

“Our European Vacation”

A Canadian FFI Journey to France and Belgium May 9 – 25, 2023



Seventeen brave Canadians travelled from across the country to meet in Europe for an adventure. The weather was mainly cool and rainy but we “hardy” Canadians handled it well by wearing everything we owned every day. What follows is a little of what we experienced, however there are many more memories of hosts and activities and friends made during our visits to Toulouse and the Belgium Coast. Nancy was an outstanding journey coordinator who organized our travel and hotels and the pre-planning that went into our trip. Thanks so much to Nancy and also to Dorothy who collected the fees and paid bills. And thank you to the Victoria and Vancouver Island Club for including all of us in this memorable outbound journey.

Journal edited by Brenda Kane

The Ambassadors: Nancy McLaughlin (Journey Coordinator), Bill Herriot, Kate Mailer, Lillian Tetreau, Valerie York, Lynna Schaldemose, Lynn Lunde and Dorothy Parker (Journey treasurer) from **FF Victoria and Vancouver Island**; Brenda & Glen Kane from **FF Edmonton and Area**; Lynda & Gary Toffelmire from **FF Calgary**; Debbie Kretz from **FF Niagara**; Carol & Geoff Aberdeen and Joanne & John Lake from **FF Lake Simcoe**.

WEEK ONE: FRANCE

Day 1- May 10th - Toulouse

Lynda and Gary Toffelmire

Today, we left our Home Exchange in Amsterdam and got the train from Central Station to Schipol airport to take our flight to Toulouse. The flight left at 1425 and we arrived in Toulouse at 1615. Our hotel was Hampton by Hilton Toulouse Airport for this night and we would meet our hosts the next morning. We met most of our group in the lobby early evening and about 10



of us went for dinner at a nearby French restaurant, L'Esprit du Sud-Ouest. Many of us had the traditional dish- Cassoulet with white beans, sausage, pork, and duck.



Day 2- May 11th - Toulouse & Goyrans

Lynda and Gary Toffelmire

This morning we had breakfast at the hotel. There was a good variety of meat, cheese, eggs, breads and cereals. Our host, Denis picked us up at 1015. We then drove to the Goyrans, the village where our hosts and many other club members live. It was about half an hour from Toulouse. We met Denis's wife, Genevieve. Denis is the deputy mayor of Goyrans. Genevieve is an artist and has a small studio in their backyard. There are several of her paintings in their home.

We had lunch soon after we arrive. They served foie gras and bread, Blanquette de Veau (a traditional veal stew), and an assortment of sweets. We had a sweeter white wine with the foie gras and red wine with the meal.

Today was our Wish Day with our hosts. As Gary has an interest in aviation, Denis suggested that we visit the Aeroscopia Museum dedicated to the Aeronautical Industry. Toulouse is the European capital of aeronautics and space. The 7,000m² building is devoted to the history of aviation. The museum includes an exhibition of legendary aircraft (Concorde, Caravelle, Super Guppy, A300B). The 7,000m² building, built in the shape of an airplane fuselage, is devoted to the history of aviation.



Our Welcome was an early evening informal get-together at the Town Hall in the village Goyrans. We had appetizers and beverage of white wine and juice. Once we got back to our hosts' home, we had dinner- a savory tart with cherry tomatoes, onions, mustard; and local cheeses as well as wine.

Day 2 – May 12th - A visit to Le Village Gaulois (The Gallic Village) and Toulouse

Bill Herriot

Our young smiling guide, Judy, explained how the Gallic people lived in 400BC. She demonstrated tools and crafts, and showed us furniture and traditions.



Lunch was followed by a trip by cable car and metro into the capital city of Toulouse. Coordinators, Michel and Nancy led us on the Metro – packed like sardines.



Elizabeth, our kind guide, led us through the rainy streets of Toulouse, visiting historic buildings like Saint Sernin church and the Capitole building.



Inside the Capitole building, were marvelous paintings and statues that had recently been restored.



