

# ***MEMBERS TRAVELS***

*By Colleen Clark*

Our winter holiday this year was spent partly in Spain and Portugal which was just wonderful. We thoroughly enjoyed the culture, food and scenery not to mention the wine, port and the very tasty Gins, all these helped make the holiday memorable.

As wonderful as those three weeks were, the absolute highlight was our National Geographic with G Adventures Tour. This was an eight-day Paris and Normandy trip chosen to give Roger something I thought he would enjoy. Much to my amazement this time became the highlight of the holiday, it is still very much in our thoughts when mention of our time away comes up.

The first two days were spent reacquainting ourselves with Paris before meeting our small group tour, comprising of 14 Americans and two Kiwis from the other side of the world.

The Tour set off, stopping at Giverny to visit Monet's house and Garden, a delightful visit especially the lake with the waterlilies, a scene from so many of his paintings. Apart from walking in his hallowed footsteps, as for the garden being called one of the top gardens of the world by the National Geographic I found it slightly underwhelming. This could be purely taste as I am not a great fan of cottage gardens.

Honfleur was the next stop, a stunning colorful small town sitting on an estuary where the River Seine meets the English Channel. Considered to be one of the prettiest port towns in France it didn't disappoint and we enjoyed our free time there. Lunch was not too bad either and by now we had definitely got a taste for French wine. Actually, more correctly I had and I thought I had better clarify this in case Roger reads this.



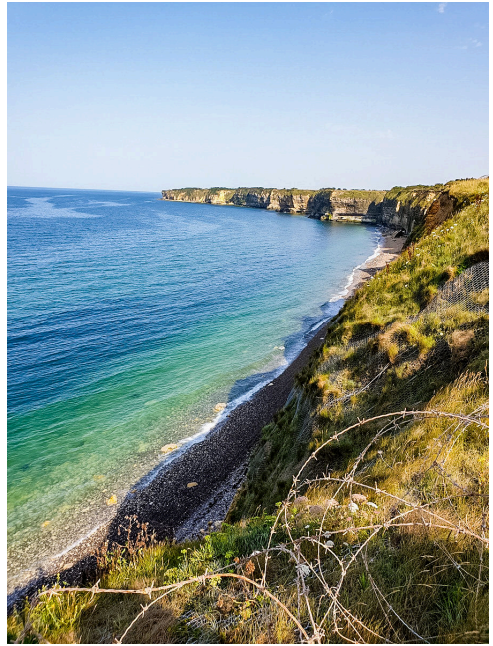
Bayeux was our stop for three nights and we radiated out in different directions in the beautiful Normandy countryside.

One day was spent visiting Mont St Michel a UNESCO site and is considered one of the most imposing sites in Europe. The origins of this go back to the 6th century and the visit was fascinating only spoiled by the vast number of tourists. We dreamt of a private tour, yeah right!

A visit to the Bayeux Tapestry was unforgettable, a 230-foot tapestry depicting over 50 scenes telling the story of the Battle of Hastings and the conquest of England by William Duke of Normandy. This was embroidered by Monks in the South of England 1066. It has had a chequered history and was even once cut into small panels.

The next day we were immersed in WW11 history. We visited a private museum out in the countryside and listened enthralled to the owner who was a local accredited expert. He had a full time mechanic and some of the vehicles were restored and in working order. The building was full of memorabilia and after spending time there we piled in a old army GMC, heaving ourselves up with a rope a similar action to Tarzan. Off we cruised down country lanes to visit a local cemetery, fallen soldiers buried where they died. In a corner of this was an area of German graves, as the Red Cross treated both Allies and Germans.





I was fascinated to be told that local families adopted a grave and even now the 3rd generation are still tending it. It was a sobering visit and as usual in these places my nose ran and eyes leaked and I was very glad to move on.



The afternoon was spent visiting scenes of the D-Day landing which had a pivotal role in the history of the war. This historical area is considered an open-air museum and we viewed different sites, memorials, old army bunkers and war relics.

The stories would take hours to tell, suffice to say we came home with memories we will never forget and are so very grateful to have had the opportunity to visit a place that has played such a vital part in the life we lead today.

*Colleen*