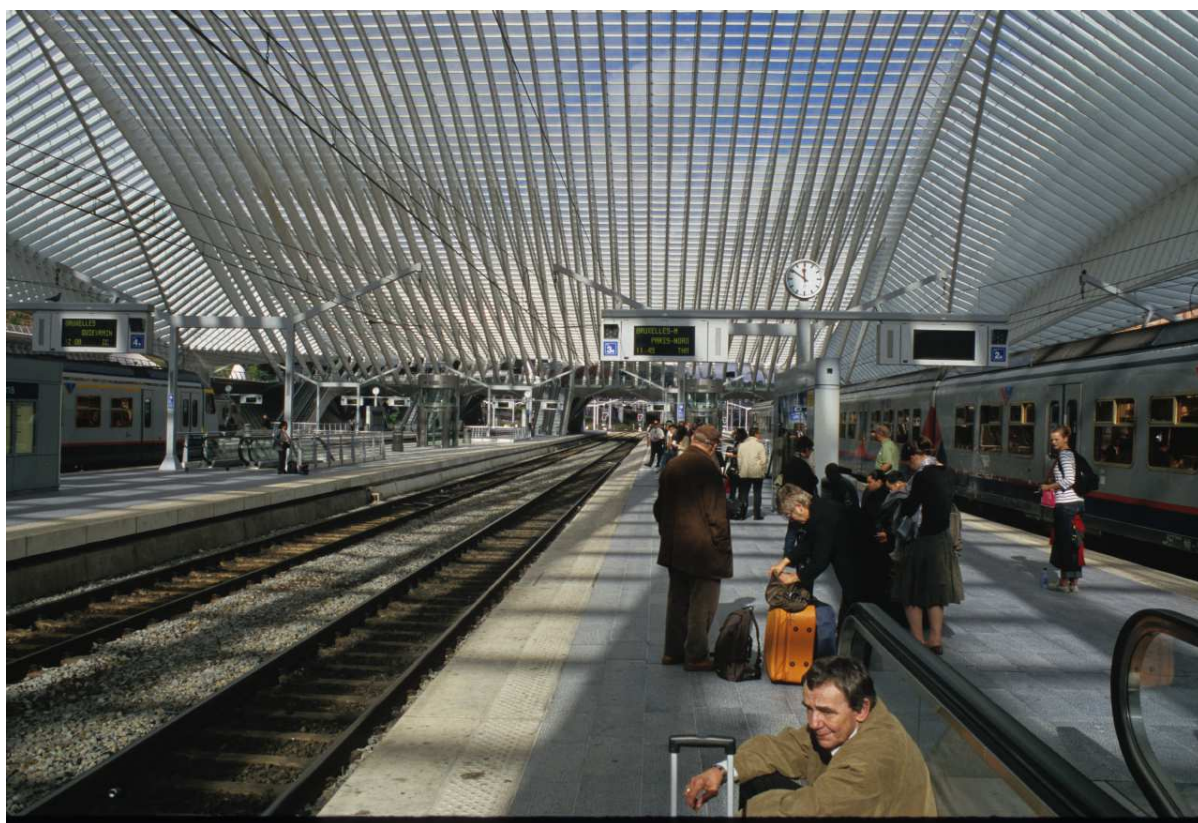
Oh, by the way. We get lost on the way home from the restaurant and walk in a circle far into the night.

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**Saturday, October 2, 2010**  
**Groot Welsden, Limburg, Nederland**

Today we are to off Maastricht. We are up and fed and packed, we turn in our key cards, and strike out uphill to recross the Pont du Château one last time and finally catch the number 9 bus back to the train station. We are learning from our experiences and seek out the international ticket window without the customary rejection at the local ticket window and purchase two tickets to Maastricht in the Netherlands

Some time toward noon we disembark to change trains in Liège which is located in North Central Belgium. The trains station is a modern confection of glass and steel with great translucent arches sweeping far over our heads. It is absolutely gorgeous but I look at some already cracked and chipped glass dividers and suspect that the structure will not age gracefully.



**The Liège Railway Station**

I find a washroom, it is equipped to be overseen by elderly ladies collecting money from desperate clients but the ladies are not on duty and their money is not neatly stacked on the table. We have some time so Geoffrey and I head across the street and around the block until we find a little shop where we hastily buy some sandwiches and drinks, the shopkeeper seems to speak only French so we have to muddle by with grunts, gestures, and our babes in arm French. I make my usual on the fly decisions based more on expediency than understanding or preference.