Time for dinner with Vivane's family



Day 3 – May 13th - St. Sulpice-la-Pointe and the Chateau de Bonrepos

Carole & Geoff Aberdeen

Our morning tour took us to Saint-Sulpice-la-Pointe where we visited the medieval underground of Castela, a chateau owned by the Count of Toulouse. We met our guide who with great passion shared the secrets of the underground tunnels used as a hiding place (or more likely for the count as a storage facility) during the many, many years of religious wars that existed in France.



Much of the castle has been destroyed over the years. The tunnels under the castle are very unique. Most households had an underground room that was used as storage and refuge. The tunnels under the castle were never used for this purpose (I guess no one ever bothered to invade the Count!).



There are two entrances, one that provides access to the Chateau and the other a secret entrance which we used which employed defense mechanisms including a large dark wooden door and 3 ½ m deep ditches with a drawbridge that would be lowered by the guard.

We heard a fair bit about the Cathar religion which focused on a vow of poverty and rebellion towards the church and its indulgences. Southern France was considered laxer in its manner toward religion so many of the Cathars lived and practiced their faith near this area. Since these individuals were not paying their tithes, the church went to war against them. This war was followed by the Inquisition where most Cathars were executed.

Finally, we heard both in passionate French and passionate English through our wonderful translator Nancy, the story of Jeanne, the Duchesse of Barry whose mother left her at the age of 3 under the care of her cousin who wanted to gain access to her lands in Normandy and other parts of France. Accordingly, the cousin became the Lord of St. Sulpice. Since she was beautiful and gifted, she married the brother of the king who was 50. She was only 12 but he paid \$30 million francs for the marriage. She was with him for 25 years. At the age of 15, she saved King Charles VI at a masquerade ball as some of the costumes caught on fire and she thought one of them was her lover. Needless to say, she became one of the richest women in France. Her second marriage to the Grand Marshall of the army turned out to be one of violence and anger. She left Paris to hide at St. Sulpice where she began to forge gold and jewelry. She was arrested but the Count of Castela arranged for her escape, and she remained under his protection until her death at the age of 40.



We had, as always, a delightful lunch at L'Aerogare restaurant started by a pilot who was laid off during Covid.



Our afternoon involved a visit to the Chateau de Bonrepos. Château de Bonrepos was built by Pierre-Paul Riquet in 1651 who was the local tax collector and therefore, quite wealthy. He was convinced that he could bring water from the nearby Black Mountains to the nearby valley and build a canal that would cross southern France, thereby negating the need to sail around Spain.





He used his millions to buy a 600-hectare estate and spend 10 years building the chateau that is now in disrepair and under renovation. He then built an elaborate model that would display how water from the mountains could be used to support the building of a canal. He finally got the King to agree, and the canal was eventually built over a period of 15 years. At the time it was the biggest project in Europe with 100 locks, a tunnel and viaducts. The castle was bought by the nearby town for \$1.7 million with government support and is under renovation. The Orangery has been fully updated to code and is available for weddings and conferences.

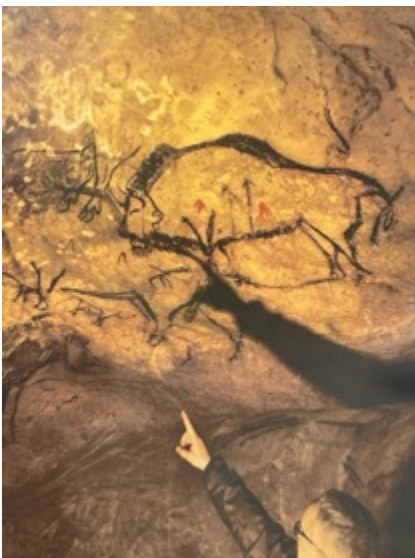
Some of us were lucky to attend a choir performance in the town of Goyrans where many of our hosts lived. A delightful end to a very full day!



