

KUWL MAGAZINE

Woman & Lifestyle

LORI'S ADVENTURES



ODE TO
FRANCE

Paris, je t'aime

Issue 3

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Revisiting Memories & Childhood



PARIS 2024

PARIS
VILLE HÔTE

PARIS
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ODE TO FRANCE

Paris, je t'aime
I love Nice
Ti tengu cara, Corsu

I reconnected with my soul this Summer traveling through France, revisiting the memories, the joys, the tastes, and the scents.

Those three weeks were resourcing, invigorating, and profound. My teenage years were spent in a little village, La Colle Sur Loup, about 30 km from Nice. I went to school in Nice, first boarding school and then day school where I took the train to get to school, or at fourteen I was given a little 50mph moped and I used to ride to Nice when the weather permitted (which was often).

But wait let's start at the beginning.

So this trip was with my love, Selwyn, just the two of us....

We landed in Paris the day before the start of the Olympics 2024 and the opening ceremony is Friday night! *The Hideout Clothing* is dressing the Trinidad & Tobago Olympic contingent for the opening.

Everyone had warned us that Paris was going to be a nightmare with all the people there for the biggest sporting event in the world. Well, first shock, Paris est vide.... Paris was empty, no one, nada, restaurants where people line up to get a table, empty.... No cars in the streets, just really strange.



We stayed in a hotel for the first 2 nights, right in the heart of the city, near *Les Halles* and *The Hideout Clothing* store. As we walked around the streets, mostly populated by les gendarmes and the army, Paris felt different. The vibes were high energy yet the city was so quiet. We tried to get close to the Seine where the Opening Ceremony was to take place but the security was tight and without passes or tickets, we decided to watch on TV in the store with the team, especially as it started to rain and didn't stop for the whole show.

The Opening was very unique, as not in a stadium but spread out along the Seine, the river became the stage and the historic buildings along it, the decor and backdrops. Very avant-garde, French, and controversial, it sparked a lot of discussion but the French people were very proud of the concept and realization. We were very proud when the Trinidad and Tobago contingent showed up on their boat, in the sailor-inspired outfits, white with red trims.



Opening ceremony



With the TT athletes Jaden Marchan & Akilah Lewis

TT Olympic team opening ceremony kit

The next couple days were hectic with Sebastien having a number of interviews, athletes visiting the store and moving from the hotel to my friend Veronique's apartment in the 19th.

Fan zones were set up in the different districts with big screens, music and lots of people. The weather warmed up and the athletes, tourists and those few Parisians who had stayed in Paris were enjoying the weekend.



*Bas getting ready for interview Sportsmax
with Kerry G*

That first Sunday, we went to Chartres to have lunch with my sister, Ruth. We ate in a very nice restaurant opposite the Cathedral. This is a historic cathedral dating from 12th century and seen as an essential landmark in the history of medieval architecture. It has been under renovation for some time and the cleaning of the beautiful facade is almost complete. After walking around the cathedral and admiring the spectacular stained glass, we headed to Ruth's farm and played with her dogs and all the animals there before heading back to Paris by train.



Lori, Ruth & Selwyn having lunch in Chartres



he next few days in Paris were just beautiful, the weather was warm, and the empty streets, good food, and comfortable accommodations made for a great time.

Then the adventure started again, as we took the train from Paris Gare de Lyon to Nice, the train was packed with families going on vacation and it was very hot. There was free wifi which worked pretty well and I ended up watching an Asterix episode which I truly enjoyed.

We arrived in Nice, late in the evening around 8 pm, and were hungry so we found a small Thai restaurant near the station and grabbed a bite before we went off to look for the Airbnb.



