



DOUGLAS WILLIAM
&
LYNDA DIANE
HUNTINGTON

MARRIED FEBRUARY 14 2002

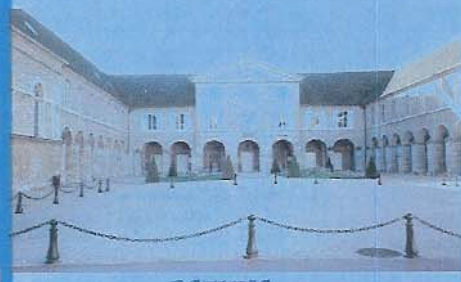


EUROPEAN HONEYMOON

MAY 13 ~ JUNE 6 2002



LUNE DE MIEL



BEAUNE



ANTIBES



ANNECY



AVIGNON



YVOIRE



REIMS

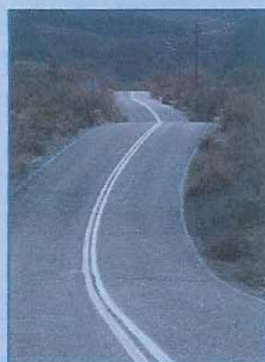
LUNA DI MIELE



PORTOFINO



AOSTA



DYN & LUGLESS EURO TOUR

MAY 13 ~ JUNE 6 2002



	LEAVE	ARRIVE	MAY	MILEAGE
DAY 1	BONAVENTURE	BEAUNE	13	447.4
DAY 2	BEAUNE	ANNECY	14	144
DAY 3	ANNECY	ANNECY	15	
DAY 4	ANNECY	AVIGNON	16	214
DAY 5	AVIGNON	ANTIBES	17	150.5
DAY 6 ~ 19	ANTIBES	ANTIBES	18~31	
			JUNE	
DAY 20	ANTIBES	PORTOFINO	1	155.8
DAY 21	PORTOFINO	AOSTA	2	176.2
DAY 22	AOSTA	YVOIRE	3	94.2
DAY 23	YVOIRE	ANNECY	4	43.6
DAY 24	ANNECY	REIMS	5	340.7
DAY 25	REIMS	BONAVENTURE	6	232.4

1998.8



MEMORIES OF OUR HONEYMOON.

May 13th 2002. Our journey via the Eurotunnel, a marvel of modern travel, took us a distance of 340 miles by autoroute to Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy. We stayed overnight at the new hotel, Novotel, where we had a fine bottle of Savigny-les-Beaunes 1996 with an excellent dinner. We were hungry because we had only had a picnic lunch of fruit and snacks in an “Aire” east of Reims. The hotel was comfortable, and we slept well with the knowledge that we had broken the back of the long haul southwards, and that on the subsequent days we would have to cover much shorter daily stretches. With our usual good fortune we had left the bad weather behind us in England.

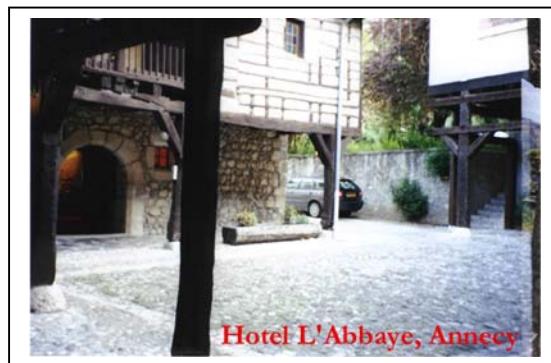


May 14th. After breakfast we spent an hour walking about Beaune. We had eschewed the idea, when passing through Calais, of stopping off to buy a supply of our favourite cigars. We had felt confident of their availability from “any tobacconist in France”, our confidence boosted by the few days supply we had brought from home. Our exploration of Beaune therefore assumed two purposes – the search for tobacconists stocking Villiger No.7, and for the Hotel-Dieu. We found neither. Well, we did finally see the Hotel-Dieu, the one-time home of the Dukes of Burgundy in the distance, hiding behind a tall wall on our way out of Beaune. The laws and practices of France are perplexing. Whilst the sale of alcohol seems to be completely unfettered, in that anyone can sell it, whether he be a grocer, butcher or baker, the sale of tobacco is strictly controlled. There seems to be a rule that there may be only one “tabac” about every ten square miles. Presumably some sort of government monopoly is involved, and in return for paying for a “tabac” licence, the shop gets a local monopoly in return. We finally found the “tabac” for Eastern France, but no Villigers No.7.

We resumed our journey at about 9 a.m., picking up the nearby autoroute going south for about 100 miles, before turning “left” near Macon, on to another autoroute going generally east towards Geneva. A word about navigation here. Using the Microsoft “Autoroute” software, we found the route directions and maps provided by it to be splendid for the whole 2800 miles we travelled. Every road we had to use was named

with its French National road number, plus the equivalent E number (for European), the mileage given for every stage of the route, with exit numbers clearly named. The surface of the French autoroutes is excellently smooth, and they seem to use hardwearing surface material which does not require constant maintenance and repair, despite the much greater extremes of temperature it has to endure. Our only complaint was that the cambers on their roads often seemed to defy and ignore certain physical laws. The difficulty caused by this plus the fact that they obtusely drive on the wrong side of the road was exacerbated by our right-hand drive car.

The change of direction brought us shortly into much more dramatic countryside, with rolling hills and mountains looming up in the distance. We crossed the Rhone at Bellegarde. This town is only about 50 miles from Lake Geneva, from which the Rhone rises. This is in fact a mis-statement in that the river flowing into the , eastern end, of the lake is also called the Rhone. At Bellegarde we stopped and resumed our search for “tabacs”, finding one but no Villiger cigars. At this point we started to reflect on the hundred and fifty or so which our mis-placed confidence had led us to leave at home. It being lunchtime we decided to drive into the country to find somewhere suitable to eat. About two miles out we had the only lousy French meal of the whole month’s holiday – the choice appeared to be sausages and spaghetti, or spaghetti and sausages – anything else, the proprietor informed us, required twenty four hours’ notice. We chose sausages and spaghetti, highly spiced, and regretted it for the rest of the day. We then decided to follow local roads rather than the autoroute to Annecy, our destination for the day, so that we could the more enjoy the scenery as it became hillier and dramatic by the mile.