Day 4 – May 14th - Cave Paintings of Niaux and Tarascon Prehistory Park

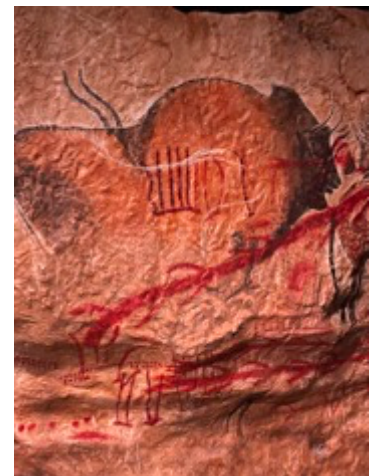
Brenda and Glen Kane

This was a wonderful day! We had looked forward to seeing the cave paintings in the Pyrenees and were not disappointed. It was a cold and rainy morning as we drove into the Pyrenees, through low clouds and a long tunnel, while listening to Patrice's favorite Canadian singer– Leonard Cohen. Although it was a two-hour drive, we enjoyed seeing the changing scenery and rolling clouds. Jacqueline lent me a lovely warm scarf since I was freezing, and I wore it every day while we were there.



When we arrived, we began our walk using small headlamps. The walk was easy to begin with but got more difficult, as we climbed through narrow passages, over uneven rocks and up steep sections, while looking at stalactites and stalagmites along the way. (This was definitely a challenge for me since my hip and knee replacements make me quite stiff, but I made it!) Then we turned off our headlamps, and the guide focused his lamp on painting after painting in the Salon Noire. They were beautiful!

More than 70 paintings of bison, ibex, horses and deer roamed the walls. Some were complete animals and some just lines to indicate a shape. Most were drawn with





charcoal or manganese. It was amazing to see them still there after 17000 years. I hated to leave them behind but our two hours was up.

Driving back, we entered the tunnel again and came out onto flatter farm land, past traditional red windmills (Moulin Rouge), modern wind farms, castles on the distant hills, and huge nests of osprey or storks on the power poles. I loved seeing the stone houses that were so different from those we'd seen in the north. This was the area that Kate Mosse wrote about in her book, "Winter Ghosts", in which the last of the Cathar people hid in caves in the hills to escape persecution.



We arrived in Tarascon for lunch at La Maison Lacube, where we had an excellent meal with shared plates of sausages, black pudding, crusty bread, fries, steak and tasty apple tarte with ice cream. Clear prune liquor in a huge bottle was served with coffee as we sat and enjoyed the restaurant owner and waiter sing traditional songs of the Occitane area. As usual, lunch lasted several hours while we ate, chatted, and enjoyed the atmosphere.

Our afternoon was spent at the Prehistory Park of Cro-Magnon Man. Here we saw reproductions of the cave paintings and footprints of ancient man, as well as as demonstrations of early man's skills. We enjoyed seeing three mandarin ducks on the pond and a heron near the walkway.

Today was a very long day for both hosts and ambassadors, and we were happy to have dinner at home. Jacqueline, our hostess, made an excellent tortiere that we enjoyed, before crawling into our comfy bed. (recipe attached at the end of journal)

Day 5 - May 15th - Pastel Country

Brenda & Glen Kane

We had a very pleasant day exploring small villages, with pilgrims passing by on their way to the Camino in Spain. This part of the pilgrimage is the St. James path. Most pilgrims were very fit and seemed to have good hiking gear. The abbey cloister we visited was very cool and beautiful with lovely carvings. Lunch was a picnic in a park overlooking a river. The view was beautiful and we enjoyed our slices of cold tortiere as we picked out lovely chateaus we would like to live in on the river below.





Later we visited a tourist bureau where we learned about pastel, made by dyeing cotton with “woad” made from the leaves of a yellow-blossomed plant. This woad oil was used by the ancient Celts and Gauls to dye cloth and textiles various shades of blue, as well as their hair, faces and bodies. Nancy and Brenda came home with lovely blue cotton scarves.



We took our hosts, Jacquelyn and Patrice out to dinner in a pretty little country restaurant near Goyrans. Our meal – excellent prawn appetizers, veal, and a beautiful but rather large chocolate

éclair.

Day 6 – May 16th – Albi and Toulouse

Dorothy Parker

Today was another full day, to Albi then back to a Toulouse restaurant for the Farewell party. The drive to Albi from Toulouse was a little over an hour through the scenic rolling countryside of southern France.

