

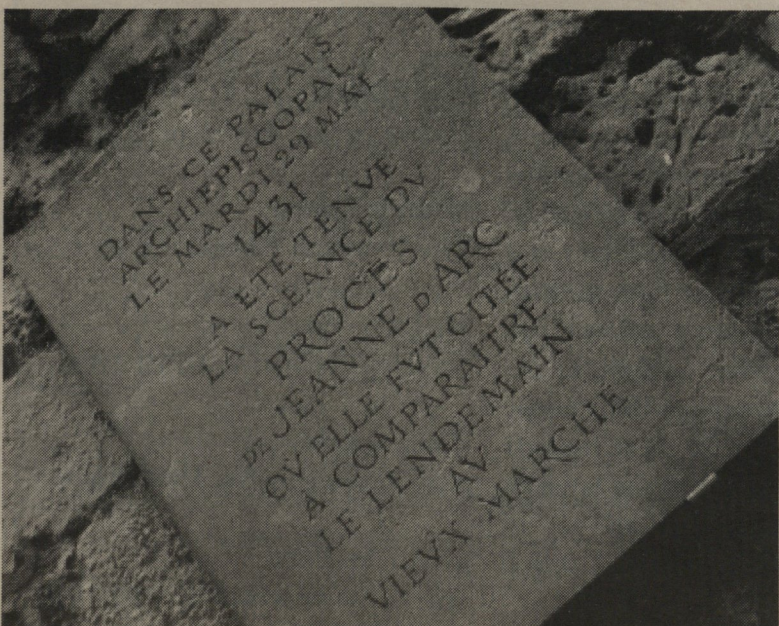
Where in the World is Kristi Kelly?

Kristi Kelly
Contributor



So, I am getting used to this “France” thing by now. I have a French bank account, I use the busing and train systems with ease, and I have become a bit of a regular at the local “boulangerie” where they make my favorite baguette. The biggest adjustment to date however, is the slow pace of life. The French take things slow... very slow. It’s apparently a “pleasure” thing. A normal lunch hour... is actually an hour and a half, maybe two - and everyone is always late (for everything). Then, when they are late, they still take an extra 10 to 15 minutes to greet, “cheek to cheek” kiss and embrace everyone (whether they know you or not) before settling down to a given task. Anyone who knows me (though I am always late) understands that a) I hate wasting time and b) I like my own personal space - so, again, these are all big adjustments.

The one thing about France though, that will always impress me, is its outstanding beauty. Sure, sure... Paris being one of the most beautiful cities



my exploring than right here in Amiens - where I live and go to school. Just north of Paris in the Region of Picardie, (kind of like a province, there are 22 here in France) Amiens it is a city of about 130,000 people and it is most famous for the grand Cathedral that stands tall in the Centre-Ville (which also just happens to be next door to my school). First built in 1152, only to be destroyed by lightning and re-built in 1218, it is the tallest gothic cathedral to be found in France and boy oh boy, it is stunning. Besides the odd beggar at the opening door ways, this place is mystical. The art and decor are truly specular and apparently this Cathedral actually holds the “alleged” head of St. John the Baptist. I am not sure where... but to tell you the truth, I wasn’t exactly willing to look *shudder*. Tourist flock from all over Europe (and the world for that matter) to catch a glimpse of the stunning towers and gothic beauty, and though I see it every single morning as I leave my apartment, I still get struck by its unavoidable looming grace. Amiens is also famous for its coconut macaroons - these cookie like treats are rich but are great with a *chocolat chaud* on a cold day and can be found in numerous shops along the marble pedestrian streets of the

in the world, blah, blah, blah - and yes I agree, but wait until you get outside of Paris! Like most places in Europe, the train systems are quick and efficient, allowing you to explore the Country with ease. What better place to begin

My travels have also taken me to Rouen, a city of half a million people and still in the Northern part of France in the region of Haute-Normandie. Renowned for its role in WWII as Nazi headquarter for France and, well, the reason why I was intrigued about the city’s past... Rouen is the place where none other than Jeanne D’Arc (Joan of Arc) was put to execution at the stake in 1341. The real Joan of Arc! Throughout the town there are various museums and churches in her honor, as well as various plaques noting related heritage sites around the city. The buildings and houses in Rouen are characterized by bright colorful designs and cobble stones walkways.