Ruth & L Lori at Cathedral



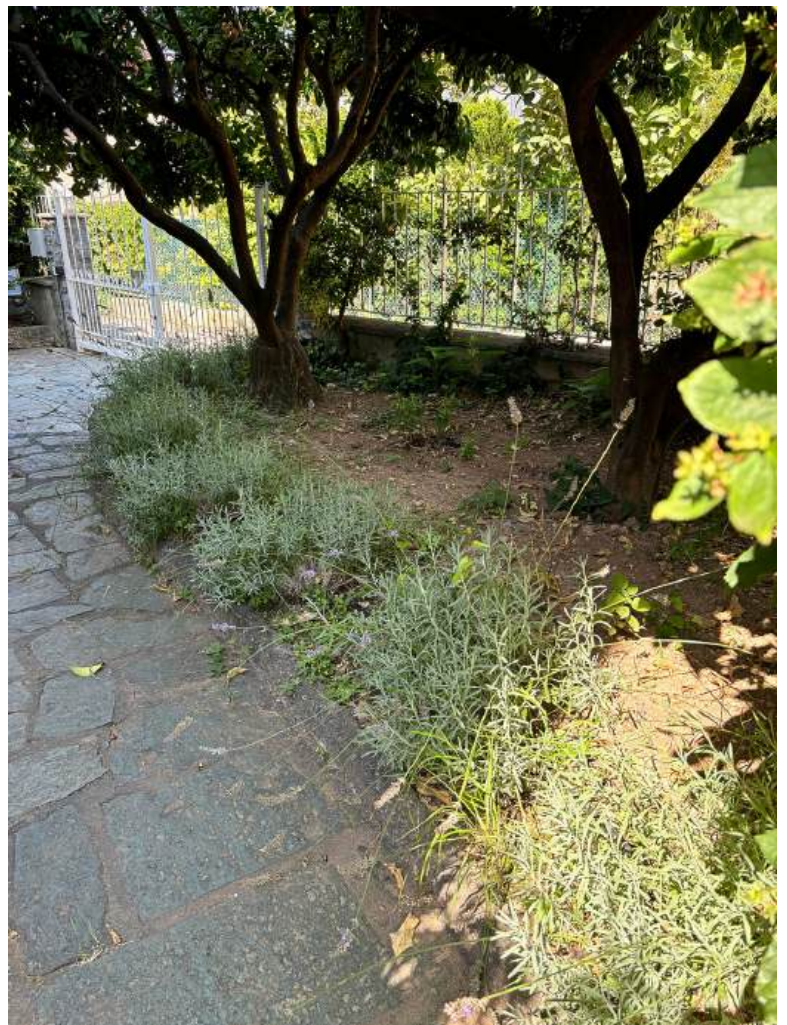
Nice airbnb garden with olive tree



o we stayed in Jean Michel & Helene's Airbnb, (which I thoroughly recommend).

He advised us not to rent a car as the parking would be a nightmare, so we took an Uber to the house, located in the upper Nice area of Mt. Boron very close to a lovely park which we could walk through to go down to the city. The rooms had AC which is a rarity in France and we truly appreciated that as the temperatures were ridiculously hot.

The Airbnb occupied the downstairs of a traditional provincial-type home, with thick walls, an olive tree in the garden, and the scents of rosemary and lavender permeating the night air. We felt very at home and got a good night's sleep.





The next couple of days in Nice were all done on foot, we explored the Vieux Nice, with its tight streets and colorful stores. We ate lots of pizza made in brick ovens. It had a thin crust and was very tasty. We also ate Soca, which is a chickpea paste rolled out into a sort of crepe. Salty, hot and yummy.

We met with one of the old friends of the family - Suzie for an aperitif on the Rue de France. All these locations, used to be my stomping grounds as a teenager. I had a small motorbike and after school or on weekends, we would meet friends, go to movies, and hang out in the bars playing baby foot and pinball machines.



Lori & Suzie



Eating Soca



I had signed us up for a perfume-making workshop at Fragonard in Grasse and I had booked a rental car to take us there. Nice has a subway and one of the stops was the port area, close to our accommodation. So off we went to pick up the car at the airport, via the subway, but arriving at the airport, we were told we needed 2 forms of ID and I couldn't rent it with my driver's permit only so that plan got squashed and we took the train to Grasse instead. Arriving in Grasse, we realized it was the Jasmine festival and the town was decorated with flowers. There was to be a parade that evening with floats covered in Jasmine. The town itself was very artistic with sculptures and murals all over.



