



Log of the Gey

We arrived in France nine days before the beginning of our charter. Eventually we would take possession of the *Gey*, the boat for whom this log is named, but first we planned to visit several sites in southeast France.

Our plan was to fly overnight from Seattle to Paris, via Reykjavik, and from Paris on to Nice. In Nice, we would pick up a car and spend the time before our charter touring the Côte d'Azur and Provence. Tickets were purchased and rooms reserved months in advance.

16 September 2014

Is it a coincidence that *travel* and *travail* are such similar words? Our trip is off to a bit of a difficult start when we learn, 24 hours before departure, that an Air France pilots' strike has canceled the flight that would be the third leg of our journey.

Quickly onto the Internet, we

1. Reserve a room in Roissy-en-France, which is a free shuttle-bus ride from Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG).
2. Change our reservation in Cagnes-sur-Mer (5 km west of Nice) from three nights to two – the hotel was kind enough to do so without any extra charge.
3. Reserve tickets for the 19th on the TGV (high-speed) train from CDG train station to Marseille, then on a local train from Marseille to Nice.
4. Change our car reservation from a pickup at the Nice airport on the 18th to a pickup at the Nice train station on the 19th.
5. Request a refund for our Air France tickets, which we received a few days later.

17-18 September 2014

Our neighbor takes us to the rendezvous point with the Airporter Shuttle, which delivers us to SeaTac in a timely basis. Check-in with Iceland Air and Security checkpoint are quick. A burger and a brew in SeaTac have us ready for our flight, which departs on-time at 16:30. We land in Reykjavik seven hours and 15 minutes

later (6:45 local) and have 55 minutes to stretch our legs, clear EU customs, and board the flight to Paris.

We are in Paris about 13:00. We check out the train station, where we will board the train to Marseille, and then take the shuttle to the Millennium Hotel Paris Charles De Gaulle in Roissy-en-France. The hotel has a bar and we order beer and “French Onion” soup. Since sleep on overnight flights is somewhat iffy, we both take a nap before we set out to find dinner. Roissy has one street devoted to hotels, and a parallel street with several restaurants. Our choice is a Chinese restaurant. We eat outside. Unfortunately, smoking is permitted outside at most restaurants and we are in a cross-draft from several smokers.

19 September 2014

Our train is scheduled to depart at 8:30, so we are up early. Breakfast in the hotel, then the shuttle bus back to CDG. The train station is under the airport, an arrangement that works quite well. The train arrives, and departs on time.

This particular train stops only a few times between Paris and Marseille. Most of the time, we are flying along at speeds up to 200 kilometers per hour. Upon arrival in Marseille, we look outside the train station for a place to eat. Seeing none handy, we go back inside and have lunch at the McDonalds. We have two hours wait until the train to Nice.



I notice that the train that was supposed to depart two hours before ours is delayed. When the time comes for our train to depart, it is also delayed. Being pessimistic, I find the car rental place and ask if I can change my reservation to pick up the car in Marseille instead of Nice. After some consultation, the lady informs me that she can make the switch, but the only car available is a sub-compact, Fiat 500. Deciding that it is our best (or only) option, I take the car. We and our bags just fit, so we are off to Nice.

The trip is about 200 km and takes about 2 hours. Before leaving home, I loaded all the hotel addresses in my iPhone, using the iGO primo app. This app has served us well for the past several trips, and delivers us to Hôtel Tiercé Beach Hotel in Cagnes-sur-Mer, a suburb of Nice. The hotel is around the corner from the boulevard that traces the coastline. We leave the car parked in the hotel lot and find

a few cold beers, followed by dinner, with a view of the Mediterranean. Our exploration of France begins in earnest tomorrow.

20 September 2014

Initially, we had considered taking the train from Cagnes-sur-Mer to Nice on one day and to Monaco on the other. We had lost one of our days, however, and were not too high on French public transportation at the moment, so we decided to drive to both in the same day.

Out of the hotel lot and around the corner, and we are on the most scenic road into Nice. Beaches and the sea are on our right, fancy hotels, apartments, and restaurants are on our left. The road circles the Nice harbor and then follows the coastline all the way to Monaco. We will spend time in Nice later in the day, our first goal is Monaco.

