

For thirty five years my wife and I have been going to Paris once a year :
We skipped a few years when I had an operation, but apart from that ...
Some years we went twice (tacking a couple of nights on to a Headwater cycling holiday).
For a few years my sister and her husband came with us.
On one occasion the other three went to Versailles leaving me to do my own thing.
We used a Michelin street map in book format which had two or three pages of bus routes,
and bought passes for unlimited travel within Paris during our stay.
We visited :
bridges, islands, river and canal side quais, covered markets, and passages,
museums, department stores
(some with panoramic views),
parks, squares, gardens and fountains,
FNAC Étoile or Montparnasse
(I usually came back with a few CDs and DVDs), bookshops, MK2 canal side cinéma,
surviving remains of Roman and medieval Paris.
Some wine bars and restaurants we visited regularly ;
we always tried a few new places recommended by the Guardian and Time Out or later
Pudlo, Lebey and Routard.
We also had A Food Lover's Guide to Paris (by Patricia Wells).
As time went by I began to make a point of shaking hands with people who served us.
(Something I learned from The Piano Shop on the Left Bank by T E Carhart)
We reached the point where staff in quite a few of our favourite places recognised us as
regulars and joked with us.
Some of our favourites changed as years went by :
owners retired and passed the business to the next generation or sold it to a completely new
team.
Sometimes it was just as good ...
This year it's not possible to go :
so we've adopted plan B.
Near the beginning of lockdown I came across some French YouTube channels. Our
favourite is Paname, a half hour France 3 television programme.
The title is a slang word for Paris.
Season 1 was originally broadcast in 2015.
Each episode explores a street, square, park or small area of Paris.
So far we've watched 25 episodes (of the 28 in the first season).
We've also watched extracts of Des Racines et Des Ailes, another
France 3 programme of a similar vintage. Episodes are significantly longer, but quite a few
extracts are available separately.
Only a small percentage are about Paris.
In addition to videos about Paris, we've also watched some about
the Loire Valley : châteaux and wine
(Vins du Val de Loire),
and some about places to eat from OULALA Paris and Guides Lebey.
In some ways it's almost as good as being there.
Paname goes to interesting places.
You don't have to go through passport control
or suffer the other slings and arrows of outrageous travel.
On the other hand you have to conjure up the meals in your imagination ...
In the final analysis it's better than nothing and I'm certainly glad I stumbled upon Paname
YouTube channel : more or less perfect for down. 📺