

February 2014 Travel Article for "Experience"

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ROMANCE FOR FEBRUARY

February is a month of romance. Windows are filled with red and pink hearts. Chocolates and roses are cherished and given away as signs of love. In recalling the most romantic sites, my mind wanders to places we've traveled, like the French Riviera & Provence Alpes-Cote-d'-Azur, Florence, one of the most charming and beautiful cities on earth. Few places can beat the romantic experience strolling along the Arno River in Florence with the site of the delightful Ponte Vecchio. We've experienced Rome, London and Vienna. Nothing quite captures the romantic heart like a quiet boat Gondola ride going beneath the Bridge of Sighs. And no pictures can prepare you for the absolute beauty of the Isle of Santorini on an excursion on our Greece travels. It is stunningly beautiful and "tickles the heart" to see the windmills and domed churches. It is no mystery to me that Santorini is one of the most popular sites for honeymoons.



Then there is Paris, the City of romance. lights, and bike locks, but more on this later. If you are a person of a certain age, you no doubt can recall seeing Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant in the 1963 Alfred Hitchcock movie, *Charades*. Most of the movie is set in Paris and I recall one particular scene with Audrey and Cary on a boat ride down the Seine

River. They were dancing to the music of *Charades* as their boat meandered under the bridges. This past September found us, and about 200 other tourists, floating down the Seine River, gliding under the same bridges, viewing the magnificent buildings lit up with white soft lights. We floated past the beautiful Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower was glowing and sparkling in the night. On the shore were small groups of friends enjoying picnics, drinking wine and waving to us. It was as romantic as the movie! OK, maybe I wasn't dancing with Cary Grant nor wearing an elegant black dress like Audrey, but I was with Wayne which made the moment special. It is an image I will hold in my mind for a long time. The Seine River trip is truly a "must experience" if you go to Paris.

The bike locks. This is a relatively new tradition that began in the early 2000's in Paris. They are called "Love-Locks" of Paris. On the Pont de l'Archeveche, the bridge which crosses from Notre-Dame Cathedral to the Left Bank of the Seine, you will see thousands of ribbons and padlocks attached to its framework. Lovers from around the globe come to declare their love, engraving their initials on the

padlocks and fastening it to the bridge itself and tossing the keys into the Seine in a declaration of undying love. So when in Paris, take along a padlock and express your love for each other.

And no trip to Paris is complete without visiting The Louvre. Romance is right in front of you when you view the Greek goddess of love and beauty, Venus de Milo. It is one of the most famous ancient Greek Sculptures. The statue is believed to depict Aphrodite. No one knows who sculpted Venus but she was found on the island of Milos in the Aegean Sea and was sculptured about 130 BC. She is simply incredible to view!

The Eiffel Tower is perhaps the most famous landmark of Paris, but it took us three visits to Paris before we actually went to the top. The lines to board the elevator can be very long so you could lose precious time. Each time we attempted to go up the tower, we would bypass it due to the lines and would say, "Someday" we'll do it. Our "someday" happened this past September. It was late one afternoon and we were traveling around the city on a "Hop On Hop Off" tour bus. The bus stops right in front of the tower and we could see the line was less than 50 people. Well, we dashed out of the bus and into the line. I don't particularly like heights or tight spaces, but it was a moment not to pass up, again. I held my breath as we shot up to the top viewing platform. IT WAS WORTH the view! And YES, it was romantic to be on top of the world in Paris!

However, the most spectacular view of Paris is in Montmartre, Paris's highest and most northerly hill where generations of artists have lived or worked, including Picasso, Van Gogh, Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec and even Hemmingway visited there. On the streets musicians played and we sat at an outdoor cafe sipping wine and watching artists painting in the square. Our toast to one another was romantic as we sat in this bohemian Parisian place on top of the "Mount of Martyrs".

In closing we have to mention another romantic site, one we are going to In April 2015, the Amalfi Coast and the Isle of Capri. My wish for you is to find your passion for what you enjoy most then make your "Someday Dream" come true. We continue to make "Someday Travel dreams come true" as we travel to Greece in April, a Danube River Cruise in September and Italy in 2015 as well as Spain in September 2015. To read more about these travels go to www.somedaytravel.com

Valerie and Wayne Graczyk

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