That day’s travelling , from Beaune to Annecy, amounted to only 150 miles, so we arrived fairly early in the afternoon. The autoroute directions took us unerringly to our destination, the Hotel L’Abbaye in Old Annecy. This had been in fact an ancient abbey. We drove into a quaint cobbled courtyard surrounded by a wooden balcony to be warmly welcomed by the proprietor. We had reserved a suite for two days, which turned out to be spacious and comfortable. The weather remained very warm, and the only drawback was that, with every window open at night, we found the smell of food cooking in the kitchens beneath us was tantalising. (the French eat until a late hour, and we retire to bed early by their standards). Worse still the washing up afterwards went on noisily until about 1 a.m. The numerous cooking utensils sounded as if they were being thrown out on to the cobbled yard before they were washed ready for the next day.

Annecy lies at the northern end of the lake of the same name, which is about nine miles long and surrounded on three sides by green wooded hills, just behind which stand snow-capped mountains. It is a popular ski resort, or rather a centre from which

visitors can take their pick of a wide choice of ski slopes. The lake is also popular for boating and sailing. At the time we were there the mountains afford good jumping off bases for hang gliders, with plenty of good thermals to power their flights. Annecy itself is a fairly sizeable modern town with a lengthy lakeside promenade. The surrounding gardens are attractively laid out. We spent the rest of the afternoon walking the promenade and photographing the beautiful surroundings of the lake before returning to the hotel for a light supper to offset the unfortunate lunch of sausages and spaghetti.

May 15th. We spent the next day exploring Lake Annecy more fully, driving right down to the end, and then climbing the hills behind it until we came to the next valley, giving breath-taking views of distant snow-capped mountains. The narrow country roads were teeming with French cyclists, wearing themselves thin at their national sport of tackling every sort of terrain. The gallic characteristic of short squat bodies above short muscular legs must be the result of, or perhaps conducive to, their chosen form of self-torture.

Back to Lake Annecy we resumed our clockwise circuit of the water, stopping off at Le Clos Marcel a restaurant at Duingt on the west side of the lake for a lakeside lunch, copious enough of food and wine to make us order yet another light supper of salad, in place of the delicious sounding dinner menu offered by the Hotel L'Abbaye. And so to bed with the tempting aroma of the dinner wafting up into our windows, and the noisy clearing up at midnight by the kitchen staff. We fell in love with Annecy; all the pleasures for which holidaymakers visit the town are the peaceful ones of skiing, sailing, hang-gliding and hiking through the mountains. The setting of the town is perfect.

May 16th. Before setting off for our next journey we searched the town for the elusive "tabacs". We found one, but no Villiger cigars. Panic began to overtake us with only a few days' supply on board! We bought a relief road map of Upper Savoy, which we subsequently inadvertently left behind at Avignon.

The journey to Avignon involved only 214 miles, so we could take it at a leisurely pace, down good, quiet autoroutes and through more snow-capped mountain ranges – the northern end of the Alpes Maritimes. South of Annecy we by-passed the town of Aix-les-Bains, situated on another attractive looking lake – Lake Le Bourget. Each bend of the road revealed more picturesque panoramas. Further south still the valleys were full of orchards growing nuts, mainly Almonds. The town of Montelimar, famous for its nougat is not far away from here. When we rejoined the wide Rhone Valley Lyn was disappointed that we had no view of the mighty river, so wide and shallow was its valley. We turned off to the village of Chateauneuf du Pape, the vineyards beloved of the Popes when they had been head-quartered at Avignon, and also of Lyn. We drove past mile after mile of vineyards, whose produce would claim the appellation of "Chateauneuf du Pape." Unlike the vineyards of Burgundy, which tend mostly to be smallish affairs of 20 or 30 acres under vines, the wine output of the Rhone Valley is immense and the wines, except for the topmost labels, are generally much less costly as a result.

By now it was not just warm, it was sweltering; the sort of day when it is painful to leave the shade and cross the street. We found a pleasant busy restaurant – La Mere

Germaine – in the little town, with a shady terrace facing west across and overlooking the flatlands of Languedoc/Roussillon. For the Euro equivalent of £30 we each had massive Filets Mignon washed down with a bottle of the smooth, rather full-bodied red wine. We chose a modestly priced local wine, leaving the big labels for the punters, of which the restaurant was fully peopled, many of them being visiting Americans.

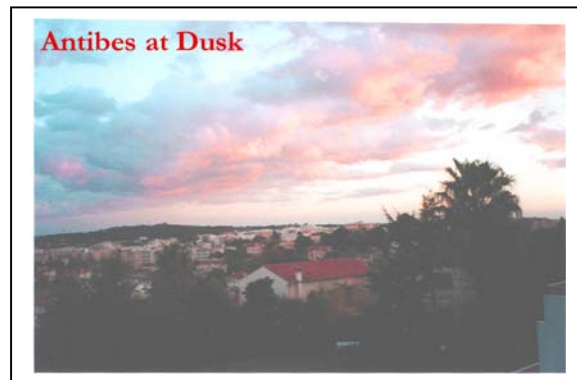
After such a meal we were glad that our destination, Avignon, was not far away. Actually our destination was a village called Villeneuve-les-Avignon, on the opposite bank of the Rhone, and therefore in the region of Languedoc/Roussillon, not in Provence and Cote d'Azur. The name "Languedoc" derives from "Langue d'oc" – the language of Occitan – the tongue of the troubadours. The region had been in Spanish possession until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, and is reputed still to cherish its separate identity. One wonders if, in future centuries, historians/commentators will write of England : "A small island off the coast of Europe, with a population of 250 millions, largely of Asiatic origin. The name England derives from a small minority of fair-skinned people called the English, who still cherish their heritage of once having won the soccer World Cup, and of having reached the quarter-finals on ten other occasions."



Once again the redoubtable software "autoroute" had navigated us accurately to our hotel, La Magnaneraie, where we were shown to our room situated on the ground floor, with a terrace adjoining the very attractive garden, and a fountain playing a few feet away. The swimming pool nearby. Like all our other hotel accommodation on this holiday, La Magnaneraie had been located via the Internet, and was a successful choice for our needs. We spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying the garden, Lyn taking in a swim in the pool, then had another light supper accompanied by some Chablis Premier Cru.