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We arrive in the Maastricht train station around 3:00PM. Geoffrey looked up the local hostel last night, confirmed that it had space, and carefully recorded the address and route. Confident in our preparations we set out toward the Maas River and then off to the left for some distance until we reach the appropriate area, sniff around in circles for ten minutes, and find the hostel in a very modern building in a very unlikely location. They are packed to the rafters they tell us. There is not a bed to be had in town they tell us. We should go back to the train station and go to the town of Rothem they tell us.



**The Maastricht Central Railway Station**

We trace our way back to Sint-Servaasbrug which is the bridge where we crossed the Maas River and then head the opposite way in search of a second opinion at the tourist office. We receive a haughty look. There is no bed to be had in Maastricht no how. There is no point in going to Rothem, all their space was rented hours ago. I ask how all the rooms can be rented like this. I am told it is like this every weekend. I am truly surprised and say so. They are truly surprised by my surprise and say so. I ask why the entire area is rented out every weekend. I am told that anybody with a spare Euro wants to be in Maastricht if they can arrange it, this is so obvious that they have difficulty gathering the words together. I do not say that I thought Luxembourg was the centre of the universe for free spending Europeans.

Geoffrey and I look pretty pathetic so the tourist office staff take pity on us and obtain a room for us in Margraten, in Groot Welsden, in the Michelin three star Hotel Wippelsdaal. They make the arrangements and we pay the tourist office something like €100.00 per day plus the agency fee but we will pay all taxes and additional costs directly to the hotel manager. We are told to go back to the train station and catch the number 50 Aachen bus which passes

## Europe 2010

through the centre of Margraten. From there it is a few minutes on a paved footpath to Groot Welsden and the Hotel Wippelsdaal. We can't miss it. They print us off a copy of the number 50 bus schedule



### **Alexander Battalaan, Wyk, Maastricht, Limburg, Nederland**

Geoffrey and I are slightly stunned by all this but we are not incapacitated so we return to the train station where we pass a huge forest of bicycles parked between the station and the transit centre and, after a bit of gawking about, we find the number 50 bus to Aachen. We ask the driver if this is the bus to Margraten, he corrects our pronunciation, agrees that we have the correct bus, and charges us each €2.40 for the 15 minute ride to Margraten. This is a nice modern Volvo suburban bus, we gratefully settle into our seats.

We arrive in Margraten at dusk and cast about for the path to Groot Welsden, we find a street map of the area on a sign board and after some consultation find ourselves on a narrow busy road with wet and almost nonexistent ditches and make an unpleasant journey of perhaps 4 km to Groot Welsden where we find the hotel, disguised as a farm house, on the far side of the village. I don't like how this is turning out.

We introduce ourselves and are placed in a large room with wifi and an en suite bathroom. We are invited down for supper later on, supper is €22.00 plus alcoholic beverages and we are assured that it is worth €22.00. Our host tells us that we took the wrong road and explains how to find the correct path which ends pretty much at his door.

We show up for supper at the appointed hour, it is served in several courses and it is superb. We are able to obtain a variety of unknown but very drinkable beers and we are told that we

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can sit around here and drink beer all day if we would prefer that to touring.

All women should come here and all men with women should bring them here, they will love the Hotel Wippelsdaal and consider the price to be a bargain.



**Approaching Groot Welsden, the Hotel Wippelsdaal is on the right**

Europe 2010

**Sunday, October 3, 2010  
Groot Welsden, Limburg, Nederland**

How will we ever keep them in Paris after they have seen Groot Welsden?

We sit down, at a pleasant morning hour, to an expansive breakfast of eggs, cheese, cold cuts, breads, fruits, juice, and coffee. Did I miss anything? We are in a pleasant sunny dining room looking out over green fields, we have linen on the table, and people come by periodically to add more items.



**The Hotel Wipfelsdaal dining room window**

We receive updated information on the bus and are told to request a day pass which costs less than two one way tickets. The path to Margraten is found in moments and is indeed shorter and more pleasant than yesterday's route. When we get into town we make an error and walk through an archway into somebody's yard and they tell us we have to make a jog to the left when we come to the cross street so we humbly retreat and make the jog that takes us to the correct path and shortly to the bus stop. The bus runs every half hour and we, knowing its scheduled time before we set out, only have to wait about five minutes before we are riding off to Maastricht.

