An Easter Weekend to Remember!

Village Trip to our ‘twinned’ town of Vern d’Anjou, France

There was an air of excitement as we left Tatsfield on Good Friday morning to travel to our twinned town of Vern d’Anjou in France. Alighting from the ferry in Dieppe later that afternoon, the coach rumbled with the sound of chatting as everyone anticipated the weekend ahead. That evening any caution was put aside on meeting our hosts, when we were greeted with warmth, food, wine and a very welcome place to rest our weary heads. We were also met by ‘Le President’ John White and Firmin Moriarty, who had courageously (or some say madly) cycled out of Tatsfield at 5am on the previous Wednesday. They arrived in Vern d’Anjou at 4pm on Friday to an unexpected press welcome outside the Marie (Town Hall,) having cycled 465km!

**A Spectacular Saturday!**

Saturday proved to be an amazing day at Puy du Fou, a historical park with exciting and spectacular re-enactments around every corner, ‘including musketeers, Vikings, medieval knights and St Joan of Arc. A favourite was ‘Le Signe du Triomphe’ held in a life size Roman coliseum with gladiators, chariots and live animals. ‘Le Bal des Oiseaux Fantomes’ was also a real treat as we saw numerous birds; falcons, hawks, owls, eagles and vultures which just skimmed our heads as they swooped over us. It was like no other ‘birds of prey’ display we had ever seen.

**The thoughts of the young Jumelage Debutantes!**

‘The best show for me was ‘The Knights of the Round Table’. The table and a horse emerged from the water and it was really entertaining.’ Sophie Mullen

‘My favourite part was the music at the end’. At night there were dancers, a pianist and a violinist, all decorated with lights, skimming the lake in and out of the coloured fountains. Ciaran age 12.

‘The birds were my favourite. They flew over you, maybe 10 or more at a time. It was a bit scary in case they pooed on you! They stood on people’s heads. The eagles and the vultures were the best, especially when they all flew over at the same time.’ Millie age 11.

‘I liked the musketeers and all their horses. Also the white horse and person that glowed in the dark. There was even a horse that walked in when we were having our medieval banquet!’ Robyn age 11.

Millie and Robyn also loved the hot chocolate for breakfast and the Easter egg hunt on Sunday at their host’s home. They said ‘It doesn’t matter if you can’t speak French, but the trip has made me us want to learn more!’

**Easter Sunday**

Easter Sunday was a relaxing day on the whole, unless of course you are the President and had to make a speech in English and French! A quiet afternoon was spent meeting up with Tatsfield friends and host families, followed by a typical Anjou meal and some hilarious Wii dancing in the evening. On Monday morning Freddie was treated to a rendition of ‘Happy Birthday’ on the coach drive to Angers, as he was celebrating his 21st birthday!

**Monday - More from our Jumelage Debutantes**

‘The intrepid travellers set off to Angers, not knowing what to expect. They were greeted by a grand castle with intimidating walls and pleasant flowers and gardens. Following a delightful picnic with a view of the river and no shortage of ham and cheese, they set off on a guided tour. Our Spanish tour guide was engaging and enthusiastic about her city. We learnt about slate, rounded corners, tree lined boulevards and the Cathedral. All in all we had a ball. Top marks to the people of Vern for arranging such a pleasant day.’

Jack Mooney and Maliha.

‘Only one day left but we still have an array of activities arranged. So far I’ve had an amazing and unforgettable experience. Puy du Fou was certainly a highlight and something that I can only imagine we would see in France! This twinning visit is unlike anything I have ever done before and how welcoming and hospitable the French have been astounds me. From when we arrived on Friday night, I have been well fed and looked after. On this trip I have tried many new foods, spoken the most French in a long time and made some good friends. I certainly want to come again.’

Lydia Pearce.

On our return from Angers late Monday afternoon, some travellers retired for a welcome nap, others visited the impressive church or the fire station. Nick, who has recently retired from the fire service, was lucky enough to be invited to visit the fire station in Vern d’Anjou by Marie- Francoise, a volunteer fire fighter and host. The evening was spent with our hosts in the ‘Pigeon Blanc’, celebrating a successful visit whilst enjoying a superb meal, entertainment and dancing.

**Tuesday – Time to Return Home**

Tuesday morning came all too quickly. For me it meant a visit to St Marie, the local primary school, where I met the excited pupils (and Elvis, their teacher) who have been emailing Year 3 at Tatsfield Primary School. We exchanged gifts and they were keen to impress me with their English. Soon it was time to gather in town to say goodbye to both new and old friends.

I will leave you with the thoughts of Nick and Elly who joined the trip for the very first time this year but certainly not their last!

‘As ‘Jumelage debutantes’ we have been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of our French hosts and by the effort and organisation of the committee. We were a bit nervous about our limited knowledge of French and, on reflection, about being amongst people who we didn’t know very well from Tatsfield village. Any fears quickly evaporated and we were treated like old friends. Our attempts to communicate with our lovely hosts became one of the best and most humorous aspects of the trip as both sides grapple to engage. We quickly discovered the key role of the picnic on excursions and the love of the Vern crowd for ‘fromage’ et ‘vin’!

Angers in particular, was a memorable trip where we learned of our shared history with the Plantagenet King of England who originated in Angers. A guided tour of the beautiful and historic city was complemented by stunning views across the tributaries of the Loire River.

At the conclusion of our first exchange our overriding impressions are of kindness, inclusion, friendship and humour. We are looking forward to participating next year and to a long association with the twinning for many years to come.’

Nick and Elly.

**Tempted to join us or just want to know more?**

Next Easter we will be hosting the French. Maybe you would like to be involved or would enjoy coming along to one of our fund raising events this year.

Either way, we’d love to hear from you.

John and Sue White 570097