Taking a photograph of the Pont St. Benezet at Avignon was a must, so we set out early in the morning, almost before the streets had been aired to get a shot of the bridge and also the Pope's Palace. It was difficult because, even at that early hour, the streets were busy with traffic and we had to dice with death at the hands of impatient French commuters as we crossed and recrossed roads to find the best viewpoint. We failed to get one of the Palace – the sun was disobligingly in the wrong place, but did take a reasonable one of the bridge, which had been largely destroyed by floods in 1668. People used to dance on the small island sous (below) the bridge, but over the years as the famous song testifies the sous has become distorted to sur (on). Hence "Sur le pont d'Avignon....."

May 17th- 31st. Photography completed, we packed our overnight bag, and set off along the coast-hugging autoroute for the attractive drive to Antibes. To our right was the coastline edged with the pretty “umbrella” pines and to our left were the foothills of the Maritime Alpes, which extend northwards from the coastal region in steps of parallel valleys and ranges, each step ever higher, until they join the main alps. The valleys nearest to the coast, running east to west are most attractive, lush with grasses and alpine flowers, fed with the melted snow from the mountains until the height of summer. Down the lower slopes of the mountains the land in many places has been artificially stepped by long-gone generations of peasants scratching a living from the soil. It is one of the few parts of Europe where “Humance” is practiced – shepherd/goatherds with their dogs living and sleeping with their flocks, moving from valley to valley for fresh pastures each day for weeks on end.



We reached Antibes and our apartment in the early afternoon and at the nearby Carrefour supermarket set about stocking with food and necessities for our stay. Carrefour is a vast affair stocking just about everything, including civilised quality toilet paper. Although the hotels we stayed at were of high quality, without exception the toilet paper did not match this standard, usually being suitable only for rubbing down old paintwork before a repaint job. At Carrefour we resumed our search for Villiger cigars - again without success. Now our earlier panic turned into frenzy, moderated only by the reflection that we knew where all the tabacs in the area were hidden.

For our fortnight at Antibes the weather stayed mainly fine, though a fairly cold wind persisted for much of the time, making it necessary, if in the shade, to wear some clothes. During the stay we visited many of our favourite haunts, including Gourdon, perched on a shelf high in the mountains with, on a clear day, wonderful views over the Mediterranean from Nice for the 20 mile span west to Cannes and beyond. A favourite shop for Lyn in Gourdon is “Les Couleurs de Soie” where the delightful Josée sells the silk garments which she has spent the winter making. The little town, once a Saracen fortress also has numerous artisan shops selling glassware, artefacts made from olive wood, and of course perfumes derived from the nearby lavender fields and from the town of Grasse. In Gourdon we enjoyed another fine alfresco lunch in the garden of the Logis Sarrasin.

Another favourite was the little mountain village of Le Bar-sur-Loup, set at the bottom of the Gorge du Loup. We lunched well at L’Amiral, which comprised four courses, though we gave up after the third. The restaurant is mainly frequented by local folk as the village is not on the tourist circuit

We maintained our search for Villiger cigars, finding a tabac in Juan-les-Pins with some stock. He would only sell us 25 cigars though, enough for a couple of days or so, and when asked if he would be getting in more stock he said “two weeks time. Some French are strangely perverse giving the feeling that they believe customers are really a nuisance. We found this in many places. For instance we had planned to visit the Renoir Museum in Cagnes-sur-Mer, where the artist had lived for some years. We found that it opened at 10 a.m., so we drove over to Cagnes, arriving at 10 to find a sizeable number waiting for the gates to the museum grounds to be opened. Eventually they were opened, but the doors to the museum were still firmly shut. Through the windows we could see the museum staff standing about, and they could see the waiting crowd, but despite several of us knocking, the doors refused to open. We decided to walk away as, here again, customers were obviously regarded as a nuisance. It was a pity because Renoir was an artist whose work we both admire. Unlike Picasso! Antibes has an extensive Picasso Museum, housed in the Grimaldi Palace, and on a previous stay in Antibes we had paid it a visit. We both found it boring, and were unable to muster any appreciation of the artist’s talent.

During a visit to Cannes, we found the Film Festival in full swing, and the Croisette packed with wannabee actors and actresses, and gawping crowds hoping to catch a glimpse of celebrities crossing from the Carlton Hotel to the Croisette. Numerous gendarmes were struggling to keep traffic moving along the broad boulevards. The two tabacs we found there were of little help, though one of them did forecast receiving some Villiger stock “next Tuesday”. So we decided to take the ferry across to the Lerin Islands, about four miles offshore. The trip was refreshing and enjoyable, and gave us a magnificent view of Cannes with the mountains in the background.

Next we tried Nice, finding about four tabacs, but no cigars of the brand we required. Sorely regretting the supply of cigars we had left at home, we decided to try some of the other brands on sale. At one tabac we bought a pack of three alternative brands. We sat outside with a glass of wine and tried one of each brand, much to the interest of people at nearby tables. Deciding that two of the brands were bearable we bought the tabac’s stock of them, fearing that next time any further sale might be refused. From there we drove to the little village of Biot and enjoyed another alfresco lunch.

So confident were we that you could drive anywhere, following our noses, and find a nice place to eat, that we drove through Cannes one day exiting north towards Mougins until we were completely lost as to direction. However Lyn’s nose led us to a village entirely “off the map” called Pegomas, and to a riverside (river Siagne) restaurant named “L’ecluse” (The Lock). We lunched on the bank of the fast-flowing river in beautiful surroundings, as did several ducks, carp and trout below us. Once again we found that eating amongst natives rather than compatriot tourists was much more interesting. Our waitress spoke good English and told us that she had worked as a waitress at Garfunkels in Regent Street for six months!

On another day we decided to drive into Italy and explored the Ligurian Littoral for about 65 miles, lunching at the resort of Imperia before turning back. It was noticeable how much the Italian economy had picked up, presumably benefiting from membership of the European Union. Once shabby towns and villages now looked spick and span. In the course of the journey, all via the autostrada, we must have

passed through about 20 tunnels, 500 yards to one mile long, burrowing under mountains and then emerging onto long viaducts spanning the valleys. Italians have a particular ability at making tunnels efficiently, and one supposes their Roman heritage of direct and straight routes has led them to go through instead of round obstacles.

