

MA VIE EN FRANCE



GOODBYE IOWA, SALUT FRANCE!

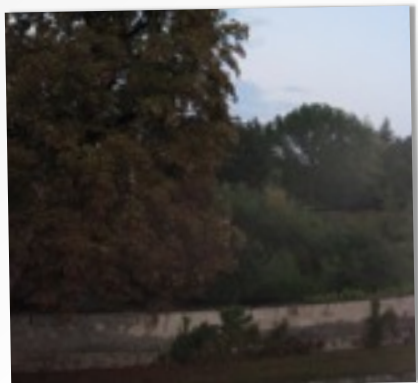
Left, first picture with host family;
Above, last picture with my dog, Fritz.

About This Newsletter

Bonjour! This newsletter has been made as an example of what future newsletters may be like if you choose to order one. Of course, my stories once I get to France will hopefully be much more interesting. This newsletter will be delivered monthly,

either an online version (which will be sent to your email) or a print version (which will be sent to your indicated address). Any donation of a \$25 or more will get you a monthly online newsletter, and any donation of \$30 or more will get a monthly newsletter

delivered directly to your house (the cost difference is to account for the cost of postage). I have created this newsletter as a means of fundraising that will hopefully give you, the donor, a more fun and involved role in my exchange.



ARRIVING, PG 2



CULTURE DIFFERENCES, PGS 4-5



EXPLORATION, PGS 6-7

«Most travel is best of all in the anticipation or the remembering; the reality has more to do with losing your luggage.» -Regina Nadelson

Air travel is certainly always interesting...

and my experience was certainly no different. I flew out on the morning of Tuesday, August 24. I woke up extremely early, having hardly slept, because of my excitement, only to see my dog cowering by my bed. In my house, this means only one thing: there was a thunderstorm. And indeed, it was lightening and thundering; the first day that we get rain or storms in weeks has to be on the day I'm set to depart. Luckily, all went well. While my original flight was delayed 1 hour, I got there early enough that they got me on a different flight that would be departing at a decent time. Then, later that day, there was an earthquake near the Washington Dulles airport, causing us further delays. By the time we got to the Dulles airport, I was paged specially on the plane and directed where to go, and I all but ran to my next plane... only to find out that they were also boarding late. So a lot of things that could have gone well, but I managed to luck out on. While sleeping on the plane was not particularly comfortable, that was my worst problem, so it was a great flight over all.

I'M IN FRANCE

I walked off the plane and people were speaking French! While I was at the airport, I said, «Hello,» «Thank You,» and «Excuse me» quite a bit (and I even worked up to asking someone if the newspapers at a stand were free (which they were: I love France already)



Meeting the Aufrands!

Like every exchange student, I was a bit nervous for my first meeting with my host family, but all of the worrying was for nothing. They are extremely nice, funny, and caring. I felt bad that I got out about 1-1 1/2 hours later than I originally thought because of my problems with the lost luggage, and there was no way for me to go out and tell them (once you go out, you can't come back in, for security reasons). But when I did finally get out, they were so nice! I had my first «bisous,» which are the two kisses that you give on the cheeks when you greet someone/ leave (and yes, they really still do this!), and I was also greeted by the coordinator of youth exchange in

the area, my Rotary Counselor here, and a few other people. It was very nice, and I was so happy that I could understand them reasonably well. They bought me a fish sandwich (different than here; the bread was quite long (looked similar to a baguette) and it had fish, some type of sauce, eggs, and some other things in it, and I also got water and a chocolate éclair (my first French dessert; the result: I think I'm going to gain some weight this year). But the ride home was very nice, and the area is so beautiful. There are mountains everywhere, and it is simply gorgeous. I am so glad that I'm going to get to stay with them through Christmas (I think).