After wandering the nearly deserted main streets on a cloudy, damp Sunday, out of nowhere, appears the biggest outdoor market I have ever seen! The place was packed! Vendors filled the area selling everything from roasted chicken to smelly cheeses, lingerie to shoes, fruits, veggies, pastries and flowers, you name it! Sales folk were yelling and bargaining, all trying to convince the crowds why their produce was the best. I managed to get my hand on some amazing apple *tartlette* and had fabulous picnic lunch on the crowded side walk café.

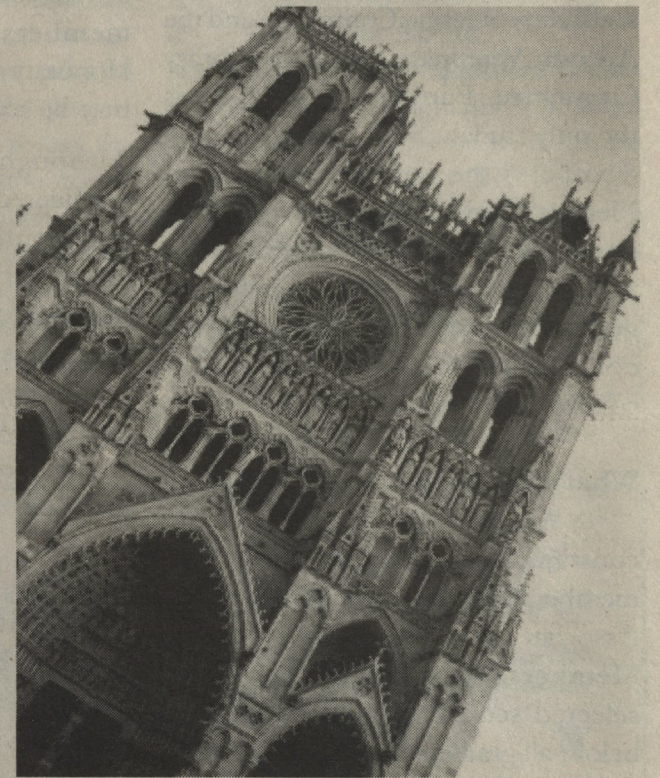
Perhaps my favorite city in France yet, Lille, was an unexpected surprise. Even further North, and known as the “Capital of Culture” of Europe for 2004, this city has a population with 30% of its people under the age 20! The city has changed hands throughout history - from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the Spanish, the Dutch to the Belgian and of course now, the French - you can undoubtedly see the combination of styles and architecture of each of these cultures throughout the city. Paris shopping at

Lille prices (hurray!), tons pubs and an upbeat nightlife (double hurray!) this city has it all - including an underground metro system that is controlled solely by computers. Lille is by far one of the coolest places I have explored yet. It’s main attraction is the Musée des Beaux Arts which houses Europe’s second biggest collection of art (only after the Louvre in Paris). Much to my own appreciation, it also houses a vast number of contemporary art collections which proved to be quite entertaining. The highlight of this trip you may ask? Finding a Subway Sandwich shop off the main street. I

literally had a sentimental moment. After I collected myself, I managed to find my way into a haven which was so close to what I was used to at home - the smell, the cookies, everything! After amusingly watching some “unaccustomed” Subway virgins realize that they need to actually follow their sandwich through the steps, I got my free refill on fountain pop and headed on my way.

Ah, the sights of Northern France. Now with a little bit of traveling experience under my belt, I am feeling a tad more confident in my ability to navigate around foreign cities - though my sense of direction is not near as good as I pretend it is. What will my next adventure be? Let’s just say, bigger is better...
À la prochaine!

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