Cameras were busy at the Cathedral-Basilica of Saint-Cecile. Having done some research into the Cathars of this region and its threat to the Roman Catholic church in the middle ages, I was not surprised to see the exterior church architecture, started in the 12th century, to be such an imposing fortress. It was built to validate the victory over the followers of Catharism, “seen to be “heretics. The bishop’s palace and other buildings were also constructed alongside.





Photos were snapped of the gothic lacelike and twisted spires of the South portal, and efforts made to encompass the 78-meter-high tower. So much to marvel at! An awe-inspiring interior of colours, angles, and textures as you walked through. Over the centuries wall frescos, iron and stone work, stained glass, painted chapels (one having a sculpture and relique of St. Cecelia) and an enormous pipe organ were added. An enormous mural of the last judgment (15th century) had its central portion removed to create a doorway to a new chapel. Still one sees rows of angels, apostles, saints, monks, emperors featured above with the sinners below!

Lunch was at a restaurant but I forget its name! This dish was delicious and such a piece of art as well!

In the afternoon, we entered what was the bishop's palace, now a museum with a collection of work by Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. Through the windows I could see a French-style garden now part of this complex.

Our last evening meal was with our host club in a local restaurant. For me, it held an extra surprise when Alain, the event organizer for Toulouse, whom I had hosted in Victoria, together with his wife Florence,



suggested I help him say a few words to all present! Luckily by this time my batteries were dead in my camera so only one photo, of more food, survived the event!



Day 7 - May 17th - Travel to Brussels through Paris

Brenda and Glen Kane

This morning we were up at 7 am to pack and have our final breakfast with Patrice and Jacquelyn. The sun was shining FINALLY and we could see the snow-capped Pyrenees in the distance. "Gilbert", their automated lawnmower, was waiting to mow the lawn at 10 am. (Such a great idea - and controlled by Jacquelyn's phone). We will miss Patrice and Jacquelyn - they were such a lovely couple and wonderful hosts. As we drove into Toulouse, we saw more fields of red poppies ("coquelicot" in French) so had to stop and get a final photo.



We met everyone at the Toulouse train station and said our farewells. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and appreciated the work that went into planning a fascinating program.

Our 4½ - hour train trip to Paris was uneventful. We enjoyed sharing stories with other ambassadors and looking at the scenery, which included many tree farms, raisin farms covered by netting, little old villages and wind farms.

We changed trains in Paris after an adventurous taxi ride across Paris. We saw the Eiffel tower in the distance, as well as the Notre Dame Cathedral, and the Seine River. I found Paris to be somewhat dirty and very crowded after the beautiful countryside.

The first-class train from Paris to Brussels was very nice, with red velvet seats and tables to play cards. Some enjoyed wine and beer from the bar car. After one more transfer to another train, we finally reached the Brussels train station which was about 200m from our hotel. Awesome organization of our travel, Nancy!!!

Scenes from our travel day-



WEEK TWO: BELGIUM

Day 8 – May 18th – Free Day in Brussels

Brenda & Glen Kane

We woke to a sunny day and walked down to a wonderful square, which we learned later was the Grand Place, where we found a waffle place and enjoyed light and tasty Belgian waffles with fruit, and café au lait. Later we explored the Agora corridors that reminded us of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar.



We spent the afternoon with Debbie and Bill on a Hop-On Toot Bus. We saw a lot of the city as we drove by new and old buildings, green parks, and interesting sights like the Atomion from the 1952 World's Fair. We had fun riding a large Ferris Wheel for 10 euros, and had a beer in the square. It was a relaxing afternoon but we still made over 10 000 steps.



Dinner with 7 other ambassadors was in a restaurant in the beautiful Galleries Building, just off the Grand Place. The Chicken Cordon Bleu was really tasty, and chocolate truffles from the Belgian candy shop were excellent.



Day 9 – May 19th – Bruxelles and Oostende

Joanne & John Lake

We have an unscheduled morning. Ahhhhhhhh

At the crack of 11:15am, Ambassadors meet at the Warwick Hotel for a guided tour with Caroline, Lolo and Gaya.