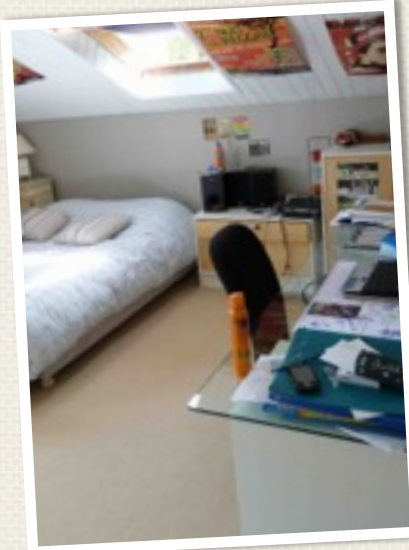
My House

I'm starting to learn my way around this house well, and they have all been very kind with helping me out. Within the first few days, I completely unpacked my suitcase and put everything away, and it's nice to have a room now. I really like the house; it feels very homey, but it also has a lot of really beautiful artwork and things of that nature. It's a little funny because they never use their front door unless someone comes to it. They leave from the back door or from the «garage door» (the house is on the hill, so there's a door that is on the bottom level and what they call a garage, but it's quite different from what we call a garage).

«LA CUISINE EST LE COEUR DE LA MAISON.» FRENCH PROVERB.

Home Quirks

There are several things that are different here. For one, there windows don't have screens, and they open out, not up (you pull them open, you don't push them up to open them). So yes, there are some bugs in here (but not bad at all, even though they often just leave their door wide open). They have this special beg repellent that you put into a little device that you can plug in when you go to bed, and then it drives away the mosquitos (I didn't realize this the first night, and I got 3 bites, so I'm glad they taught me). The other quirky thing that I learned quickly is where the ceiling slants. In the bathroom, right next to the garbage can, the ceiling slants, and I hit my head on it once, and that was enough to team me that lesson.



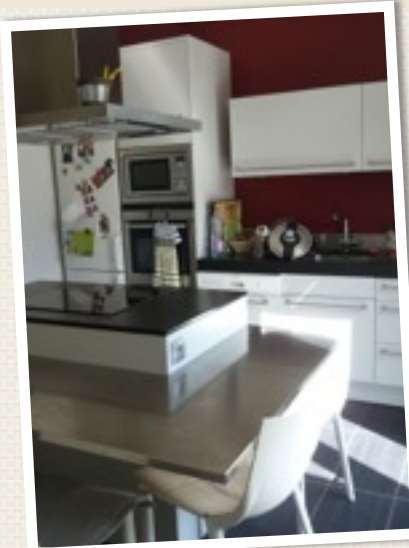
MY ROOM

My room is quite beautiful. It has one of the wonderfully European slanted roofs, and Léa (my exchange sister in Waverly) has several posters and other decorations that are really cool. I don't usually spend too much time in here awake, but it's a nice room for going to in between activities.



MY BACKYARD

This yard is so gorgeous. The stairs that you see lead up to a pool (which I've been in once, but it was quite chilly outside (only about 65°F) and the water was about 75°F, but it was still very fun. And the castle that you see is just beyond their yard, and it's now a school for young children. We always eat outside, so I get to enjoy this view everyday.



MY KITCHEN

In english, the quote to the left says «The kitchen is the heart of the house.» This proverb is one that I really do find quite true here. French people are well known for having delicious cuisine, and I haven't been let down, but it does take some effort to make the food, and between eating and preparing food, you spend a lot of time in the kitchen.

«Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.» - Jawaharal Nehru

While I've been here, I've seen quite a bit that is very similar, but also quite a bit that is different. These are just some initial impressions and listings of things that are different here.

1. Greetings Many people are already familiar with the French greeting of kissing each other on the cheek, once on either side. This is called the «bisous,» and they really do it! Sometimes, males will just shake each other's hands, but it's not uncommon for two men, two women, or a man and a woman to kiss for a greeting. (And I have yet to see people hugging