At Opio, a few miles inland from Antibes there is quite an extensive Garden Centre which we visited a couple of times. In the gardens of our apartment at Le Roi Soleil we had noticed the gardening contractors using a useful tool, rather like a long-handled pitchfork, but with four tines instead of the usual two prongs. We found them on sale at this Garden Centre, and bought one, which we then carted around Europe for the rest of our holiday. We felt it would be useful for tossing and turning compost in our garden at home. We also found a delightful rose which we determined to buy. However when we returned a couple of days later with that intention we noticed that the blooms had quickly lost their unique combination of colours, and now looked quite ordinary. So we did not buy. We did buy a couple of Bougainvilleas, one deep red and the other white/pink, which we intended to plant and nurture in our greenhouse at home. These plants spent the rest of the holiday on our terrace at the apartment, and later when we were travelling, in the boot. By the time we arrived home they had shed their bracts, but at the time of writing signs of new bracts are appearing.

Antibes is a delightful place to spend a holiday, with so many places to see; this time we did not venture west of Cannes, nor to Cap Ferrat, Villefranche, Monaco, or Menton, but we return to the apartment for 17 days over the Christmas period, and look forward to renewing acquaintance with some of those at that time.

During our stay in Antibes, youngest son Guy advised us by text-message to Lyn's mobile that Bridget had given birth to a second son on the 27th May. For nearly three weeks afterwards the new arrival had to be referred to a "Wotsisname", whilst Guy and Bridget debated choice of names. They finally settled upon "Jack Rees". Thinking it would be best to delay the despatch of flowers to Bridget until she returned home, we planned to send them on Friday 31st. So on that morning I visited the florist and ordered the despatch. They seemed flustered, and said they couldn't deliver the flowers that day. I replied that I didn't really expect the shop to *take* the flowers, but tomorrow would be fine. The best they would promise was the following Sunday – they would be lucky to find *any* florist delivering on a Sunday in England, but in the event the flowers were delivered satisfactorily and were much appreciated by Bridget. In passing, I am not a lover of mobile phones, though appreciating that for some business circumstances, and for some security purposes, they are ideal. On the other hand they are too often used as a status symbol, and can be annoying interruptions in public places, restaurants etc. The facility to send brief text-messages worldwide quickly and cheaply is admirable and annoys nobody.

May 31st. Our journey to the next destination, Portofino, where the Ligurian coast of Italy "turns right" to begin its travel down the leg, was 176 miles, including about 30 tunnels. It is quite spectacular. We broke the journey at Diana Marina for lunch on a restaurant terrace and resumed amidst increasing Friday weekend traffic as we approached and bypassed the major port and city of Genoa. The exit for Santa Margherita and Portofino was not far beyond, and our trusty route directions took us unerringly to the Hotel Piccolo. This is situated on the narrow but busy road a quarter

of a mile before reaching Portofino and has a small lay-by alongside for parking cars. On checking-in for our two day stay we ordered a bottle of Champagne and then were shown to our delightful room with a balcony, just big enough for two persons, a table, two chairs, and the bottle of Champagne. The balcony overlooked a pretty cove with boats of every size and shape anchored in the calm sea and a private beach. Having had a fairly light lunch and the Champagne having been consumed, we decided to walk into Portofino for dinner. The little port has numerous restaurants, and we chose one on the waterfront, the Ristorante Delfino. Having been told by the waiter that they didn't open for over half an hour, he immediately showed us to a table and proceeded to take our order. In this place customers were definitely NOT nuisances! After a sturdy dinner we found that the walk back to our hotel had lengthened by at least twice, and the gradient up the hill increased considerably. Despite the noise of traffic which continued long after we retired, we slept very soundly.



June 1st. After breakfast we returned to Santa Margherita, a couple of miles away to explore that pretty, fairly large resort. But not before the hotel concierge had given us an undeserved telling off for leaving our car in the lay-by – which we had assumed to be the hotel car park. Apparently on our arrival we should have been told that the local police permitted only short-term use of the lay-by, and directed, after unloading our luggage, to a multi-storey car park in Portofino. We were given a token enabling us to park in the multi-storey, which necessitated a further unscheduled trudge up the even more elongated and steepened hill to the hotel – this time burdened not just by a hearty dinner- but by further luggage which we wished to have in our room. It was a hot and sticky walk.

Exploring Santa Margherita involves mainly searching for a car parking spot, most available spaces bearing dire threats to tow illegally parked vehicles away to the other end of Italy. We Brits have not fully rumbled the French and Italian habit of ignoring or defying such regulations and parking anywhere, even double-parking. Like animals which herd in masses on the theory that an individual's odds of being the one pounced upon by predators, Italian drivers all park illegally en masse, obviously realising that the polizi will throw up their hands bewildered by excess of choice.

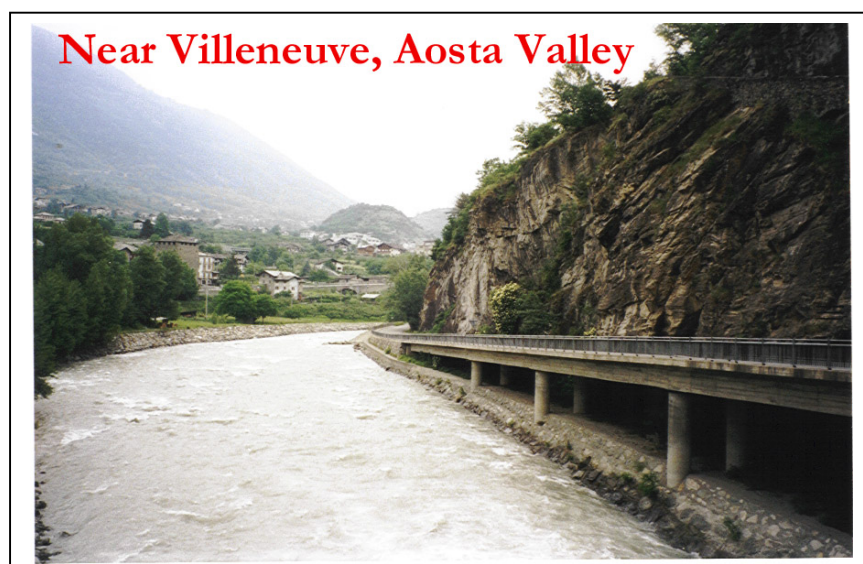
Nervously following the natives' lead and parking on the promenade, we bought tickets for a boat trip which called at Portofino, and then proceeded up the coast to another small fishing port. The steep coastal hills have dwellings perched on them and stepped vineyards clinging to the hillsides. After the heat it was refreshing on the boat to be standing in a cool breeze. Portofino is a very pretty place but nowadays has become very crowded and commercialised. Prices for everything, from hotels and meals to souvenirs are high.