It is obvious that Lolo is a professional tour guide. She was animated and passionate while recounting the history of the Grand Place, detailing the architecture of the 11th century UNESCO buildings, the thriving noble families, the merchant groups that traded there

(among them the Haberdashery's, Boatman, Arrow makers, Coppersmiths, bread makers, the beer makers,) the newcomers who promised to be non-political in exchange for residency and the horrific ruling of Leopold II 's atrocities and mutilations of the Congolese people for rubber harvesting.



The tour wouldn't have been complete with witnessing the infamous Manneken Pis, the landmark bronze fountain sculpture, and sister statue Jeanneke Pis, who squats a few blocks, nooks and crannies from where we enjoyed a light lunch in the elegant outdoor dining garden of the Hotel Dominican.

After lunch, we retrace our steps to the hotel, gather our luggage and walk < 500m to catch the afternoon train to Oostende. We arrive at

5:26pm and like magic, are greeted by our Belgium hosts and are whisked off to a welcome dinner at Marie Paul's home. The hosts have prepared an ample pot luck meal, offering a plethora of Belgium beer (cherry beer was a hit)



Party adjourns by 830pm – everyone is off to their host's home for a good sleep.

Day 10 – May 20th – Bruges

Nancy McLaughlin

We were gifted with a beautiful sunny day for our highly anticipated excursion to Bruges, led by expert guide and Belgian Coast club member Arlette Daenekynt. Our day began with a short 15-minute train ride from Ostend to Bruges – or Brugge as it is called in Flemish. Arriving in the Brugge train station, we discovered we could walk directly into the city. I forgot to turn on my GPS tracker that day, so have recreated approximately the route we walked.

A delightful shaded walk along the canal where the old city walls had been took us to the gunpowder tower, or “Poertoren” built in 1397, where we turned left to walk into the town along



the Minnewater. Our first stop was the Begijnhof, or Beguinage (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/begijnhof-beguinage>), a safe retreat for women only, children to 12, with an elected head woman. A Begijnhof can be found in most cities in Medieval Europe. This location was founded in 1245, and is a peaceful private gated enclave containing living quarters and the Begijnhof Church. Leaving the Begijnhof by its stunning entry gate, we viewed the weir and bridge, and heard the story of why there are swans in Brugge (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/the-story-of-the-bruges-swan-brugsch-swaentje-2>).

We now discovered how many families and visitors had decided to make an excursion to Bruges on this long weekend of Ascension. At every bridge, we could see line ups to board the many boat tours on the canals and river, and there were people everywhere -- the small city was chock full of tourists.!

We passed the Brouwerij De Halve Maan, in business since 1856, and part of the proud Belgian brewing tradition, to enter the fascinating Stooftstraat (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/stooftstraat>), location of several bathhouses in the 14th and 15th Century. Emerging from this narrow lane, we crossed directly into a narrow archway leading to a lovely garden, part of the adjoining St John Almshouses (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/godshuizen-almshouses-2>).

Crossing the bridge to Mariastraat, we paused to view the St. John's Hospital buildings, founded in the mid 12th Century, and expanded twice, continuing in use until 1970 (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/sint-janshospitaal-saint-johns-hospital>). Next, we turned into a lovely leafy square, and entered the Church of our Holy Lady, now a Museum of Brugge, (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/onze-lieve-vrouwewerk-museum-of-the-church-of-our-lady>) with many beautiful renaissance paintings in addition to the splendid architecture. Here we were free to wander for a while.

Exiting the museum, we passed by the Gruuthuse Museum, a former brewery (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/gruuthusemuseum>), on our way to the jewel of Bruges, the Burg square (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/burg>), where we found the Basilica of the Sacred Blood (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/gruuthusemuseum>), the 14th Century Gothic town hall, and the city archives building. Many religious statues were destroyed during the French revolution.



From the marvelous Burg square, we moved to the Market Square with its 14th Century bell tower (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/markt>), where we admired the many beautiful buildings surrounding this large imposing square.