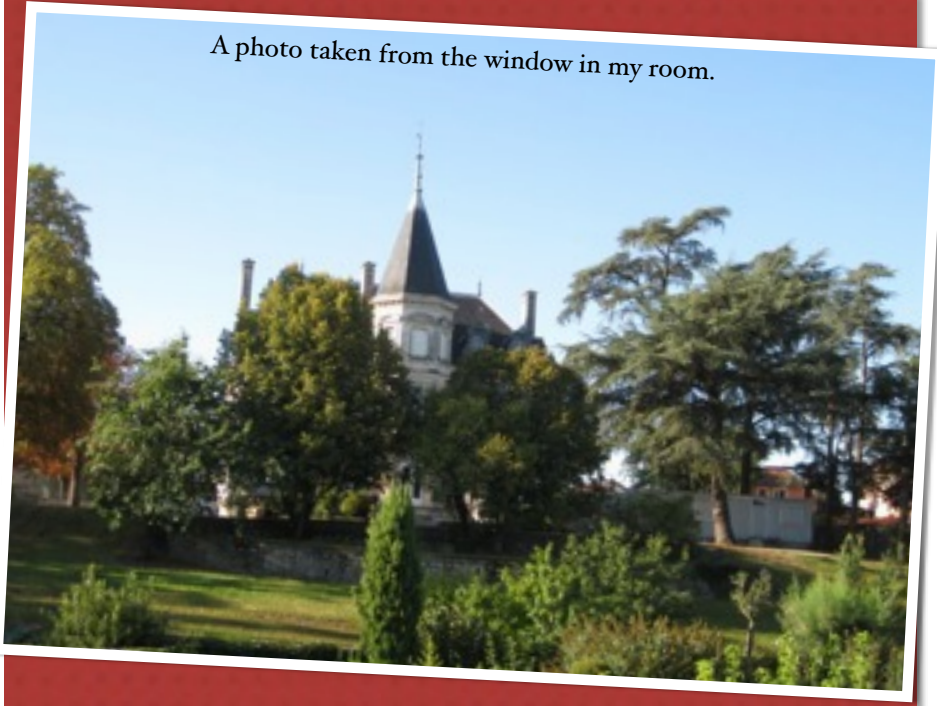
here.) Luckily, it's not awkward at all (unless, I suppose, you make it awkward). It's a really nice way to greet people, and I find that it actually makes me feel more comfortable talking with the person.

2. Houses Houses here are quite different than houses in Iowa, mainly (I think) because they are older. You don't see the siding that you see in America at all, it's all stucco or brick or stone or something similar.

3. Roads Roads here are way smaller than ones in the United States; I have been on a bunch of roads that wouldn't fit two regularly sized US cars on it's width it at the same time. And it's quite common place to just walk in the middle of the road and not necessarily on the sidewalks, because there are more people walking than there are people driving.

I'M SOMETIMES
SURPRISED, BUT NEVER
HAVE I BEEN
DISAPPOINTED, BY THE
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE
US AND FRANCE

A photo taken from the window in my room.



DIFFERENCES



HOUSES



WINDOWS (ON THE
CEILING)



ROADS



TRAFFIC CIRCLES

French people (and Europeans in general) tend to be much healthier than Americans, and now I can see why....

...

4. Travel The first time I was walking with someone and they just walked into the road without really looking in both directions, I was slightly horrified. I was also worried the first time I was on a road where two cars can not go by at the same time. However, I've come to realize that both of these things are possible in France, because the problems associated with them aren't ones that arise very often. A lot of people walk here; in fact, so many people walk that a lot of the time, you just walk in the middle of the road!

5. Food Food here is very different than in the United States, or at least quite different from any food that I have eaten. The first thing that is different is the time of day when they eat. They have breakfast shortly after waking up, so that part is the same. Lunch, however, isn't until 1 PM at the earliest, usually 2 PM. And dinner

is at 8 or 9 (the latest I've experienced has been 9:30) at night, which is very different. At first, when I heard how long they go without eating (because they really don't snack here), I was worried that I would be starving, but I've come to realize that the way they eat at their meals means that it's not hard to go that long without eating; not because

they eat too much, but because they have legitimate meals for lunch and dinner. They have sliced bread with everything, they have at least one vegetable dish, and then usually some meat (but the meat isn't just a large piece of steak or something; they have smaller portions but I think that the food is better).