The workshop was short and sweet, the best part was actually being in the Fragonard factory and seeing all the antique stills, the distillers, old bottles, and smelling the amazing scents emanating from the factory. This year, they were focused on Lilac, which is a silent scent, meaning the odor doesn't translate from the flower when distilled. So they used a combination of scents to recreate it including lemon, heliotrope, vanilla, violet, and cloves. Of course, we couldn't resist buying a few of the beautiful products made by Fragonard.





n Sunday, we were invited for lunch and for dinner. Lunch was with our good friend Philippe and his girlfriend Sue in the quaint village of Biot.

Their home is absolutely beautiful and very provincial and we had a typical Mediterranean meal on the terrace eating grilled freshly caught Daurade (Snapper) and different salads, with fresh tomatoes and courgettes from their garden. We shared memories as we have been friends for over 30 years and caught up on their lives and the lives of our common friends. Dinner was in a gorgeous setting, overlooking the Port of Nice, with my childhood friend, Veronique's mum and Vero's daughter, Allegra. The sunset was spectacular and the food was divine.



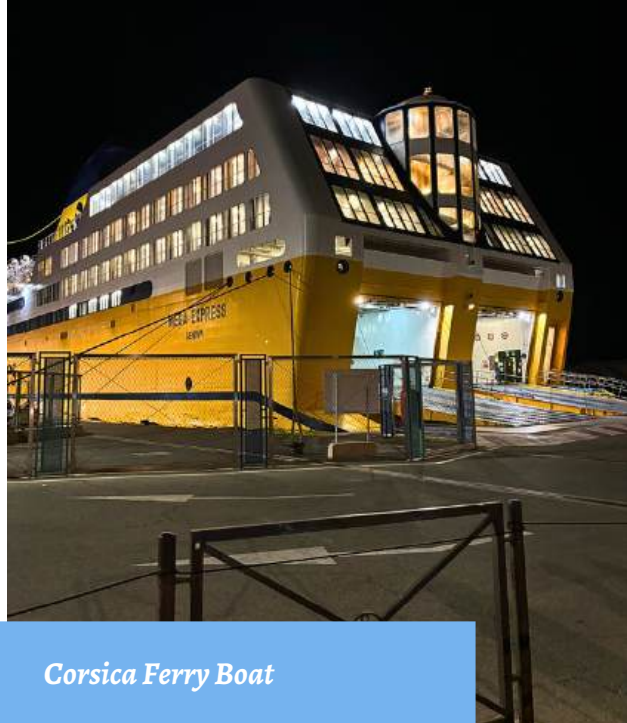
Lunch with phillipe at Biot

That night, we stayed at the Hotel Gounod in centre Ville as the Airbnb was booked and we had to move out. The hotel was very Art Deco and quirky, we had a lovely evening and a big breakfast in bed the next day.



Hotel Gounod

It was our last day in Nice, so off we went by foot, exploring. We walked along the Promenade des Anglais, and up to the top of Castel. It was very hot and the cooling energy of the waterfall, the big trees and tight streets of Vieux Nice were a blessing.