After taking time to admire – and lots of photos! -- we adjourned to a nearby restaurant for a typical Belgian lunch. Free time in the afternoon allowed us to explore – Kate, Debi and I returned to Stooftstraat, where Kate had seen earrings she coveted in a window (yes, she bought them!), then stopped by Saint Saviour's Cathedral (<https://www.visitbruges.be/en/sint-salvatorskathedraal-saint-saviours-cathedral>) on our way back to the meeting point, where we lucky enough to hear the organ playing.

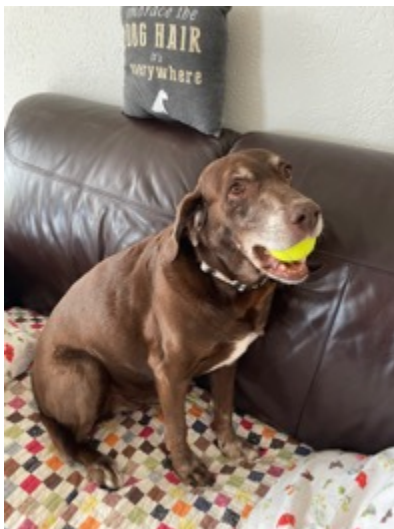
A wonderful day of exploring a beautiful old city, well informed by our knowledgeable friend and guide, Arlette. Thank you, Arlette, for sharing your passion and love for your history, and for your patience with us.

Day 11 – May 21st - Free Day with Hosts in Bredene

Brenda & Glen Kane

How nice to get up late, and have a lazy shower before setting off today! We had a light breakfast and played fetch with Gracie, our hosts' lovely old brown Labrador. We are using Gracie's bed so felt it was important to keep her happy since she wasn't allowed in her bedroom while we were there. Then it was off to tour the local Bredene museum that our host Roger volunteers with. It had a great collection of historical items as well as a bar that served wine and beer. So, we enjoyed wandering through the rooms with our refreshments. The museum was a very nice little place with lots of interesting Roman and Gallic

coins, early farming tools, samples of Belgian lace etc. We watched a very interesting table game that used a spinning top to knock down wooden spindles. It was very competitive game with everyone in the room cheering on the player, and they kept track of how many spindles were knocked down in a book.



Our hosts, Flo and Roger, own an English Vauxhall so the steering wheel is on the wrong side, but Flo did a fine job of driving in spite of that.





Lunch was at the Harbour Restaurant (not near the Harbour) where we treated our hosts to two huge platters of fish and shrimp dishes. The sauces were very tasty and we thoroughly enjoyed our meal and the company of several other ambassadors and their hosts.

The day ended with a walk from our beach house to the beach after a short nap. We enjoyed the bird songs and the dunes and the waves rolling in. Jellyfish were everywhere on the wet sand.

Day 12 – May 22nd – Afternoon and Evening trip to Ypres

Lillian Tetreau

Our hosts and volunteers graciously drove us to Ypres and surrounding WW1 sites. After meeting at the Flanders Fields Museum, we visited Essex Farm, a WW1 cemetery and the John McCrae memorial where he wrote his tribute to fallen comrades. At the Brooding Soldier monument and at each stop, professional guide Martial, related tales of loss and heroism which brought the stories to life.



We could fully appreciate the imminent danger of German attacks just across a narrow canal as McCrae treated the wounded in a hillside bunker.

Tynecot cemetery (the largest in the Commonwealth) was a beautiful, well-maintained and impressive reminder of so many lives sacrificed for our freedom. Hill 60 was shrouded in mist – a somber reminder of the scarce cover and colossal losses to gain this advantage.



After a delicious dinner of “chicken a la king” or “volvant” in French, we watched the “Last Post” – a solemn conclusion to an exceptional day. Special thanks to expert guide, Martial, and to Elizabeth, who navigated all the detours and kindly drove Valerie and I back to Oostende.

(Editor’s note: Today was very cold, but also was amazing and very moving! So much to see and learn about the First World War and Canada’s part in it.)