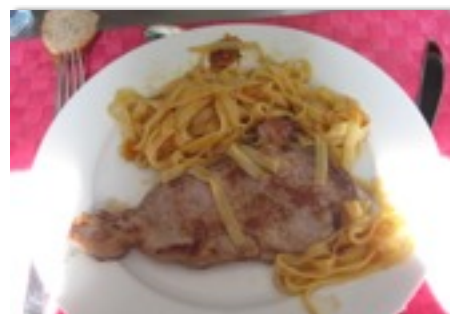
FOOD IN FRANCE: WHAT MIGHT A MEAL LOOK LIKE?



For breakfast, I usually have tea, fresh bread with honey, plain yogurt with jam, and some sort of fruit (lately it has been peaches, because that is what we got at the market this week). The French tend to have light breakfasts.



Lunch here tends to be a much grander affair than in America. Here, you might cook your main meal, and a lot of people come home from work. You usually have a meat, vegetable, bread (always bread with every meal), and then a tart and/or cheese for dessert.



My first several days, we also always cooked something new for dinner (but they have a nice way of combining left-overs with a new dish; they don't waste any food). However, I think that was mainly to greet me, and now they generally have leftovers for dinner, perhaps with some fresh meat or a salad.

AROUND TOWN



This is a picture of the River Vivezy, which runs through the center of town. I found this when I was walking home with some new friends (you walk everywhere here), and it was too gorgeous to pass up a picture.

This is just a picture of a fairly typical road in my town of Montbrison. The sidewalks are small (a lot of people walk on the road) and in brick, there are a lot of plants, and the buildings are gorgeous.



QUICK FACTS



City: Saint-Étienne-le-Molard

Construction: 13th through 15th centuries

Owned By: The Bastie Family

Style and Period: Italian Renaissance

Interesting Facts: The house was modified by Claude d'Urfé in the 1500s to resemble Italian houses (he had worked as a Ambassador in Rome)

The first French novel that was widely distributed in Europe was written here, called *L'Astrée*, by Claude's grandson in 1607. The book is over 5,000 pages long.

There is a sphinx at the entrance that serves as the guardian of the castle.



Le Château de la Bâtie d'Urfé



This beautiful castle consists of several different buildings and an extensive «French Garden» to the left (you can just see some of the small, triangular trees and the surrounding wall).

Since its creation, it has undergone many renovations. It was originally constructed as a fortress (the ramp that you can see towards the middle of the picture on the right is very steep, and was originally a horse ramp). There were moats surrounding it and a wall (which you can see a small amount of on the far right, but these are reconstructed walls), but it was redecorated by Claude d'Urfé in the 16th century. In the 1700s, a different family bought it, and then later in 1909, a local Historical Society bought it and began restoring the castle. Today, the castle still features an «artificial cave,» where small rocks and other parts of a cave were brought in to create beautiful artwork, the gardens, a chapel, and much more.



This young boy was on the same tour as me, and he was very interested in the history of the place, so much that he crawled until this *autel* (alter in English) behind the tour guide. They do always say that hands-on-learning is the best kind.

Other Explorations

HERE ARE SOME OTHER PLACES THAT I HAVE GONE AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPLORE A LITTLE BIT IN MY SHORT TIME HERE.

The Market

The market was a very fun thing for me to go to. In Iowa, I have never been to very many Farmer's markets. I've been to a few, and I suppose that this was fairly similar to the Cedar Rapids Farmer's Market (sorry if you don't live in Cedar Rapids and have never been to this). It was very busy, and it covered several streets. You could buy fresh cheese, bread, vegetables (there were several vegetables that I had never even seen before!), fruits, etc. You could also buy flowers, hand-made soaps, clothing, accessories, shoes, etc. It was very neat, and they have the market most Saturday mornings (until it gets too cold outside).