East of Nice, the route leaves the shore and winds around the sides of several capes. Beautiful views are seen of Nice, Villefranche-sur-Mer, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and Eze. Soon, we are in the Principality of Monaco.



Driving through Monaco is no more difficult than driving in any mid-size European city. We meander through town and are soon back in France. (The land area of Monaco is less than a square mile.) We turn around and head back into town, looking for parking near the harbor. We park in a parking structure about two blocks away, and walk down to admire the yachts and seek lunch.

Back to the car, and we drive west towards Nice. We stay on the low road, with the coast on our left most of the way. A side trip takes us out to Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, populated with homes that resemble resorts. Once in Nice, we find a place to park just off the Quai des Etats-unis (Quay of the United States). We walk around the old town a bit and then out onto the beach for a view of the Mediterranean, complete with sun worshippers.

Refreshed with a beer or two, we head back to Cagnes-sur-Mer for dinner and rest.

To see more pictures of our trip along the coast, overlaid on a map, click: [Côte d'Azur](#)

21 September 2014

Today's journey will end in Cannes, but first we will tour the coast en route. It is an easy drive, with only a few wrong turns, to get to Antibes.

We skipped the hotel breakfast, so our first task is to find something to eat. A convenient flea market has food for sale, and we invest in two baguettes. We resist the temptation to buy any of the wares on display. Instead, we drive out the Juan-les-Pins peninsula to see views of the Med and the town. The picture at right was taken from one of the beaches on the peninsula.



Driving back into town, we park near the marina (visible to the right in the picture) and walk over to check out the boats. Nice, very nice. The *Sauvetage En Mer* is a volunteer life-boat society, and they are having an open house today, showing off one of their rescue boats. A nice young man with reasonable English gives us a tour, and then we meet an ex-pat Brit who is also a volunteer.

Out of the harbor, we walk into the old town to check out the farmers' market and find some lunch. The market has a lot of food items and seasonings for sale. We could have eaten in the market, but opt for a café on the square overlooking the market.

After lunch, we are back in the car. Driving along the coast, we arrive in Cannes. There are miles of coastal beaches, with parking, food vendors, and lots of sand. We drive around town a bit, and then set off to find our hotel for the evening. Cannes is on a hillside, and the roads curve around a lot. The iGO primo app gets us there however, just in time to check in to a lovely boutique hotel, the Hôtel Albert 1er. This is the kind of place where one could spend many leisurely days, but we are here for only the night.

The hotelier tells us how to walk down to the town and waterfront for dinner, which we decide is a lot easier than driving down and back. It is about 1 km down, but after dinner seemed more like 3 km back. Even so, we are fed and have a good night's sleep before we travel on.

22 September 2014

After a nice breakfast, we hit the highway to travel to Marseille. The route was primarily freeway. On the outskirts of Marseille we dove into a tunnel with multiple exits. Fortunately we choose the right one. A few crazy turns and we ended up at the Hôtel Peron, which is right over the shoreline. We had a great view of the Frioul Islands and the Château d'If from our room. Our hostess arranged for our car to be parked in their secure parking behind the hotel, and she told us how to catch the city bus into town.



Once settled in, we walked about a block to the bus stop and caught a bus that delivered us to the head of the harbor. There was a lunch place right there, so we paused for sustenance and refreshment.

After lunch, we decided to take the local version of hop-on, hop-off bus tour. These usually give a good overview of a city for those with limited time. The tour wound around the harbor, took us up to the Basilique Notre-Dame de la Garde which over watches the city, and gave us insight into much of the local lore and history of Marseille. Many of the pictures in the associated map tour are from that bus ride.

We hopped off back at the harbor area and walked around a bit, checking out the local boats as well as the crafts and souvenirs for sale on the waterfront. Late afternoon beers fortified us for the bus ride back to our hotel.

For dinner, we walked down to a restaurant perched on the shore. We tend to dine earlier than the French, so we had the place to ourselves during most of dinner. While there, we saw a colorful sunset, and watched cruise ships and ferries depart for Corsica, Tunisia, and other Mediterranean ports.

Back to our room after dinner – tomorrow we drive inland to start a quick exploration of Provence.

*To see pictures of our visit to
Marseille, overlaid on a map,
click: [Marseille](#)*