Day 13 – May 23rd – Day Trip to Ghent

Brenda & Glen Kane

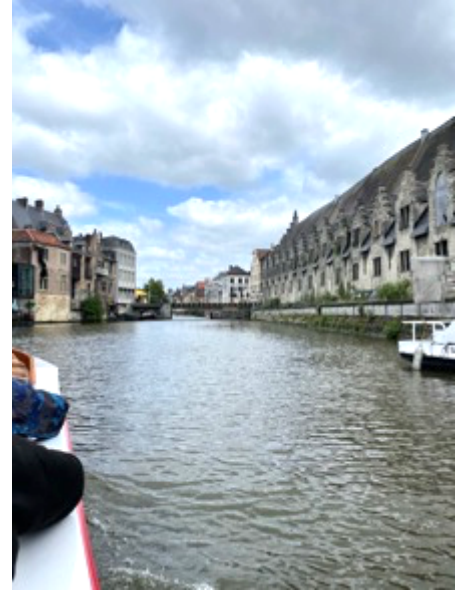
Today began as another grey, cold, windy day but warmed up in the afternoon. We walked to the tram with our host, and then took the train from Oostende to Ghent. Our guide was very knowledgeable, and shared many stories about the history of Ghent. It was first established with an abbey around 630AD, and has many historic buildings. We had an interesting morning touring the central area and visited St. Bavo’s Cathedral to see the painting, “The Mystic Lamb” by Hubert and Jan Van Eck. It was almost destroyed by fire from rioting Calvinists, stolen by Napoleon, hidden from looters in the WW1, stolen

repeatedly during the Second World War, before being rescued by a team of double-agents. The fact that it was the artwork the Nazis were most desperate to steal – Göring wanted it for his collection, and Hitler wanted it as the centre piece of his super-museum, has only increased its fame. It was a beautiful piece of art.



Lunch was an excellent Flemish beef stew or Stoofvlees.

Ghent is at the confluence of two rivers, the Lys and the Scheldt. We had a relaxing canal ride in the afternoon with many more historic buildings along the way, including a castle. Following this, we went shopping and Glen found a nice warm sweatshirt that said “New Zealand is great”. No Belgian sweatshirts unfortunately. We had enjoyed excellent salted caramel ice cream cones from an Australian ice cream shop in Brugges but couldn’t find any as good in Ghent.



We took the tram back to the Ghent station to get the train back to Oostende, and arrived on platform 12. We were then moved to platform 9 and finally platform 4 before finally getting our train to Oostende about an hour late. We were kept amused in the waiting room by a noisy door that screeched as each new person entered – a sound right out of horror film. We were a very tired

group as we arrived back in Bredene at 9:30pm.

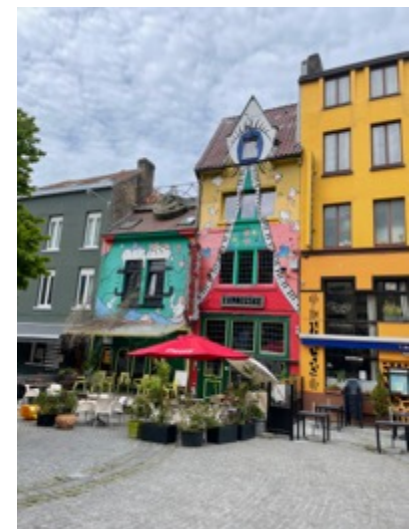
Day 14 – May 24th – Guided Visit to Oostende

Brenda & Glen Kane

Finally, we woke up to sunshine, and enjoyed reading in the garden until noon. Then Flo, our host, drove us to the free ferry to Oostende, where we were to meet the rest



of the group at 2pm. But no one was there! Apparently, they had decided to go over to Oostende earlier, but missed mentioning it to Flo. So, Glen and I took the ferry over and eventually found our group at a church built by Leopold 2nd. We enjoyed the afternoon tour and ice cream before heading back over on the ferry.



We had a nice evening chatting with our hosts over a glass of wine, and then walked the two Labradors with Roger. Bredene



has many attractive green spaces and lots of good dog walks. We were surprised to see wild deer on our evening walk.

Day 15 – May 25th – Visit to De Haan and Farewell Party

Debbie Kretz

Our last day with our new Belgian friends began with an optional tour of a beach neighbourhood in De Haan. Our guide was Arlette who started the tour at the old train station, Coq

Sur Mer. Originally, the houses were likely family vacation homes that weren't winterized. The owners were allowed a 99-year lease of the land. Unfortunately, as the 99-year leases came to a close, the owners attempted to sell. Since there was a sudden glut on the market, the homes weren't selling well in spite of reduced prices. In the late 19th century, 4 new large demo homes were presented to boost sales and the area took off.