On the subject of prices, both in France and Italy we noted that the introduction of the Euro had given rise to increases in prices – just as had decimalisation of coinage in Britain earlier in our lives. The Euro, having been introduced in January 2002, had settled down after the initial shock and till checks still give prices in Euros as well as the extinct currency. Despite strong personal aversions from our country joining the Euro circus, Lyn and I both found very convenient the use of one currency throughout the places we visited, or could have visited.

June 2nd. At crack of dawn we set off northwards on the homeward leg of our holiday, our destination being the city of Aosta in the Valley of that name. The whole journey of about 170 miles was via autostrada in the province of Piedmont, across very attractive lush countryside with rolling hills and numerous streams. Most of these feed into the river Po, some of whose tributaries come from the Aosta Valley. The Po flows east to west right across northern Italy into the Adriatic, collecting pollution from Turin and Milan. Many of Italy's best wines come from Piedmont. Crossing Piedmont we passed mile after mile, at one stage, of flooded paddy fields where rice was being grown. Shades of the past were brought back to us when, filling up with petrol, the attendant cleaned the windscreen unasked.

Our route directions took us to Aosta without difficulty, but we had neglected to ask Autoroute to direct us to the Hotel Europe, where we had booked a suite for the night. On arriving at the town centre several people we asked had never heard of the Hotel Europe, but one told us that it was located in a pedestrian-only area, giving us incomprehensible directions, our knowledge of Italian being very basic. Finally we found an Italian lady who spoke perfect English. She didn't know, but asked another passer-by, and was able to direct us the 150 yards we happened to be from the hotel. True enough it was in a pedestrian-only area, but, Italian style, we drove there anyway and were able to park our car outside long enough to unload the luggage, check in and, with the help of a bell-boy, park the car in the hotel's reserved spaces in a nearby public car park.

The hotel was very comfortable, and we found that we needed the air-conditioning despite our expectation that it would be much cooler in this mountainous area. We had an alfresco lunch in a shaded part of the terrace of the Ristorante Pedrazza; it was a sizzling hot afternoon and crossing the square to return to our hotel was torture. We did not like the town of Aosta very much; it has a rather shabby air as if it hasn't shared in the increased prosperity which membership of the EU appears to have brought to the rest of northern Italy.



May 3rd. Eager to experience the drive through the Mont Blanc tunnel we set off early up the Aosta valley, following a rapid, in places “white-water” river to the foot of Mont Blanc. Along the route dramatic cascades of water were crashing down the wooded mountainsides, to join the Occa river, eventually the Po, and ultimately the Adriatic Sea south of Venice.

Having paid our toll for the tunnel we entered and drove the seven or so miles into Upper Savoy in France. On this, the northern side of the Alps, Mont Blanc looked awesome, its 15,000 feet high summit being snow-capped year round. On this side also the Mont Blanc Glacier looked impressive despite its being an insignificant relic of the Ice Age when the whole of Europe had been beneath massive depths of ice. We took a few photographs but, unfortunately, snow-capped peaks do not show up well when snapped by amateur cameramen.

From here to our next destination of Yvoire was only a matter of about one hour’s drive, across fertile valleys plentifully supplied with water. Yvoire is a small, ancient fishing port on the south, French, side of Lake Geneva (in France called Lac Lemman). To the west, at the western end of the lake, lies Geneva, and to its east, about 15 miles is the spa town of Evian. Across the lake and a few miles to the east lies Lausanne. Steamers, some of them with side-paddles, ply the lake calling at a choice of ports.

Yvoire is a delightful, peaceful little walled village, with flowers everywhere. Our hotel, the Hotel du Port is right on the lake-front by the pier and the marina. We arrived in the rain and had to park the car in a car park about 150 yards from the hotel, getting pretty wet from there. On advice from the reception clerk Lyn fetched the car to the front door for unloading and a bell-boy took the car to the hotel car park on the outskirts of the village. By this time it had stopped raining. Our bedroom was on the second floor, with a balcony overlooking the lake, where we could sit, sip wine and watch the activities below and before us. These included a swan with a squadron of sygnets in tow – seven of them – one or two hitching a ride on the parent’s back, and the rest in formation behind. There were also herons and fish-eagles foraging on the lake.

The hotel gave us a good lunch, and we spent the rest of the day in exploring the town and the lakeside, taking photographs of this very photogenic setting. We made up our minds that this would be a fine centre for a future holiday, enabling us to explore the lake fully, visit some of the Swiss lakeside towns by steamer ferry, and further to see more of Upper Savoy.



June 4th. We had tried to reserve two nights at the Hotel du Port in Yvoire, but unfortunately they were fully booked, so we had booked the night of the 4th back at Annecy, about 50 miles away. Before going however we travelled east along the lake coast as far as Evian, which we found to be like many spa towns, slightly dated, but very pretty nevertheless. En route we at last found some Villiger cigars!!

The drive to Annecy didn't take long and with Lyn and her roving nose at the wheel we explored the countryside behind the lake before finding "Les Pecheurs" by the lakeside to have lunch, during which numerous hang-gliders showed their skill at manoeuvring over the lake and neighbouring mountains. Back to the Hotel L'Abbaye after a second tour of the lakeside road we were shown to a room for our night's stay. The suite we had occupied before had already been reserved. Thinking that at least in that different room we might be spared the cookhouse noises, we were disappointed to find it every bit as cacophonous! The drawback of being without a suite was that Lyn had nowhere to retreat to should my snoring become unbearable. Apparently it did. I woke up in the night and panicked because Lyn was nowhere to be found. I eventually found her sleeping on the floor in the little passage between the corridor and our bedroom!

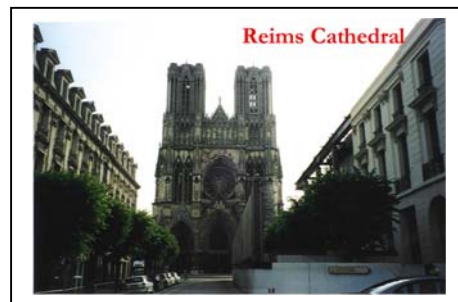
June 5th. The last but one leg of our travel was from Annecy to Rheims, a distance of 340 miles. The first hour and a half was back through the mountains where we hit stormy weather with rain like stair-rods. It was not pleasant but as we approached Burgundy we left that behind and the journey was uneventful. North of Dijon, Lyn's nose once again took us off the autoroute for a few miles and we found the village of Longeau. Approaching the Hotel De L'Escale the high gates magically opened for us and a man in a chef's hat beckoned us to enter into the yard. As nearly always in France the lunch in this remote village was excellent and the service good.