Maastricht is located in the South Eastern corner of Holland on a little stub that shoves down into Belgium so that the city is within 5km of Belgium on the West and South and about 20km from of Germany to the East. Maastricht argues that it is the oldest community in Holland because people have lived there continuously since the Romans built a bridge across the Maas some time around or before 100 AD. The city of Maastricht has a population of

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110,000 and, by their own claims, attracts shoppers and tourists from all over Europe. Most of us living in North America would never have heard of Maastricht except that the Treaty of Maastricht that formed the European Union was signed here in 1992.



**South of the Maas River looking East toward the Hoeg Brögk**

Geoffrey and I are not economists so we ignore the European Union and retrace our steps past the Hostel on Maas Boulevard and continue on into the suburbs in a search for 18th century Fort Sint-Pieter. We don't find it. We find canals, boats, blue skies, green trees, a church where the service is just ending, but we don't find Fort Sint-Pieter. We walk back to Maastricht and ask how to find the fort and thus equipped we find that it is not very far away at all if you knew where you were going.

Now we find Fort Sint-Pieter and we notice that the front door leads to a restaurant. This is not unusual, half of the castles in this are converted into restaurants and hotels. We circle the fort and find a gate in the security fence and on it a schedule for guided tours of the fortress and the associated underground galleries which makes it clear that on a Sunday in October the guided tours are only hosted in Dutch. We dawdle about until the appointed hour and then sign up for a Dutch language guided tour but we are in luck because the assistant guide speaks English, is well informed, and is willing to answer our questions during the tour.







**Fort Sint-Pieter: if they can't find you handsome...**

Fort Sint-Pieter was constructed in the first decade of the 18th century and served as a redoubt. A redoubt is a fortification built outside a larger fort and is intended to protect the larger fort, in this case the larger fort is the walled city of Maastricht and the redoubt is placed on a small hill so that attackers cannot use that hill to shell the city. There are powder magazines and other storage rooms dug deep under the fort but they are damp, so damp that the tons of gunpowder stored there had to be replaced every two weeks at great labour and expense. Fort Sint-Pieter was used by the Dutch army until very recently, the dutch army built a anti-aircraft position on top fo the fort before World War II which the German army took over and used for the same purpose.

There are no lights in the tunnels of Fort Sint-Pieter so the tour guides each carry a kerosene lantern to light our way. That is the only way to visit ancient and spooky old tunnels.



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It is a glorious, warm, sunny day and we enjoy a very pleasant walk back to Maastricht and find that the tourist information office is still closed so we eat a waffle or two and ride the bus back to Margraten where we stroll the footpaths surrounding Margraten and Groot Welsden. The fields are full of unharvested corn (probably called maize in Holland) and I am very curious about when they harvest it and what they do with it since it is months past the point when it would be used for human consumption if they eat it the way we eat it.



### **The tour guide teaches the rudiments of mortar gunnery**

We eventually walk over to the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial located on 65 acres just West of Margraten. The cemetery holds 8,000 graves and, unlike the commonwealth cemeteries, is manned and only open to the public between 9:00AM and 5:00PM. We arrive sharp at 5:00PM and watch the large wrought iron gates automatically close for the night. We walk around the perimeter admiring the fences, the lawns, the distant buildings but we never see a single grave.

Whatever. We follow the tangle of footpaths back to the Hotel Wippsdaal and the usual excellent supper.

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Monday, October 4, 2010  
Groot Welsden, Limburg, Nederland



**The 700 year old Sint-Servaasbrug, the piece at the right is a lift bridge**

Ah glorious Groot Welsden! We are up to the customary enjoyable breakfast and the customary enjoyable walk to Margraten where we catch the bus to Maastricht. Today the bus is more crowded as people go back to work or school or whatever their weekday routine may be.

What luck! The tourist office is open today and I purchase a self-guided city walls walking tour booklet for €2.50 and we spend four hours touring the city walls and their fortifications with one break half way through for a pee and a beer.

In 1204 Maastricht was granted “city rights” which, among other things, granted them the right to construct a wall around the city which they immediately did. Maastricht was attacked repeatedly in the 16th and 17th centuries during the ongoing religious wars that followed the reformation during which time the walls were constantly rebuilt and modified to



match the evolving techniques used in European warfare.



