

Lens letter from the Via

Date 9/07/17

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| Location | Rest Day in Besancon | KM's to Rome | 1,316 | Steps Today | 17,457 |
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Besancon is a lovely small city sustained by its university and a thriving tourist industry. The walk into the old city is comparable in beauty to any other European city I have entered on foot. The river is clean and looks healthy.

Below are a couple of photographs for my friend Tommy who has a toy monkey which he has tried to convince me is real and the tiger of course needs no explanation.



The great thing

about university cities is that there are always plenty of good bookshops which brings me to the Via Bookclub. Just to remind everybody the current book is *The last days of a Condemned Man* by Victor Hugo. The next book is *Steppenwolf* by Herman Hesse. This book was selected by Gordon on the basis that it was written by the author while living in Switzerland. Gordon may have also selected it because it has the same structure of the first book in that the book is written as if the main character has written the book as the author. Initially Victor Hugo did not put his name to the book. However, I don't think *50 shades of Grey* has any relevance to my walk.

I enjoyed *The last days of a condemned man*, a quite harrowing description of what happens when society decides to terminate a citizen and how some parts of the community enjoy the process as a spectacle.

The book was a prequel for a visit to the *Musee de la Resistance et la Deportation* in Besancon. Most of us have some awareness of what occurred under the Nazi regime and seen some of the pictures. Moving through the displays, starting with the rise of the Nazi's in Germany to the ultimate liberation of France, using mainly photographs from the time was a harrowing and devastating experience. We are "Mostly Harmless" but when by some madness we decide not to be we can lose all reason and become ideologically fundamentalist and heartless.

One photograph showed a resistance fighter being shot by a firing squad, he was smiling at his assassins just before being shot.

Reminds me a bit of the gladiator fights in the Rome colosseum where political outcasts were thrown into the ring.