We reached Reims in the mid-afternoon, and quickly found our hotel, the "Hotel Mercure-Cathedral, a part of the Accor Group of hotels. Parking was easy outside the front door. Our room was on the second floor, meaning the 3rd as the bar and restaurant took up the 2nd (mezzanine). It was not good news for Lyn who hates lifts and had to climb nine flights – good for her muscles but not for her lungs in their present state! It was a nice room looking over the canal and with air conditioning. The problem with air conditioning is that the windows are locked and fresh air is unavailable, so we asked the staff to unlock the windows, which they obligingly did. A lot of the hotel seemed to be under refurbishment, including our floor. At the end of the afternoon though, all the workmen disappeared and we were left in peace. We had enjoyed a substantial lunch, so we confined further eating to some fruit we had brought with us and then repaired to the bar to tackle a bottle of Chablis.

We struck up a conversation with the young barman - who was called Antoine - and was keen to use his English. Shortly a large party of French tourists visiting the

Champagne country arrived and took over the rest of the bar. Given a glass of Champagne they were subjected to an introductory lecture of 20 minutes by one expert, who then handed over to another man who talked at them for a further 20 minutes. By this time the party were, to a man and woman, becoming clearly restless. The unfortunate group, fingering by now empty glasses, were then treated to a marathon lecture by the real Champagne expert for nearly an hour. We observed all this with pity and incredulity that the tormentors did not realise how bored (and thirsty) were their captive audience. Finally liberated they rushed off unceremoniously to the restaurant.

Antoine was very interesting to talk to, and during one of his visits to our table to recharge our glasses, he expressed interest in our cigars. When offered one he replied “Oh no, we are not allowed to accept gifts from customers. But if you left one behind in the packet I would be able to think you had forgotten them”. We arranged to do this. On being told that we were actually on our honeymoon he insisted that we have a glass of champagne on him, which we accepted, having no problem with rules. It was a pleasant evening.



June 6th. In the morning, before departure, we took time off to walk to the magnificent Reims cathedral. It contains many beautiful stained glass windows, and we took several photographs, my wrists being slapped politely for stepping across the rope barrier to get a full view of the windows.

Calais was not more than a couple of hours drive and we made straight for the centre of the town to the tabac from whom we had ordered, on the phone from Antibes, a supply of Villiger cigars to take back to England. On this occasion, after our parked car had twice before been broken into and robbed in a very public car park, Lyn stayed in the car and drove it around the block whilst I collected the booty. The customs' guidance is for 200 cigars per person. But the guidance is that excesses over this quantity *may* be confiscated, plus the vehicle in which they are carried, unless they are satisfied that the goods are intended for personal consumption. Our cigars are for personal consumption so we bought 800, enough for several months. During our three trips through the Eurotunnel we have not seen a customs officer, let alone been questioned, though large notices at both ends announce that Customs and Excise are recruiting 955 new Customs & Excise officers in order to prevent illegal import of tobacco products!

Lyn's nose was let loose for finding a place outside of Calais for lunch and once more it came up trumps. About 5 miles outside the town we saw a signpost for Guines, which we promptly named "Guinness" and in the village we saw a sign

pointing to a farm restaurant about a mile up the road. Following this took us to “Le Grand Air” Farm Restaurant set astride a hill with a view over to Calais and the sea in the distance. In this fairly remote setting we were treated to a warm welcome, a complimentary “maison bouche” with our drink and afterwards a lunch which any chef would be proud to serve.



The boss of this establishment paid a lot of attention to Lyn, making several compliments, and commenting that she was a very sexy lady smoking cigars. I concluded that he thought Lyn was out with her father and therefore possibly “available”. He pointed out that the establishment had some fine bedrooms which Lyn ought to come and inspect. We thought it appropriate to tell him at this stage that we were on our honeymoon. Philippe was completely unabashed, turned to me and told me I was a lucky boy. After the meal we decided to smoke a cigar, so I went out to the car to fetch some. I searched desperately in the bags, overlooking the fact that we had just bought 800, which were in the boot! Despite the attempted philanderings of Philippe, which we found mildly amusing, we shall almost certainly return there on a future visit to France.

When we checked-in at the Eurotunnel we were able to get on to an earlier train than the one for which we had booked and arrived home in the late afternoon in the same sort of dull, wet weather which we had left behind nearly a month ago.

Reflections on our odyssey. The highlights were our stays in Annecy and Yvoire, both of them in Upper Savoy. The terrain and surroundings were so different from the rest of our journeyings. Other highlights occurred virtually every time we ate out; the French really do take their cuisine seriously, and aim to please with imaginatively flavoured food, whether they are catering in a high-class restaurant, or in an out-of-the-way village establishment. They can be an awkward race, but their way of life is very civilised, and they do respond better if a foreigner tries to speak to them in their language, even though their reply may be as rapid as a machine gun.

We both cherish very happy memories of what was in fact our honeymoon.

Douglas and Lyn Huntington, Bonaventure, June 2002.

NOVOTEL - BEAUNE



WELCOME



*The secrets are one of the charming
of the old stones at the Abbaye.
Painted, name, age, quiet, and comfort,
welcome you in this place
between lake and mountain.*



The "Abbaye" was indeed an ancient abbey.

A stone archway leads into a quaint cobbled courtyard, surrounded by a wooden balcony.

The proprietors have been restored it and the Abbaye has recovered a rustic nobility inherited from the first dwellers who were not monks as we led to believe.

This old but marvellous Savoyard farm, has a wooden gallery to gain access to the rooms, by worn stone steps. At the top of the gallery, into a room which has not been restored and inaccessible, we could see on a wall, a painting of Saint Jacques Le Mineur and Saint Philippe. On the last wall a bearded pope, wearing mitre and crook is painted but not easy to identify.

All the bedrooms have been beautifully furnished in a variety of styles, and with every modern conveniences.