**A portion of the city wall with yet more cannons on display**

In 1673 Louis IV ordered our old buddy Sébastien Le Prestre, Seigneur de Vauban to besiege and take Maastricht, this was Vauban's first attack on a major city. The fighting forces were led by the king's musketeers commanded by Charles de Batz de Castelmore Comte d'Artagnan (the very fellow from "The Three Musketeers" by Alexander Dumas) who was killed in the battle. The French held the city until 1678 which gave Vauban time to re-engineer the city walls and other defenses.

When we run out of walls to walk we head back toward the centre of the city, stopping to admire an 11th century church named "Onze-Lieve-Vrouwebasiliek" which means "The Basilica of Our Lady". it is believed that this is the oldest church site in Maastricht but that has never been proven so I must award that honour to the 11th century Basilica of Saint Servatius which stands on a site where a church has existed since 384 AD when a memorial chapel was put up over the grave of Saint Servatius. I don't think we have seen any older churches in our travels.



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Geoff is not much interested in churches so I don't get to linger.

But wait! We find another old church! There is a 15th century Dominican church which now holds a bookstore named "Selexyz Dominicanen". Within the church's glorious Gothic walls are three or four stories of books and periodicals as well as a coffee shop. I wander the stacks finding English language books in and among all the other languages and actually have a stack of two or three that I contemplate purchasing until Geoffrey eventually finds me and insists that we have been there long enough. I repent of my intentions and leave without any books but I find a photography shop and buy six more rolls of film at a lower price than in Luxembourg.

Tomorrow it is back to Paris.



**Margraten, Limburg, Nederland**

Europe 2010

**Tuesday, October 5, 2010  
Paris, France**

Geoffrey and I bid a fond but expensive farewell to the Wippelsdaal Hotel and its comfortable rooms, pleasant staff, and excellent food some time around 9:30AM and walk the kilometer or two from Groot Welsden to Margraten where we catch the bus to Maastricht.



**Riding Veolia Transport Lijn 50 back to Maastricht**

Hey, did you know that the Dutch railway system is officially named “Nederlandse Spoorwegen”??

No matter, Curiously we ride with the SNCB back to Liège and from there We ride “Nederlandse Spoorwegen” Hispeed from Liège to Paris. Hmmm, we ride the Belgian system in Holland and the Dutch system in Belgium. We are out of Maastricht at 11:09AM and into Paris Nord by 2:00PM, that is 400Km in three hours and that includes the slow part from Maastricht to Liege.

At Paris Nord it is back on the Métro but I start by sticking my ticket into a random crack in the turnstile instead of into the ticket slot. It is a long way from the turnstile to the nearest ticket vending machine but there is a young lady in a ticket booth so I ask her for a ticket, she tells me she doesn't sell tickets and I have to go back up stairs. This is not turning out well so I tell her in English that I stuck my one and only ticket in the wrong slot in the turnstile. She replies in English that she can fix that and comes out of her kiosk with a ring of keys and I show her where I stuck it in. She unlocks the top of the machine and there is my ticket. I

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say, “Ah! C’est ca!” and she says, “Voilà!” I really like Europe!

Geoff and I are going to something called the Aloha Hostel South of the Eiffel Tower and it is best reached from the “Volontaires” Métro station so we find a platform that will take us to the Volontaires station but the train that comes along is a double decker SNCF train. I am somewhat dismayed and start to step back but Geoffrey grabs me and we get on the train which - sure enough - anonymously takes us to Volontaires and anonymously stops to let us off. Friendly place Paris.



### **The Aloha Hostel**

The Aurora Hostel is located at 1 Rue Borromée which is a small street of only a block or two. The hostel is quite near the Métro and we find it quite easily - for the first and last time! You would not believe how many ways there are to not find the Aurora Hostel, it is almost mystical. We register and pay at the hostel but it is too early to access our room so we stuff our luggage into a very full common luggage lockup and leave.

So what do we do now? We walk randomly North and find l’Hôtel National des Invalides which we, quite naturally, have never heard of before so we go in and find that it has a bit of everything including a veterans’ hospital, Napoleon’s tomb, and la Musée de l’ Armée which seems to be devoted to institutionalized violence so of course we are interested but its all closing right now.

We resume our Northbound walk. We cross over the Seine on le Pont Alexandre III and pass both le Grand Palais and le Petit Palais which are not palaces at all but exhibition halls built for the Paris Exposition in 1900. We continue on to the wide and very commercial Avenue de Champs-Elysée where we turn on a very broad and crowded sidewalk toward l’ Arc de Triomphe.

