

Provence

September 2015



Provence is legendary for its lifestyle. I didn't know it included bullfighting. This is at Arles.



The Riviera coast is, of course, gorgeous.



But we spent most of our time cruising backroads and quiet villages. That's the advantage of having your own wheels.





One of the toughest jobs in France is driving truck.



We learned that “scenic routes” meant this. Scenic for the passenger. Actually, driving without a GPS in Europe – we called ours Madame Q – is impossible.



How I did it with no problems in '73 with one of these (though a “van”) I’ll never know. And with right hand drive. But I guess the population and roads have doubled.



The roads are really made for horse and carts. There's still a few around.





France – not just Provence – is all about good living. But this is the heart of it.







The imported low and medium priced Frog wine in Canada is all sharp – acidic. Here, even a \$3 bottle is excellent. I learned that they export their crap to us! Same with Spic wine when we were there. I fell in love with it in Spain in '73 – but the stuff in Canada is, well, not good. I wondered if I was wrong about my tastes...? Then we returned and the wine was just wonderful. They export their crap too. (The shot is at a grocery store, and just one wine area. It's everywhere in their large stores.)





You see Frogs hopping their dogs everywhere. I've never seen a people with so many pet dogs. And nice, friendly little dogs, not Dobermans or pitbulls. Dogs always describe their owners.



But they are a poor people. You see them having to use bikes, everywhere. And dressed funny doing it. Even poorer ones have to run. You see them running everywhere. (Well, hopping actually.)



On my 69th birthday we hit St. Tropez. That's a propitious number but we won't go there.



It's still synonymous with BB. Her pictures are everywhere. She's gone to the dogs too. She owns herds of them.









Great walking town. It's not that big.







It's still a big money small town, of course. Besides the zillion dollar yachts.



We beached out across the bay from St. Tropez. Did some beachcombing.



Did my imitation of McCartney on the Abbey Road cover, but going the wrong way.



The next day we cruised down the coast to Cannes.



Unfortunately, campervans are verboten for parking. I drove by the Carlton in '73 without being able to stop because of the lack of money. Now it's because our vehicle is too damned big.



There's all kinds of magnificent hotels along the promenade, and Gucci and all of that. Friends in the movie biz hit the town every year for the film fest and tell me about it...and we can't stop....



We tried to find parking. But fergit it. They don't want riffraff like campers uglifying the town.
This is a block off the promenade.



So we cruised down the road to Nice.



Nice is nice but Cannes is Cannes. Again, campervan are verboten.



Monaco was worse. I remember the nightmare of narrow streets and traffic getting down to the casino in '73 in that tiny Morris.



Just the approaches to Monaco were like this. Not for the first time we opted for getting out of Dodge.



Not a problem. This is a country trip and we just headed back into provincial Provence. Next time we'll do a Med cruise to hit the coastal cities and another time Eurail passes to do the interior cities, most of which we've done a few times anyway. Here we parked by a gorge, a choke point, with medieval battlements and remnants of an ancient bridge.



It also turned out also to have an ancient road cut into the rock – note the rockwork support on the extreme right, then the switchback upward to the left – leading to a grotto for a beautiful morning bath. And the ancient road itself continued on. Did I want to follow that!



We ate like kings on Frog food. A feast every night. I have a Japanese cook.



There's even flamingos in Provence. And on this end note....