The Nearby Mountains

Montbrison is located in the Rhône-Alpes Region, so I suppose it isn't surprising that there are mountains everywhere. One day, I went running in the mountains with my host mom. I discovered several things on this run: running in the mountains - with the hills and thinner air - is extremely difficult, and this country is absolutely gorgeous. We ran up to another little town called Ecotay. It was an extremely pretty town, with a beautiful river that went through the center and some beautiful buildings. At one point along the run, we stopped and picked berries on the side of the road.

A French Restaurant

I have gone to one French restaurant, with my host parents and my host mother's sister, brother, and sister-in-law. It was in St. Etienne, a city that is about half an hour away. The food was quite different from what you would have here. I had a special of the region (I'm afraid I don't remember the name), and it was pretty good. For dessert, we had fruit, but you could also chose tarts or cheese.



LE NOTRE DAME D'ESPÉRANCE

BEAUTIFUL GOTHIC CHURCH IN MY TOWN

MONTBRISON FRANCE

The Notre Dame d'Espérance is a beautiful an absolutely gorgeous church that is in the center of Montbrison. It took over two centuries to build this church (construction began in 1223 and ended in 1466). The church features beautiful *vitraux* (stain-glass windows, like the one above), a beautiful *l'orgue* (organ), eight chapels, paintings, and much more. There is also a memorial for all of the people from Montbrison who died during World War I.

During the Religious Wars in France (during the 1500s), Montbrison was captured by a Protestant group (July 15, 1562) and the Notre Dame was ransacked, and a lot of treasure was stolen. Later, during the French Revolution, the church was actually used as a place to keep soldiers.

I went to the Notre Dame one afternoon with my host mom, Françoise. We had very good timing, because we got there right in between two weddings. Therefore, when we went in, an organist was playing some

beautiful music, and we had a very neat atmosphere in which to look at the church. The only bad thing was that at the end, we were actually forced to leave pretty quickly because the wedding party was beginning to come in (and when we left, we saw that there was a horse and carriage waiting to take the bride and groom away). Next to all of the paintings and chapels, there are plaques telling you what each of them was originally for, the history of it, etc. My host mom was very good about helping me to understand what all of them meant. I learned several new words there (like *vitraux*, *chapelle*, *l'orgue*, *autel*). Unfortunately, I'm not sure how useful they actually are in every day conversation, but it was fun either way.





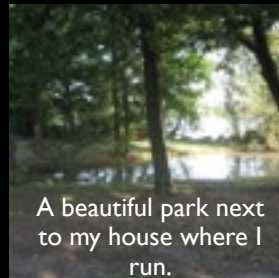
My first Castle Ever:
Le Château de la Bâtie d'Urfé



The Notre Dame d'Espérance



Last view of
Cedar Rapids



A beautiful park next
to my house where I
run.



A young boy at the
Château



River Vivezy, which runs through town.

Month in Recap

1. Leave Iowa, Arrive in France.
2. Lose baggage, get baggage.
3. Learn some French
4. Meet and get to really like my family.
5. Meet some new friends.
6. Visit my first castle ever.
7. Eat some good French food.
8. Try and read some French children's books here.
9. Study French.
10. Went running in the mountains and in a beautiful park.

Thank you to all of my donors for
your support.

Aimee Williams

Amy March

Ann Scherf

Anonymous

Carolann
Morykwas

Cheryl Niemeyer

Chris Lindell

David Kennedy

Davis and Eunice
Folkerts

Debbie Tyson

Denis and Denise
Deaver

Erin Wagner

George and Alyce
Werkema

James Hines

Janette Fiedler

Jay, Ann, and Quinn
Murphy

John and Marge
Cooke

Joy Oldfield

Keith Cook and
Sharon Kress

Kevin Deaver

Kimberly Buros -
Rotary Club of
Dubuque

Lisa Skilang

Lorna Richards

Marilyn Mark

Marion-East Cedar
Rapids Rotary
Club

Mary Supple

Michael Klappholz

Mike Wiethorn

Nancy Almasi

Patrick Soyer

Penny Olson

Reid Zehrbach

Rockwell City
Rotary Club

Scott Arensdorf

Scott McCain

Shawn Broman

Steve Stickney

Susan Smith

Tina Monroe

William Jacobson