

April 28, 1940

Dear People,

After five countem five riotous days traveling here we are back again in Paris, broke and happy. Paris & our apartment looked lovely to us as we came home, despite the fact that it's rainy and grey here now as ever. Whoever invented the phrase "Sunny France" must never have been anywhere in France save in Provence, or else have been feeling super-sarcastic when he said it. In Avignon the weather was lovely and rather warmish for us, but as soon as we left Provence clouds & rain descended, as they had been descending since last August.

We went down to Avignon on a crack train & got there in time to hunt up a good hotel. We got one for 17 francs a night, which is pretty darn good. Avignon is full of soldiers & aviation "types," & is old as old can be, with a large wall all around it and a flourishing castle on the hill. Streets are in the main just as they have been for centuries – about 8 or nine feet wide & cobbled.

Next day we hired bicycles & went to Château-neuf-du-Pape, 16 kilometers away. The land is, happily, flat & very Van Gogh-ish, so it was a nice ride. I fell down twice and emerged from the experience with as battered a fanny as has ever been seen, but it was all very fun. Château-neuf is the very center of the wine district, but while all around they grow "red," in Château-neuf they produce nectar. The most incredibly wonderful red wine! Château-neuf is a nice old town and spread on the side of the hill with a ruined tower on top, as usual. The whole town does nothing but attend to the needs of the grape, which is a fine thing. We had lunch in a restaurant called Chez la mère Germaine¹, where one Eats. First we had 18 hors d'heuvres in quantity, then three brimming bowls of meat pâtés-foie², duck, volailles³. Then a fine big truffle omelet, followed by half a roast chicken apiece, accompanied by a green salad. After that came approximately two bunches of asparagus. Then a crème au chocolat, with sauce, of which one ate as much as one wanted. Then five or six varieties of cheeses, then a basket of fruit & nuts, then strawberries. All this washed down with a bottle of Châteauneuf '28, & with half an hour's interval between courses.

We could just wiggle our little fingers afterwards, but what indescribable well-being! Ah me. We bicycled back, stopping on the way at one of the "caves" to see how they set the wine to

¹ **Chez La Mère Germaine:** Mother Germain's House. A restaurant-hotel at 3 Rue Commandant Lemaître, 84230 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France. Web: lameregermaine.fr

² **Pâtés-foie:** liver paste, usually made from goose-liver with herbs and spices, wine, and other admixtures.

³ **Volailles:** French 'poultry'

brewing, & to see if it tasted all right (free!). It did. The people in Provence are very nice & friendly & unsuspecting, thus forming a great contrast with Parisians.

Next day we went to Tarascon & Beaucaire⁴, which are 25 kilometres from Avignon. They are both walled towns, both with enormous ancient castles which meant business. Both can't have changed at all in the past two hundred years, except that they've moved the pigs away from the streets. Fascinating. Tarascon was the frontier town of the Kingdom of Provence, and Beaucaire, just across the Rhône, was the boundary of the lands of the Montmorencys, dukes of Languedoc. The two castles stare stonily at each other, & are full of holes to pour hot lead down. Richelieu "destroyed" the castle of Beaucaire, but it could stand a lot of destroying. We came back to Avignon & wrote postcards to you. We also went to a movie.

Next day we started out for Nîmes, but a high range of mountains intervenes (not on the map, but higher than the Himalayas) so we rode back to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, where the Romans built a church, the father of Saint Louis started the castle, & Philip the Fair built a high tower to overlook the Rhône. Very fun, and another fine feathered dinner.

That evening, we decided we wanted to go back by way of Haute-Savoie, & see the Alps. So the next day we took the train to Grenoble, went up on the téléphérique⁵ to the top of a mountain, & went on to Chambéry to spend the night. Next day we went to Annecy, in the middle of the Alps practically, & looked & looked, took a bus to a tiny town where all you have is view. Gorgeous. Snow covered. Then we went to Aix-les-Bains & took the train to Paris. Here we are.

I have expended so much effort telling you all this that I must stop. It looks as if Mary, Steve's girl-friend, is going to loan us her radio. She likes our apartment very much, & will thus have part-interest in it.