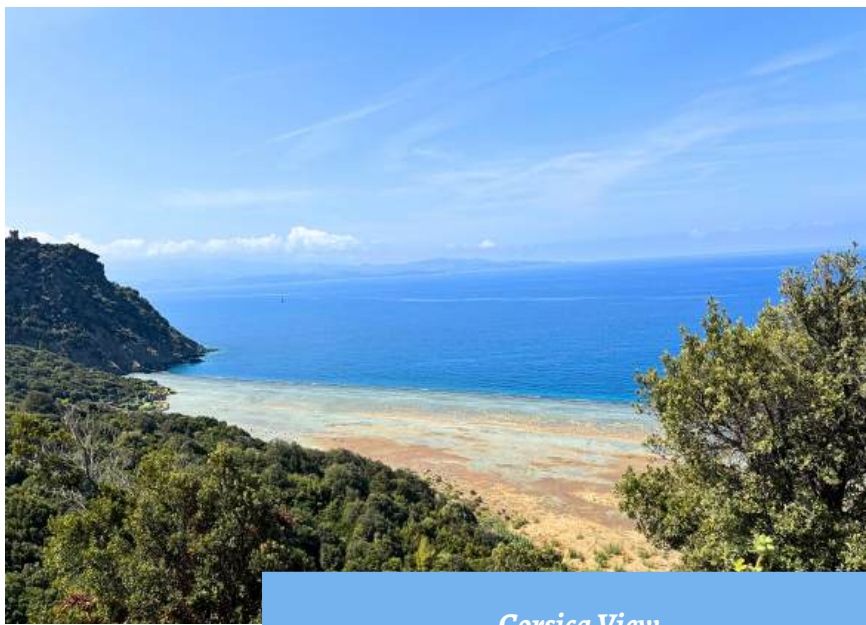
Corsica Ferry Boat

The boat to Bastia, Corsica, left the port very late at night, 11 pm to be exact and I am an early bird so we geared up for this adventure, checked out the hotel, and spent some time liming at their bar then looked for some food, which ended up being pizza again!

We got to the port around 9 pm but boarding wasn't until 10 pm and the boat was huge, cars and trucks were loaded first, then they let the pedestrians on. Families with lots of children, suitcases, and prams were waiting with us to board. We had booked a cabin, so once we found that, we didn't move from there until we docked in Bastia the next morning.

We had rented a car to drive to Castiglione where we were staying with a friend from Trinidad, yes Trinidad has quite a few Corsican families, but the car was to be picked up at the airport and that was about a 30-minute drive from Bastia. I figured I would just book an Uber well of course that didn't work and when I finally found an active taxi, he laughed that I would even think Uber was operating in Corsica. Corsica is very pure, raw, and authentic.

There are no big advert signs on the picturesque roads and no hotel chains on their pristine beaches. Actually, it was 12 years since I had been to Cap Corse and everything seemed the same, no major changes, no big buildings or eye sores. My friend was telling us that the building code is extremely strict and even the color of your house has to be approved. That is why the landscape is so harmonious and the architecture blends so well with the environment.



Corsica View

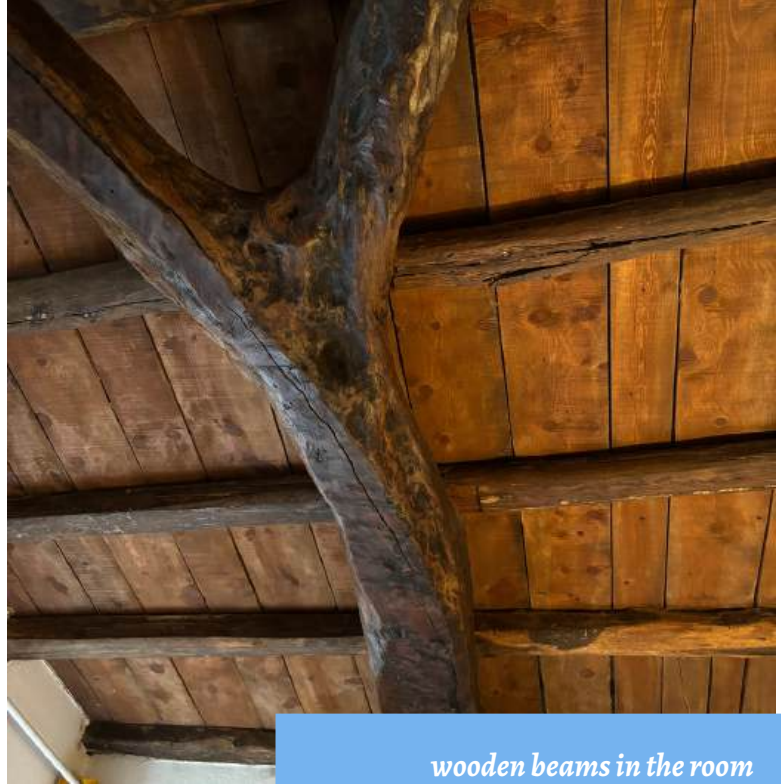
I have been to Corsica many times starting back in 1989 and every time I fall in love. My great-grandfather, Joseph Salvatori, left Corsica in the 1890s to head to Venezuela and then on to Trinidad. I feel a very strong connection with this island, especially Cap Corse, the Northern rugged part of the island. Vegetation wise it is the opposite of the lush green hills of my beloved Trinidad, but its stark, dry beauty touches my soul and I feel at home.