You will enjoy your stay in a historical Abbaye just 10 mn drive from the center of Annecy.

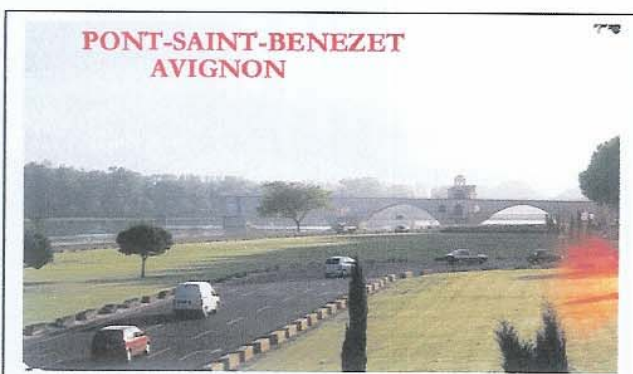
ANNECY, HAUTE SAVOIE



AVIGNON

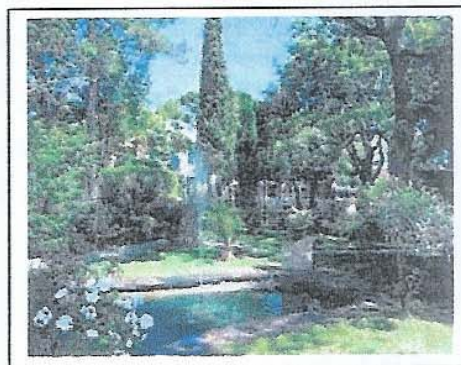


PONT-SAINT-BENEZET AVIGNON



Hostellerie LA MAGNANERAIE

37, rue camp de bataille – BP115
30401 Villeneuve-les-Avignon
tel : 4.90.25.11.11/ fax : 4.90.25.46.37
e-mail : magnaneraie@wanadoo.fr



To : Mr HUNTINGTON

Dear Sir, Dear Madam,

We would like to thank you for your interest in our house, & we are glad to confirm the following reservation :

Arrival : May 16.2002

Departure : May 17.2002

1 Night(s)

1 double room at the daily rate of 160 Euro for 2 people

Continental breakfast is 12 euro / person (in the bedroom or in the restaurant room)

Buffet breakfast is 15 euro / person (available in summer, on the terrace)

Local city tax is 1.10 euro / person.

CONFIRMATION :

We took good note of your credit card number and the expiration date.

(this is just a guarantee, we will charge the card just in case of no-show or late cancellation*)

CANCELLATION POLICY :

- 6 days or more before arrival date : no charge
- within 5 days before arrival date : 1 night per room will be charged on your credit card.

We look forward to welcoming you soon,
Yours sincerely,

Reception desk : Laetitia B.





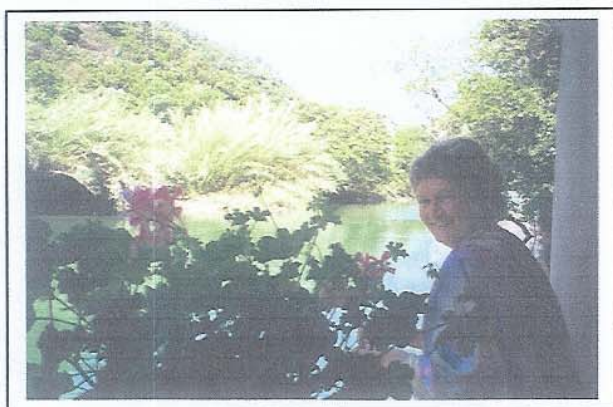
The garden at Hotel La Magnanerie, Avignon



Lyn on the silk at Gourdon



Lyn at lunch in Gourdon



Alfresco lunch at the L'Ecluse, Pegamos



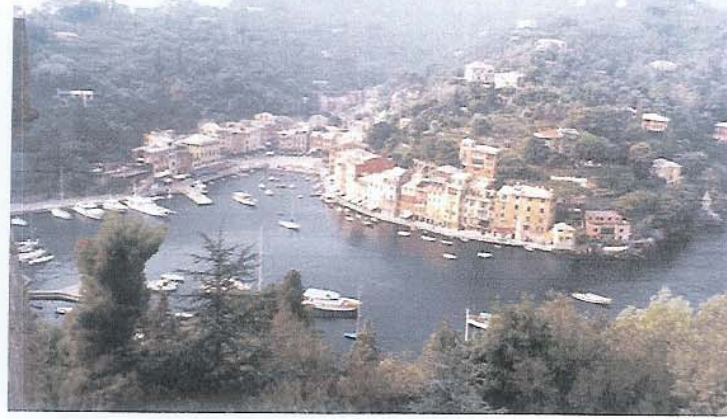
A waterfall in the Aosta Valley under Mt. Blanc.