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L'Arc de Triomphe is big and far away and it takes us a long time to get there only to find that it is an inaccessible stone monument surround by fast and heavy traffic. A bit anticlimactic I must say. Somebody asks us to take their picture in front of l'Arc de Triomphe so I get them to photograph Geoff and I in return.

It is now almost dark and past our suppertime so we start back for the hostel with the intention of finding something to eat on the way. The restaurant we pick is called "Le Sufferen" which I want to translate as "the sufferers" and presume that refers to the clients because the food is so disappointing. Disappointed or not, we are sufficiently fortified by the indifferent meal to walk back to the location of the Aloha Hostel only to find it is gone. The hostel which we found so easily earlier is now quite elusive and it is only after an exhausting search that we reach our temporary home. We rush inside before it can move again, regain our luggage, and go up a narrow twisting stair to a third floor room equipped with six beds with two beds left open for us.

This is quite a contrast to the three star Hotel Wippelsdaal.



**Le Pont Alexandre III, le Grand Palais, le Petit Palais**



Europe 2010

Wednesday, October 6, 2010  
Paris, France

Breakfast at the Aloha Hostel is better than some because they offer granola as well as corn flakes but worse than some because the coffee looks so bad that I don't even try it. Real estate prices might perhaps affect the size of hostels, both Paris hostels are small and crowded with cramped dining rooms and itty bitty common areas while the hostels in Caen, Lille, and Luxembourg have great quantities of space and they are in much newer buildings. I like the Jules Ferry hostel more than I like the Aloha Hostel but they are both serviceable if somewhat cramped.

Geoff and I set out in the morning to look in the shops for suitable gifts to bring back with us but that is not working out all that well. We are both men after all and it will only take a small change to make us into clones of Red Green. I suggest that we go down town to the Louvre, Geoff is interested in the Louvre anyway and it probably has a well appointed gift shop.



**Le Boulevard de Grenelle and the elevated portion of Métro line 6**

The road to the Louvre is far from direct since we are somewhere South West of the Eiffel Tower. We walk vaguely in the direction of the Seine and eventually find our way up le Boulevard de Grenelle and pass the monument to the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup which stands near the site of the long gone Velodrome d'Hiver.

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On July 16, 1942 at the request of the Germans, the Paris police arrested 13,152 Jews of which about 7,500 were locked inside the Velodrome d'Hiver and held there for five days. Only about 2% of the 13,152 people arrested survived the war, the rest either died in detention in Paris, while being shipped by train to Poland, or in the Auschwitz extermination camp. The French people were outraged by the roundup and many French and German people involved in the roundup were arrested and tried after the war and some were even executed. The present monument was erected in 1994.



**The monument to the Vel de Hiv Roundup**

We cross le Pont de Bir-Hakeim to the North side of the Seine and begin a meandering stroll to the East down l'Avenue de New York and eventually stopping for lunch near the intersection of l'Avenue F.D.Roosevelt and l'Avenue des Champs-Elysées. After lunch we continue East through the immense and busy Place de la Concorde and through a green space the size of Moose Jaw which consists of le jardin des Tuileries and le jardin du Carrousel. The Louvre comes into sight but you actually enter the Louvre museum complex through a huge glass pyramid in la Place du Carrousel. There is a long lineup to get into the pyramid and another lineup to buy a ticket once you are inside.

The Louvre is immense (as is the palace in which it is located), it is not the largest museum in the world but it is right up there. The Louvre hosts about 15,000 visitors each and every day of the year which makes it the single most visited museum in the world. Geoffrey and I learn this with dismay as we stand in the pyramid with our tickets in our hands, obviously we could only visit 1% of the museum, what should we do?

We do the only sensible thing, we go to the gift shop.



### **La Place de la Concorde, or at least some of it**

The Louvre gift shop is the size of an ordinary museum in an ordinary city. Every taste and budget is catered to in the Louvre gift shop. They have 2 metre high copies of the Venus de Milo and Michelangelo's David on sale for several thousand Euros. They have jewelry for thousands of Euros and priced all the way down to tens of Euros. They have obscure trinkets like globes, astrolabes, clocks, and magnifying glasses for hundreds of Euros. They have this that and every thing else for every price. They have postcards priced at three for a Euro.

I am vindicated! Even Geoffrey and I can find suitable gifts in the Louvre gift shop. I shell out €140.00 on assorted jewelry and books. Geoffrey shells out an undisclosed amount on similar stuff.