As we drove off to the village of Castiglione, we were stopped by a bad accident that happened on the treacherous road that hangs on the steep hills overlooking a bright blue sea. The accident was cleared in about 30 minutes which was impressive considering the gravity.

Driving up to Castiglione via Luri, we were enthralled by all the olive trees, the bright colors of bougainvillea and oleander, the streams, and the stone walls and stone buildings. The house we were staying at was nestled in a little village with maybe three dozen inhabitants and its own private church. The backyard garden is full of scents of rosemary, lemon verbena, pine, and olives. We ate a quick lunch of homegrown tomatoes and delicious olive bread and took a nap.

The rooms weren't air conditioned but the thick walls and shutters keep out the midday sun and keep the place cool. We slept in a downstairs room with big wooden beams (tree trunks actually above us).

La Maison Rose was so delightful and our hostess - Veronique, was more than welcoming. After our nap, we headed to the nearby beach, again driving through the olive groves. The beach is a pebble beach, covered in a sort of dry seaweed that was very cushy and apparently had a lot of beneficial properties.



wooden beams in the room



Our hostess- Veronique



Beach with seaweed

Dinner was set up in the backyard, on a large table, as Vero's sister lives next door and her family was visiting. So enchanting and so "summer" to sit out in the backyard under the big trees, with lights twinkling, drinking wine, and eating fresh produce sourced locally. The conversation was lively and interesting, sharing tales of our families and our adventures.



The next day we headed on an exploration, just Selwyn and I, we drove all the way to Saint Florent via an incredible road. I have to admit, I couldn't look at times, as the precipice was literally just outside the window and I kept telling Selwyn *"hug your left lol!!"*

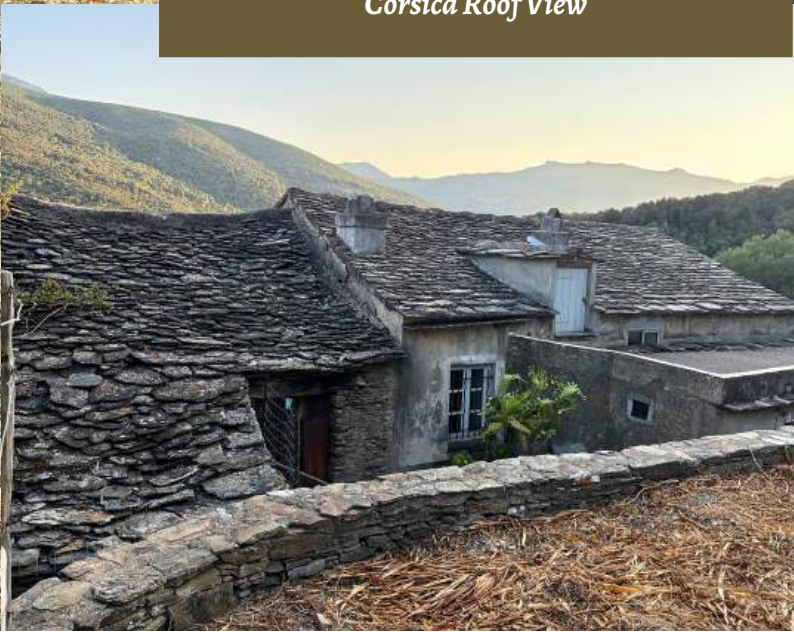
I am a coward when it comes to this, and I also kept reminding him, "This is why I don't do rollercoasters!" Of course, Selwyn was calm and composed, and handled the car like a boss while laughing at me. We passed so many picturesque villages and exotic-looking beaches, like the black sand at Nonza or the fishing village of Centuri (where I spent many days back in the 1980s).