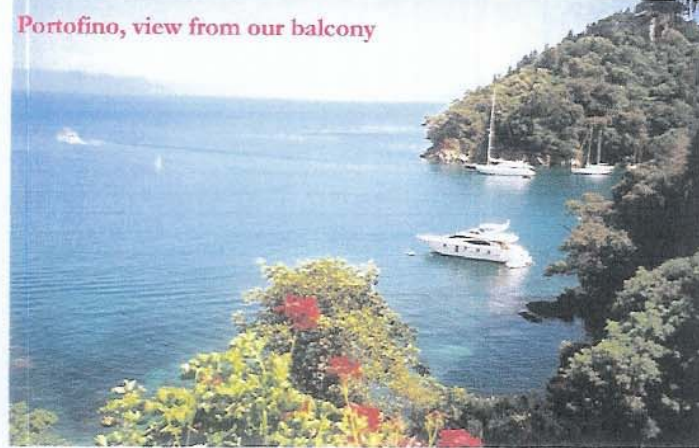
BRIDGE AT PEGOMAS



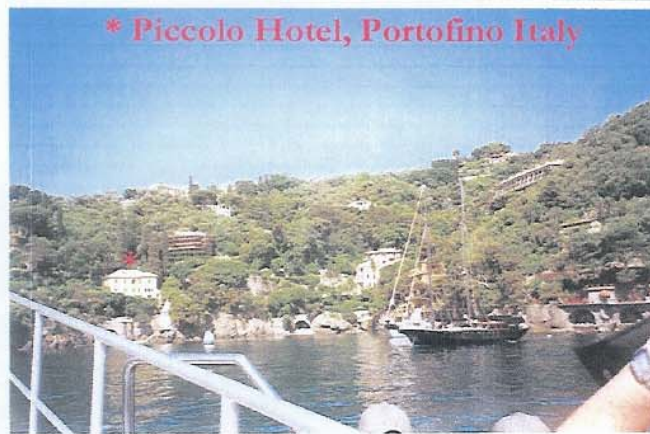
Portofino



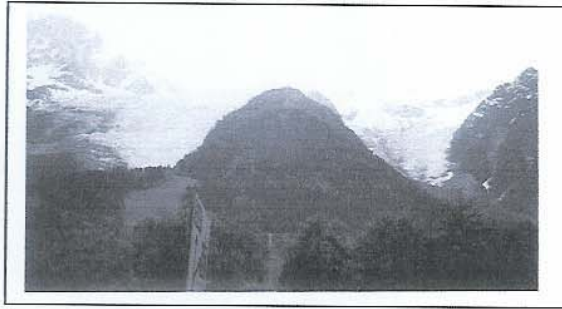
Portofino, view from our balcony



* Piccolo Hotel, Portofino Italy



IN THE AOSTA VALLEY



MONT BLANC GLACIER

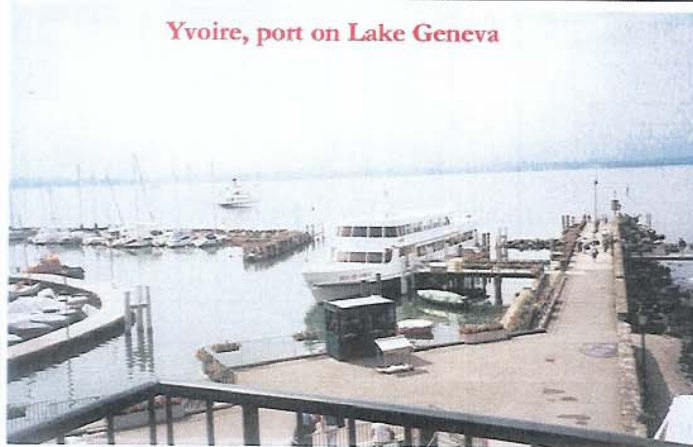


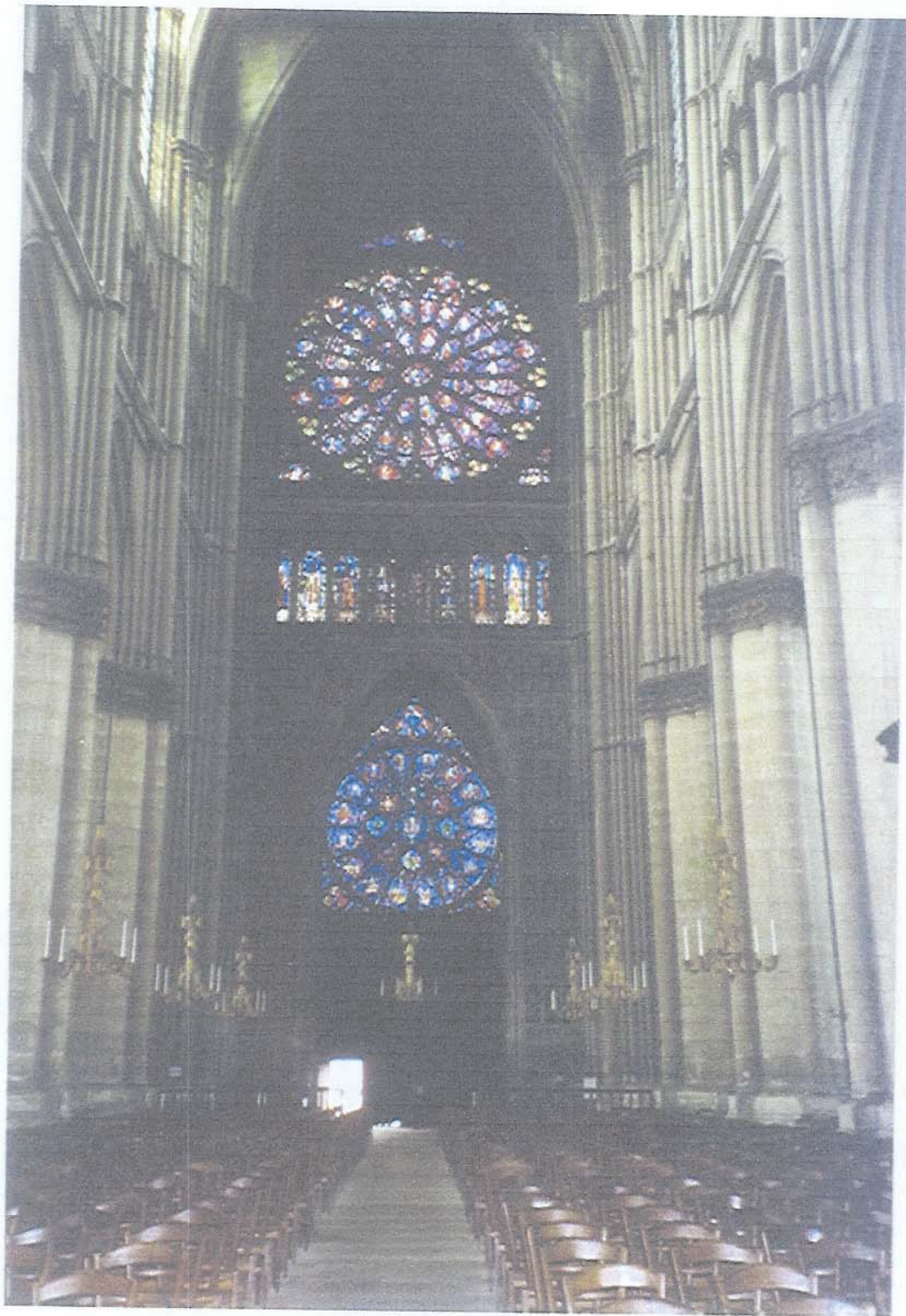
Waterfall in the Aosta Valley under Mt. Blanc
One of the beginnings of the Po River system.

Hotel du Port, Yvoire



Yvoire, port on Lake Geneva





REIMS CATHEDRAL