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THE BABY BOOMER'S GUIDE TO TRAVEL

Exploring the French Medieval Village of Perouges

2015/06/22 by Jan Ross

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Simply put, France is a stunning country and exploring its profound history, diverse cuisine and incredible landscape makes for the perfect baby boomer adventure. Of course, for anyone planning a trip through France, exploring the picturesque countryside and off-the-beaten-path villages is a must. However, today's guest writer Jan Ross, from Wanderlust Wonder, tells us how pure and simple serendipity led to her exploring the little-known medieval village of Perouges.

Medieval Perouges

Visiting Perouges was actually an unexpected surprise on our recent trip to France. My husband and I were on a cruise of southern France with **Viking River Cruises** but, because the Rhone was overfilled with the run-off from melted snow in the Alps, our beautiful Viking Delling longship was berthed in Lyon and we were bussed to locations we would have normally cruised to.

Perouges is not usually on this itinerary but, because we had been so inconvenienced by not having the cruise experience we had planned, along with going out of their way to make sure we enjoyed the experience we were having instead, Viking added a visit to this medieval walled city and we were delighted with the addition.

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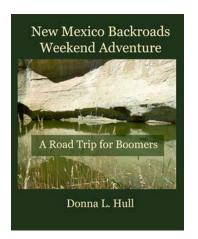Email:

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The narrow streets of Perouges make for great strolling.

Perouges is a tiny village northeast of Lyon which is perched on a small hill overlooking the plain of the Ain River and has quite a lovely view of the surrounding area. Probably founded in the early 1100's by a Gallic colony, the town has always been inhabited by craftsmen, mainly farmers, linen weavers, and wine makers. The town officially became French in 1601 and the textile industry boomed until the early 19th century when roads and railroads were re-routed which bypassed the town and the population dropped from well over 1,000 to 90.

In the early 1900's, the town was restored to its medieval appearance, houses and other residences were saved, and it became a popular tourist destination. Because of this authentic, medieval appearance, the town is often used in movie sets.

We had already been to several French towns by the time we made it to Perouges, but from the moment we saw the entrance gate, we knew this place was totally unique. After strolling through the gate, we walked along the cobblestoned lanes to see centuries old, medieval homes lining the narrow lanes. Our guide pointed out the difference between the homes that had been built and owned by linen merchants and those of wine makers. The wine making homes all had lower levels to store wine and were easy to pick out. We were surprised when a door to an ancient and charming home opened and we could peer in to see modern furnishings, complete with a large, flat-screen television! She also explained the sealed up windows and doors on many of the homes – ghosts were expected to leave via those exits, then they were sealed up so they couldn't return!

And stay out, you ghosts!

Although Perouges only has about 100 inhabitants, there are numerous artisans with shops as well as several restaurants and hotels in the town and the surrounding areas. From handmade paper to a fresh bakery, you can purchase several items to take home. **Guided tours** of the town are a good idea to help you understand the history of the area.

After our tour, we ended up in a large, central square where there are several small shops, restaurants with the requisite open-air dining so popular in France, and a hotel, the **Hostellerie du Vieux Perouges**, one of the oldest inns in France which would be a wonderful place to stay when visiting.

We were tired after navigating the narrow, cobblestone lanes so our group divided, each finding shady, comfortable seating at one of the restaurants where we all ordered cool drinks and Mia, our Viking River Cruises program director, brought us all a very special treat.

Galette Perugienne a la Crème

Galette Perugienne a la Crème (literally, "pancake of Perouges) looks like a simple cheese pizza until you look closer and realize that's not cheese but butter, sugar, and lemon. It was the perfect, delicious, and unique snack to end our visit to this fascinating place.

Disclosure: Jan's trip was provided by Viking River Cruises.