Le Grand Louvre, that is the official name, is predominantly an art museum and it is divided into eight departments which are each the size of a large museum. Geoffrey and I decide to visit the Near Eastern Antiquities department which is located in the Richelieu wing and covers the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Persia from way back when until the arrival of Islam. The palace itself is quite something to see and the objects on display are something else again - some of them 5,000 years old - and come from all the ancient civilizations that we have heard of and some that we have never heard of. Not Egypt, there is a department devoted exclusively to Egypt. After a couple hours of Near Eastern Antiquities we are exhausted and

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reluctantly decide to head for the hostel but we divert ourselves through a basement hallway that goes past the only part of the original medieval fortress that is still accessible to the unwashed masses.



### **The grand entrance to le Grand Louvre**

We take the Métro back to the hostel - we must truly be tired. We have a seafood dinner which, for me, is complicated by my lack of French words for seafood: I do not know the words for lobster (homard) and mussel (moule), the waitress goes back to basics and teaches me the word for fish. We get into the hostel some time around 10:00PM and we only have to circle the block once or twice to find the place.

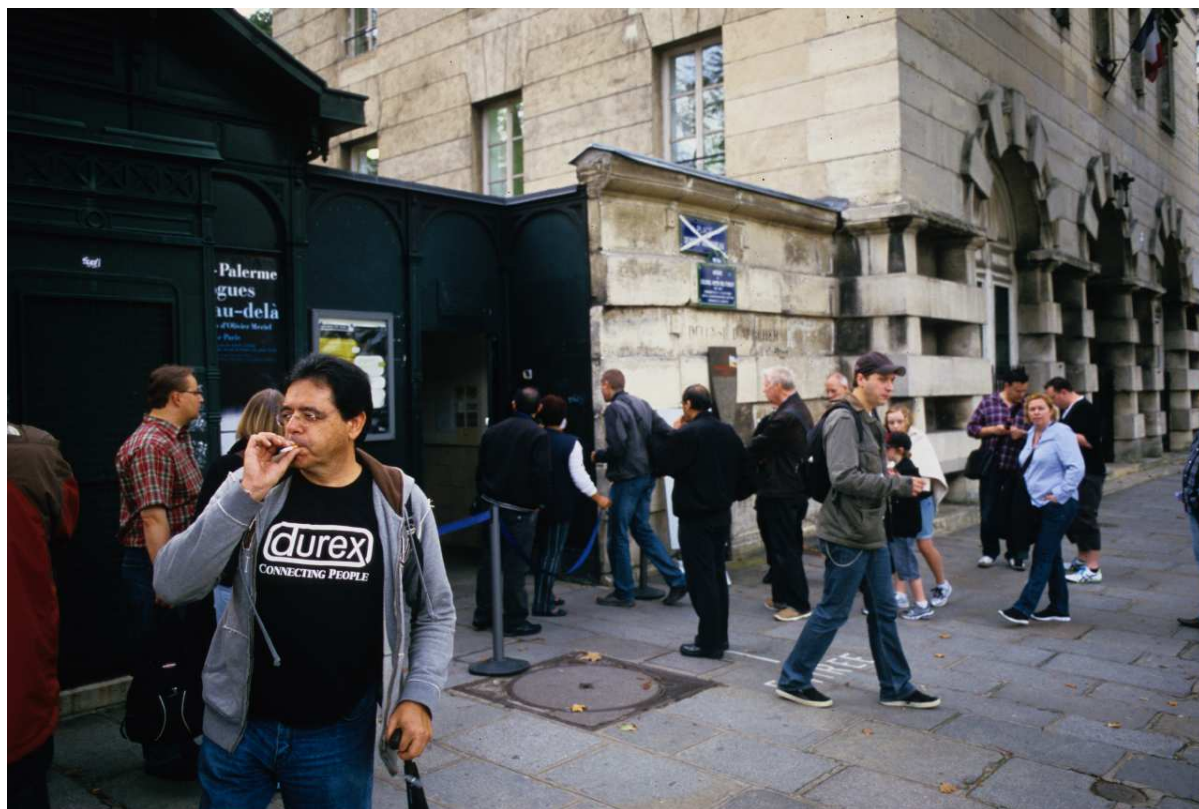
Europe 2010

**Thursday, October 7, 2010  
Paris, France**

This is the last day of our entertaining but expensive junket and I am tired of traveling and glad to be going home. Who would have thought? It must be old age.