There were rules to follow in the new builds. The land contours had to remain as is, so many sites had dunes to build around. Steep sloped roofs, home styles and natural landscaping, hedges not fences, were a few of the guidelines.

Many of the large residences are now boutique hotels or holiday rentals. For example:

- The Bell Tower...hotel in Norman Cottage Style
- Chanticleer....hotel name means rooster call
- A Belvedere is a widow's walk on the rooftop
- The Joli Bois... hotel built in 1929, art deco style, using pseudo wood looking beams
- Savoyarde... Einstein's house... a rental where he stayed less than a year
-

Nowadays, every August the locals hold a festival by the train station to celebrate the 1920s when this neighbourhood was booming.

At noon, we all headed to the farewell party at Palmyre and Johan's country house. The scenery was beautiful. The chef who catered the meal was amazing. Not only was the food delicious, but he managed the meal virtually alone. Soup, salad (smoked salmon, duck and trout), a main dish of Moroccan chicken and 3 desserts -all FABULOUS. Drinks were flowing freely. Goodbyes followed the meal and we were all off to various destinations.



Recipes from the trip:

Old fashioned Veal Stew (Blanquette de Veau)

Lynda Toffelmire

Preparation: 10 minutes Cooking: 1 hour 30 minutes

Ingredients (for 6 people):

1.250 kg of breast or shoulder in pieces
2 glasses of dry white wine
2 carrots, 2 medium onions, 1 bouquet garni
60 g butter
3 tablespoons of flour
180 g of Button mushrooms
1 egg yolk
lemon juice
3 tablespoons of fresh cream
salt, pepper.



In a saucepan, heat 2 liters of water and the white wine; salt, pepper, add the carrots, the onions cut into large rings, the bouquet garni. Bring to a boil and maintain for 15 minutes. Then add the pieces of meat, cover the pan and cook for 30 minutes over low heat, skimming once or twice. Drain the meat. In a sauté pan, melt 40 grams of butter, add the flour, brown it slightly and add the cooking broth little by little; add the pieces of meat, which must be well immersed in the sauce. Simmer over low heat for 45 minutes. After 35 minutes of cooking, add the washed mushrooms, cut into pieces and browned in the remaining butter. Bind the sauce with the egg yolk dissolved in the cream and the lemon juice. Arrange the blanquette in a hot deep dish and accompany it with Creole rice. Serve with a dry white wine.

Meat pie from Munster Valley (Thanks to Jacqueline Beck)

Brenda Kane

Ingredients (for 6 – 8 people)

L kg minced meat – ½ pork and ½ veal
2 whole eggs
1 cup bread soaked in milk
1 large onion, chopped finely
Salt, pepper, nutmeg and chopped parsley
750 g puff pastry
1 tablespoon brandy

Mix the onion, soaked and drained bread, 1 egg, seasonings and minced meat together with 1 tbsp brandy. Cover a tourtiere (large pie plate) with puff pastry by making it overflow from the dish. Fill the lined tourtiere with the meat mixture. Cover with a layer of puff pastry and crimp edges together. Paint with egg yolk, prick pastry with fork.

Bake at 200 for one hour.
Enjoy with a green salad.

Vegetable Crumble with Parmesan Cheese (Thanks to Jacqueline Beck)

Brenda Kane

For the Crumble topping:

60 g of grated parmesan
Thyme
50 g salted butter
80g flour

Mix everything to form a “crumble”.

For the vegetables:

100g onions, chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
Thyme, salt & pepper
200g carrots peeled and chopped
300g zucchini peeled and chopped
150g fresh peas

Saute onions, carrots and zucchini in olive oil, adding salt and pepper and a little water. Let simmer until soft. Add peas and cook 5 min. Drain and put in dish. Sprinkle with topping and bake in oven for 20 min at 370C.

Serve with meat dish.

