

Trefcon to Corbony

Km's to Rome:1692

After an early breakfast, Day 12 on my journey started with a walk through wheat fields enjoying the early morning sunshine. My hosts very obligingly got up at 6:30 to send me on my way with bread and jam. To supplement the jam he went to the cupboard where I tantalising noticed some cereal, I think there is a widely held belief that tourists here covet the traditional French breakfast when most of us probably just want to have cereal and fruit.

It is hard to remove yourself from the long tentacles of WW1 around here as you are constantly reminded of it by the red poppies that are everywhere. Here is one of my artistic shots.

My destination today was Chauny, a 32 kms walk through the ubiquitous wheat fields and some forest. It was a bit of a chore as temperatures are rising. Arrived in Chauny to my hotel to find that it is all locked up, not even able to get through the high front gates. Checked my bookings and dates to confirm I was where I should be, confirmed I was and then my temperature started to rise. What sustains you on the long days is

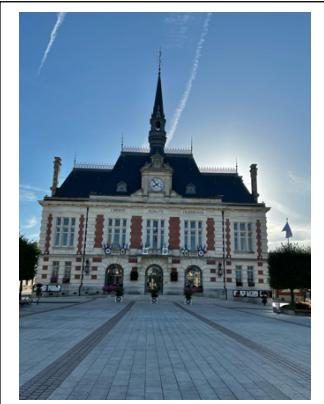


that as you approach the end of the walk you know it won't be long before you can jump in the shower and clean the walk dust off. It was particularly annoying as I like to buy a cold drink on the way into the village but being Sunday everything was closed. After a phone call the host arrived and showed me to a lovely large room with a mini bar. I quickly drank my fill of the cold water on offer then headed off to Centre Ville in the pursuit of an evening meal. Settled on goodies from a kebab shop and ate it in the village square. A local even wished me bonne appetite as he walked past. Returned to my hotel for a good nights rest as the next day is going to be the longest yet at 36 kms. But my

host Basil had another mishap for me. I presented as arranged at 7:00 for an early breakfast to find the hotel deserted again, I hadn't realised that I had the whole twenty room hotel to myself. Again after another phone call, he had no electricity, I think he meant that his phone had gone flat, he turned up and told me that breakfast would be in half an hour. I decided to not wait for breakfast and brought something in the village on the way out. Came across this statue, think it is a homage to A. Lincoln.

Day 13 of the walk to Laon turned out to be the best so far, lots of walking through forest and tracks. The sort of walking I love to do in Europe. I am hoping that I have left the coastal plains behind me. Laon is a village in the tradition of the hill top villages of Italy which of course means a long climb up into the centre. This is the first hill so far of the walk and I have to admit that I had to stop a few times.

But the climb was worth it as I walked into a grand square with an even grander cathedral. I resolved to come back later and dine in one of the cafes around the square. Nobody has ever told me that they have visited Laon but it is well worth a visit from the grandest of the



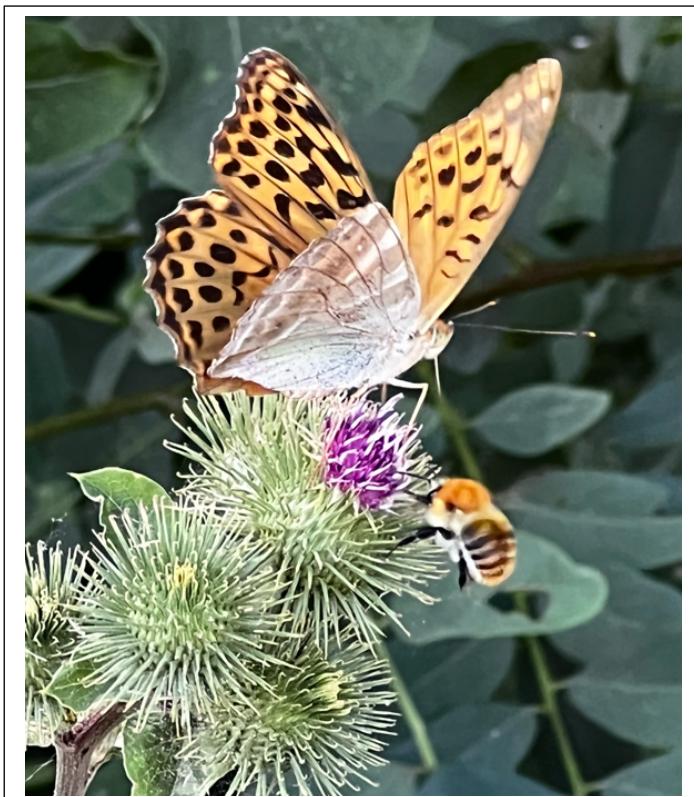
buildings to the view from the rampart's almost back to Calais. It's also the first bookshop I have encountered on my travels which usually attests to some thoughtfulness in the community. This is the view back to Calais. Also the impressive Cathedral viewed from the plains on the way out of Laon.



On Day 14 on my way to Corbeny I came across a lovely village called Vorges. It's claim to fame was that a nearby brook has mystical healing capacity. Queen Blanche of France in 1250 visited the village and partook of the waters to heal her fever, she drank the waters and on advice of the local bishop took to ten days bed rest from which on the tenth day she arose from her bed recovered. The fountain erected on the site and dedicated to Saint Peter has disappeared over time so I am not sure about the healing capacity of the water, perhaps it was the bed rest but it is better to have a false belief than no belief at all.

If you were made a queen wouldn't you choose a better name than Blanche it's decidedly an unroyal name, on the information about Blanche at the local church there was no explanation as to name selection.

In the past I have tended to include too many photos of the natural world in my blog but I thought this encounter was worthy of a showing.



On arriving in Corbeny I found that there were five Via walkers at the hotel Erika and Nicholas who I keep crossing paths with and three French walkers. I must have a sign over my head that I am Australian as one of the French walkers said G'day mate.

Colby is a small village where the smells of the local beef and dairy farms waft into your hotel room. Added to this is the occasional rumbling from the huge agricultural machinery that passes through the village. I hope they go to bed early, which I must now do.