Love,

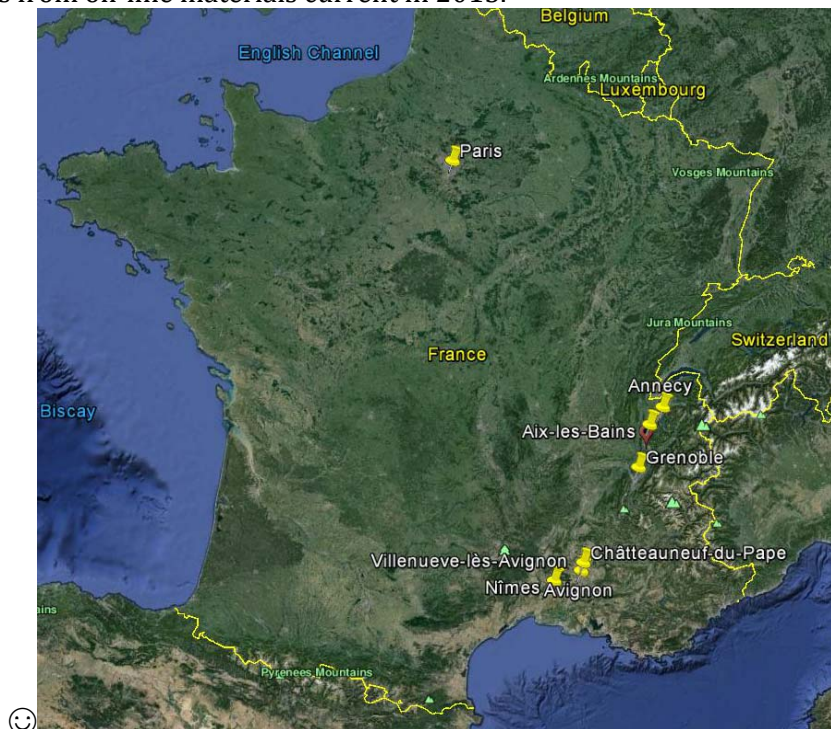
Me

⁴ **Beaucaire**: see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaucaire,_Gard

⁵ The Grenoble-Bastille cable car (French: **Téléphérique** de Grenoble Bastille)...is a cable car in the French city of Grenoble. It links the city center with the Bastille, a former fortress overlooking the city. The line was inaugurated on 29 September 1934. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenoble-Bastille_cable_car, accessed 2015-10-11)

Travel Supplement

Maps and photos from on-line materials current in 2015.



Map 1: France, with pins indicating places mentioned in this letter
(Google Earth)