I am up bright and early but I am not early enough to avoid competing for the Aloha Hostel's inadequate supply of bathrooms. After the bathroom tournament I head downstairs for a boring breakfast of corn flakes, baguettes, and bad coffee.

Geoffrey appears down stairs after the hostel has stopped serving breakfast so we must start the day by finding a brasserie which will feed him breakfast and both of us a decent cup of café noir. I am suspicious that his tardiness is deliberate but I am unable to prove it.



**La Place Denfert-Rochereau, line up here to visit the catacombs**

We make our way South East to the catacombs which can be accessed, for a fee, at the verge of la Place Denfert-Rochereau. There are many tunnels under Paris: first were the quarries used to obtain building stone and later utility tunnels and Métro tunnels were constructed and today they all tend to be incorrectly referred to as the catacombs. In the late 18th centuries the abandoned quarries started to collapse which endangered streets and building located above them so a division of the city government was formed which has been inspecting and repairing the abandoned mines ever since.

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In the same era that the city began maintaining the tunnels, it became apparent that the city's cemeteries were grotesquely overloaded to the point where they had become a health hazard and nuisance to the residents of Paris so it was decided to remove all the old bones from the cemeteries and store them in the abandoned quarries. The Roman Catholic Church consecrated the appropriate tunnels and the bones were brought down and stored there - to this day the church maintains jurisdiction over this ossuary and the tunnel maintenance crews stack and restack the bones in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

We stand in line on a pleasant autumn day, pay our admission fee, and climb down the many steps to travel through the several kilometers of the catacombs that are open to the public. We discover the many interesting artifacts left by the centuries of tunnel maintenance including street signs that correspond to the streets directly overhead, pillars carefully marked with the date of their construction, water wells for use by the workers to make cement and for drinking, and art work made by the workers when they apparently had nothing else to do.



**Le Cimetière des Innocents was the first cemetery emptied into the ossuary**

Upon reaching the ossuary portion of the catacombs we are informed by signs that flash photography and the use of tripods are both prohibited. I pride myself in allowing the letter of the law to provide a way to disobey the spirit of the law so Geoff and I take many pictures by propping up our cameras up with rocks, skulls, and femurs. The first cemetery moved into the ossuary was le Cimetière des Saints-Innocents (which was closed upon being emptied) and its name is engraved on the wall where the bones are stored. Several other cemeteries followed and each has its name and the date engraved where the bones are kept. There are also various shrines and alters down there and Christian services are held on special occasions.

We climb up many steps to emerge from the tunnels several blocks from where we went in and there is a souvenir shop/snack bar across the street so I pick up a couple touristy books about Paris and we make our way back toward la Place Denfert-Rochereau.



I divert Geoffrey toward the Paris Observatory which was built in 1667 to do astronomical research for the purpose of improving maritime navigation but we find it is not open to the public so we redirect our thoughts to L'Hôtel National des Invalides which is back to the North and some distance beyond the Aloha Hostel.



**Somewhere along the Boulevard Raspail**

L'Hôtel National des Invalides is a huge complex which was built by order of Louis XIV and completed in 1676. The purpose of the complex was to be a veterans home - a home and hospital for some 3,000 unwell and disabled veterans. The complex includes l'Eglise Saint-Louis des Invalides which was built to satisfy the residents' spiritual needs - daily attendance was compulsory. Today part of the complex is still used as a veterans hospital but other parts have become museums and several famous people are entombed in the chapel including Napoleon Bonaparte.