We planned to have lunch in Saint Florent but it was full of tourists and we couldn't even find a place to park the car so we didn't stay and instead found a quaint restaurant just outside of the town where we ate traditional Corsican food, on a terrace shaded by a luxurious grapevine

The drive back was less scary as we were on the other side of the road and still extremely picturesque. We bought some treats in Macinaggio and headed back to the house, to have another lovely dinner in the backyard.



Corsica Roof View



Unfortunately, we were leaving the next day and I wasn't ready to leave the land of my ancestors but Paris was calling and time to head out. We even visited a property for sale as I really feel I would be very happy to spend my wise years in the Corsican maquis, between olive trees, bougainvillea, and rosemary. On our way to Bastia, we drove up to San Martino di Lota, where the Salvatoris are said to be from.

The flight back to Paris was uneventful and we settled in Vero's flat in the 19th (yes another Veronique). All this time, the Olympics were going on and of course, we were following the feats of the Caribbean athletes. We were excited to be able to go to one of the sessions at the Stade de France on Friday 9th August. Have to say it was super well organized, from the train to the entrance of the venue, finding our seats. The atmosphere in the stadium was incredible as the French audience was totally into the games, and the MCs had them singing, chanting, doing waves, and cheering on the athletes. We saw the semi-finals of the women's decathlon, the semi-finals men hurdles, and a couple of other races.



Lori & Bas Stade de France

That evening, we met up with Alex Jordan, who was covering the Olympics for the Caribbean region with Sportsmax and we visited the Olympic Flame in the Tuileries. Spectacular. Also great getting to know Alex as I had never met her and we have many friends in common.



Olympic Flame



Lori & Alex Jordan

On Sunday, we returned to Chartres for an exquisite meal at Moulin de Ponceau, outdoors on the water (the moat that surrounds the town of Chartres). The food was very French and nouvelle cuisine so not a lot to eat but everything was presented with extraordinary care and finesse.

After the meal and the wine, we were all sleepy, and it was very hot (34°) so we headed back to Ruth's farm and rested in her hay with some of the 50 dogs that live at the kennel. Only the favorites get to hang out in the house and with the people who visit, that includes the 2 huge Irish wolfhounds that reach up to my torso.



Bas & the dogs by Ruth's

Ruth had made us special deserts with fruits from her garden and we had to eat them quickly as the dogs were sniffing around, ready to finish them off for us. We caught the evening train back to Paris, it was Sunday evening and we were exhausted after a busy weekend.



Moulin de Ponceau meal



Sel & Lori with Irish wolfhounds

The next day we had to move to Les Halles, my niece's flat in the heart of Paris, 6 flights of stairs, under the roof, and the temperatures were soaring. I think it must have been 40 + degrees C in that studio. I must have showered 4 times to cool down but it was all in good spirits and we laughed a lot.

We decided to make the most of that last week and go out early in the morning before it got too hot, also with the time difference, everyone would still be asleep in Trinidad.

So work day really only started at 3 pm French time. We walked everywhere, along the Seine, Ile St. Denis, Jardin des Plantes, Places des Vosges, Bastille.....sharing some of the photos here.

It was glorious, we moved back to the 19th a couple days later and just soaked in the village atmosphere of the area.

Paris with empty streets, friendly people, good food, and historic buildings at every turn. I was in my glory and loving every minute of it. And Selwyn too, he was practicing his French and enjoying my joy and stories. We ate dinner with Sebastien every evening and then would take the metro home.

Yes home, because by then, we were so comfortable in Vero's flat, her downstairs apartment was in a basement and stayed very cool in spite of the heat wave that France was experiencing. Must say, after 3 weeks it was time to head back to our true home but Paris felt so comfortable that I could have stayed longer.

In all, it was the trip of a lifetime, many memories were made, connected with old friends and family, Selwyn and I just two of us make great travel companions and I am ready to plan the next adventure.

Who is coming?





Place des Voges Paris

Veronique's Mom - Monique and daughter Allegra in Nice



At THC



Quai de Seine, 19th Paris

SAN MARTINO DI LOTA



San Martino di Lota, Corsica