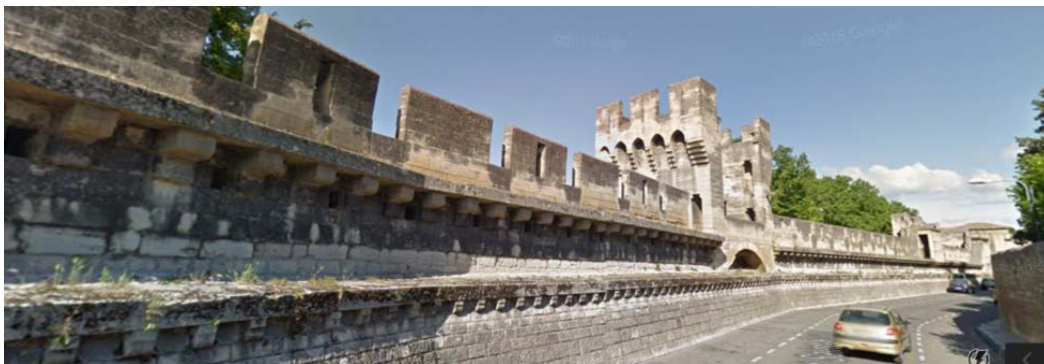


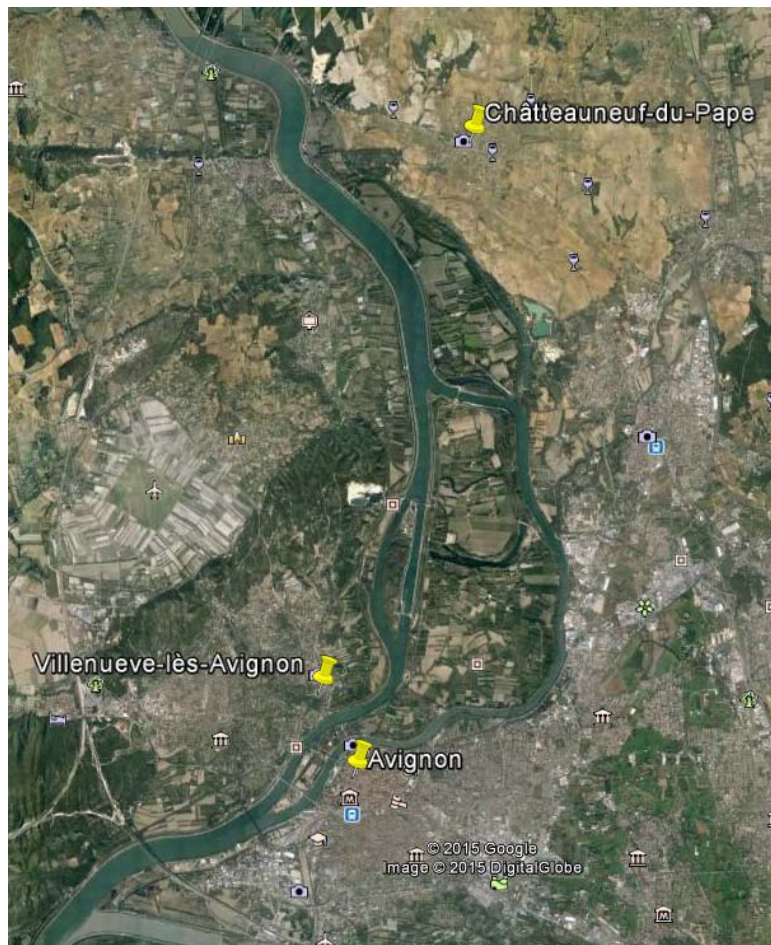
Photo 1: Ramparts of Avignon
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 2: River Rhône with Avignon's medieval bridge
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 3: Papal palace, Avignon
(photo by Rossier, Wikimedia Commons,)



Map 2: Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape area
(Google Earth)



Photo 4: Country road between Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 5: Châteauneuf-du-Pape (photo by Manon Vacluse)
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 5b: La Mère Germaine, 3 Rue Commandant Lemaître, 84230 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, France.
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 6: Bourq Saint-André, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon
(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)



Photo 7 Tarascon Castle on the Rhône River
(Wikimedia: Public Domain. Uploaded by Chamaeleon, 2005)

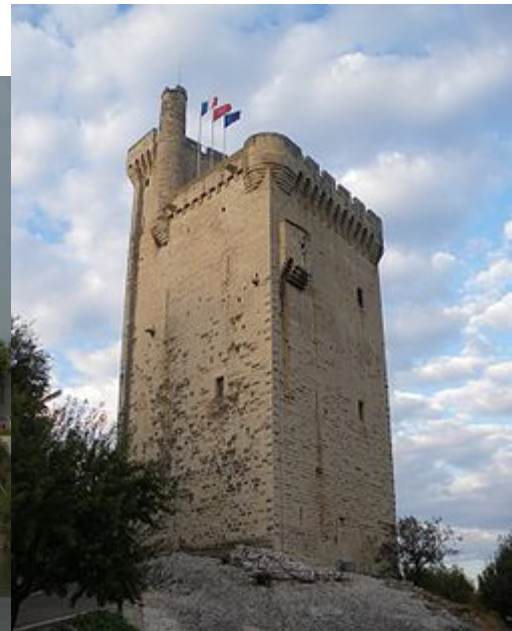


Photo 8: tower of Philip the Fair, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon
(photo by Véronique Pagnier)



Map 3: Alpine region
(Google Earth)



Photo 9: Grenoble
(part of photo by Stan Moi)



Photo 10: Téléphérique de Grenoble Bastille
(from a postcard; Wikimedia Commons)



Photo 11: Panoramic sight of Annecy and Lake Annecy
(Wikimedia Commons: licence CC BY-SA 3.0)



Photo 12: Lake Annecy
(photo Yves LC, Wikimedia)



Photo 13: Dent du Chat and Aix-les-Bains

(photo by Florian P epellin - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons)



Photo 14: French National Railway Station, Aix-les-Bains

(Google Streetview, accessed 2015-10-11)

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F-48

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