

Client Adventure: Girls' trip to France and England!

Leslie Williams' best friend's 50th birthday was the perfect occasion for a celebratory girls' trip to France. Last September, Leslie, her best friend, and two other friends packed their suitcases for a ten-day overseas adventure.

The girls spent most of their vacation in Paris, France. They stayed in a small boutique hotel close to the Arc de Triomphe.

Leslie enjoyed discovering the city. She particularly liked the Haussmanian architecture, traditional gardens and shopping on the Champs Elysees. She was able to realize an old dream of placing her own lock on the Lover's Bridge (Pont des Arts). Lovers or friends write their initials on a padlock and lock it on the bridge's fence to symbolize their love or friendship. Then, the key is thrown in the Seine River to symbolize unbreakable love.



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Client Adventure: Carol Ede – Cruising in the Baltics!

Last June, Carol and her longtime friend, Kris, flew together to Copenhagen, Denmark. They spent the day at the Tivoli Gardens and enjoyed a nice dinner, before embarking on the Emerald Princess cruise ship to tour the Baltic Capitols. The boat took them to Oslo, Norway, Aarhus, Denmark, Helsinki, Finland, St. Petersburg, Russia, Tallinn, Estonia, Stockholm, Sweden and back to Copenhagen. Carol and Kris enjoyed the daily visits; they toured an old Viking ship, saw a glass worker creating art pieces, visited several islands in Helsinki and Stockholm, spent a day at a medieval castle and more.



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They took most of their meals at local bistros where the food was simple but delicious. Her blue hair drew a lot of attention, giving her the opportunity to meet many locals and chat over meals. She also noticed that in Paris, people don't need to leave their neighborhood to shop for necessities because boulangeries (bakeries), bistros and markets are in each neighborhood.

The girls took the Eurostar train from Paris to London (via the Chunnel) where they stayed one night before returning to France. They were able to discover the traditional English architecture, shop in famous English stores and enjoy restaurants on Regent Street. They also tried some London-based microbrews while conversing with new found friends.

Leslie's favorite part of the trip was a visit to champagne cellars in the Champagne region of France. She visited two famous cellars: Mumm and Moët & Chandon, where she learned how champagne was made. All the villages of the region grow grapes or make corks for champagne and wine bottles. Champagne is exclusively made with grapes from the Champagne region. Most champagne is a blend of three grapes: Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Bottles are aged in cellars where the temperature varies between 26°F and 34°F. Each bottle is slowly hand turned every day for thirty days before market. Dom Pérignon is still made the same way since its creation and is exclusively made with grapes from Dom Pierre Pérignon's place of birth. This luxurious champagne ages ten years before consumption. Leslie was surprised to learn that champagne becomes sweeter with age and never becomes stale.



Leslie's funniest memory of the trip happened while touring the Moët & Chandon cellar. The phrase "text your mother" was code for "take a picture of this good looking man". However, during the visit, her friend forgot to disable the flash and got caught by the tour guide while taking a picture of him.

Overall, Leslie found that French people are mostly trendsetters, they are not influenced by other countries' ways. She suggested "keep an open mind" if you are considering a similar trip - just "go with the flow". Also assume extra travel time if you plan to walk or take the metro (subway).

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Additionally, Leslie suggested converting Dollars to Euros in the United States, because during your trip, you won't always be close to a currency exchange office.

Leslie loved her girls trip and would like to go back to France to "tour more wineries" and "discover more of what that country has to offer".

Client Adventure: Carol Ede – Cruising in the Baltics!

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(Inside the Saint Isaac's Cathedral)

Her favorite moment of the trip was walking into St. Isaac Cathedral in St. Petersburg. Carol said it was breathtaking and beautiful. The walls were covered with gold leaf and paintings. "Pictures cannot reflect the beauty of it." On their way to the Cathedral, their bus had an accident with another car. The two drivers argued for hours in the middle of the street. The group left to St. Isaac Cathedral. When they returned, the bus and car were still in the middle of the street and the police were just leaving. It was a curious experience for the two friends.

Carol is intolerant to gluten. She was surprised that in every country visited, with the exception of Russia, the food was delicious and adapted to her condition. Russia did not offer excellent food. However, she enjoyed customary free vodka shots in every place she visited. (Carol is not vodka intolerant!)

There were a few things Carol found surprising during her trip. June is one of the rare months of nice weather in Russia. She saw many Brides and Grooms walking in St. Petersburg. The tour guide explained that because of the nice weather, people plan their weddings on every day of the week in June. The two friends witnessed another interesting event, this time while touring some islands in Helsinki: there were large stalks of firewood everywhere along the shores for White Night (Summer Solstice) which is the longest day of the year in Finland. Inhabitants were getting ready to light those giant bonfires and celebrate during the entire night. Unfortunately, the cruise ship was leaving for the next country that night, and the friends were unable to celebrate with the local people.

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Because she already had visited the majority of the Baltics in the 1960's with her family, Carol found it interesting to compare how some places changed and others stayed exactly the same as in her memories. She also visited some countries for the first time, such as Estonia. There, the group toured a medieval castle where people were dressed in medieval clothes, and ate a medieval lunch. Carol was surprised to see a real torture chamber.



(A church in Tallinn, Estonia)

Carol really enjoyed her vacation. She found that each country has its own architecture, history and traditions. She strongly recommended a Baltic Capitol cruise to anyone interested. However, if you have a disability, Carol recommends that you check the activity level to make sure you will be able to appreciate your visits. Also, when going on a cruise, Carol suggested arriving a day before your trip and staying a day after. This helps reduce stress, ease the jet lag, and allow time to explore the embarkation city.

PATHWAYS ANNOUNCEMENT

(In case you missed it...)

We are pleased to announce that Dustin Smith has recently purchased an ownership stake in Pathways. Dustin will serve as Vice-President of the corporation. David will continue as President. As described in the announcement email, this transaction is the latest step in an ongoing effort to create continuity and a consistent, sustainable service to all clients.

Our clients have long been of many generations. Now we are as well.

Thank you for your ongoing faith in us.

Pathways