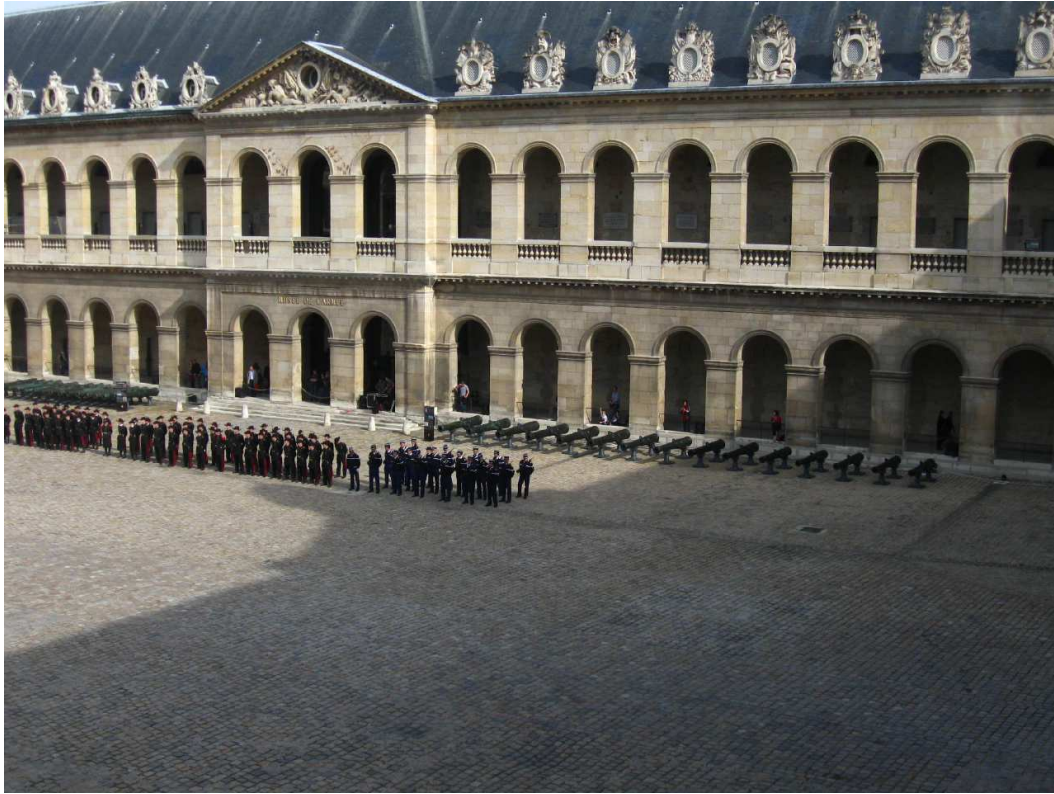
Geoffrey and I arrive after an extended journey which requires a stop for more espresso. We purchase two tickets to visit la Musée de l'Armée and lounge away a couple hours looking at yet more things military including a wide array of cannons lined up along one wall. The museum is immense like all Paris museums and we are only able to tour





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a small part of it, the first and second world war galleries, before we are shown to the exit sometime around 5:00PM.



**The parade square in la Musée de l'Armée**

The day is still pleasant and the sun is still shining so we start an extended trip back to le Boulevard Montparnasse and a Mexican restaurant called the Hacienda del Sol.

The French practice of having limited opening hours for restaurants comes into play and we find we have to consume about an hour before the restaurant opens so we walk back up le Boulevard Montparnasse and have an expensive but palatable beer before returning to the restaurant for a very nice Mexican dinner.

It is a long walk back to the hostel but that helps us pack all that food and booze into our stomachs properly.

Alas, this is the end. After this its back to Canada where the food, coffee, and beer are ordinary.





**Drinking beer on le Boulevard Montparnasse on an October evening**

## Europe 2010

**Friday, October 8, 2010  
Paris, France**

Geoffrey and I are up and around at 7:00AM because we expect to be picked up by the airport shuttle around 8:00AM. We do our dressing, packing, and exiting in the dark so as not to overly disturb the other four inhabitants of the room. The good thing about being up at 7:00 is I can muscle my way into the bathroom with a bare minimum of competition. The bad thing about being up in the dark is that I forget my hat and I don't notice until the moment when the airport shuttle arrives so my scruffy old hat is now history. The bad thing about an 8:00AM appointment is that we have to leave the hostel before breakfast is served. The good thing about an 8:00AM appointment is that we can leave the hostel before their boring breakfast is served.

The airport shuttle is a small minivan driven by a Korean guy and we are his first of five passenger for this trip. This is the only European vehicle I have seen that has a front bench seat and/or seating for three people in the front. I am surprised at the driver's efficiency, we stop two more times to fill the van and still make it to CDG Terminal 3 in an hour. I didn't know it could be done.



**The Terminal 3 departure area is almost as drab as the arrivals area**

It is all anticlimax and routine after this. Geoffrey and I have a moderate amount of time to spare so I waste a bit of it taking pictures of the terminal. I browse a newsstand to find papers in simple enough French for me to read until Geoff drags me away by the ear so we can find some breakfast. After that is the usual airport stuff until we are seated in the Airbus

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and on our way to beautiful exotic Cowtown and another wait for the delayed flight to Edmonton.

Jocelyn picks us up and drives us back to Athabasca while I sit in the back seat in a torpor surrounded by grunge music. Shayne should be here, he always liked grunge music.