

Trepail to Chavanges

Km's to Rome:1534

Day19 on leaving Trepail was another walk through some vineyards. All the plantations are named and even come up on my navigation app, map me if anyone is interested. The next few days are going to be very warm with record temperatures predicted for three days time. This



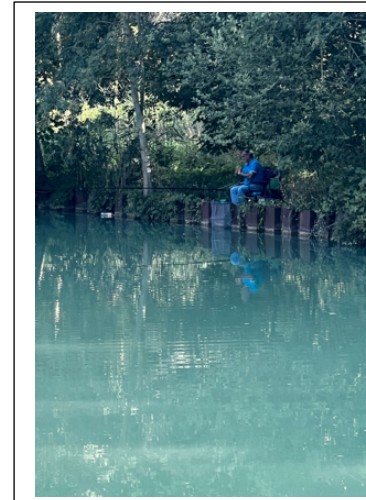
is looking back to Trepail in the early morning. I am looking forward to today's walk because once I get through the vineyards I will be walking along a canal's towpath. There are extensive canals in this area which I will be mainly travelling along for the next few days. The canal's main use are for leisure activities, I passed many longboats and lots of people fishing. The tow path is also very popular for cyclists who I have found to be overwhelming courteous. There are a few daily walkers but I haven't come across any long distance walkers for

a few days but I am not on the Via taking a more direct route. There is some limited commercial activity, for example I passed a boat full of coal. I also passed a boat flying the Australian flag called Shiralee from Sydney. There are lots of fish in the canal but I have not seen any being caught, it's sometimes the quite contemplation that is more important than actually catching anything.

I stopped and watched a longboat going through a lock which was interesting, but I can't understand the development of the locks, were they set up to use horse power before the invention of machines? The canals are actually higher than the surrounding rivers. The canal walking was very pleasant as there was a bit of a breeze off the water.

Arrived into the beautiful Chalons-en-Champagne on a hot Sunday afternoon and found one of the aforementioned milk bars open for business.

After settling into my rather spanky hotel I walked back to the square for my evening meal.



To build my strength I went for the big bit of steak with chips, ate it a little too fast. The square was a lovely place to spend a couple of hours of quite contemplation but the heat was too excessive so resisting desert I scarpered back to my air conditioned hotel room and finished the novel.

Overall I enjoyed the book particularly the depiction of how war effects people on the micro level who are some emotional distance from the reasons for the actual war. But I found some of the events a little hard to believe

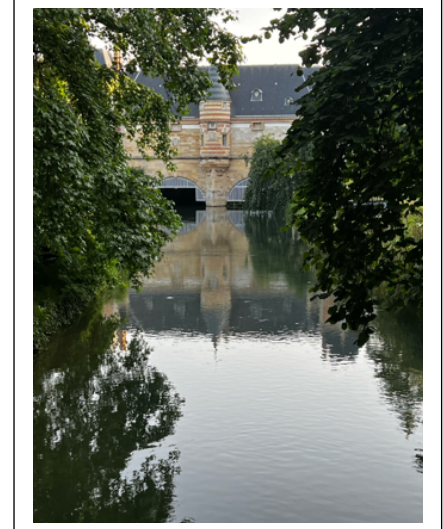
for instance the heroine's father killing himself, the heroine running off with Franklin after such a short romance and O'Conner possibly sacrificing himself for Franklin. I did like some of the minor characters such as the doctor brothers and the two English women in Marseille.

Next recommendation please.

Day 20 was going to be mainly canal walking to Vitry la Ville. Some of the infrastructure of the canals is impressive, I came across this on my way out of Chalons-en-Champagne.

I spent an enjoyable day walking the tow paths so I felt my decision to leave the official Via was beneficial. Leaving the canal to enter the village Vitry la Ville was however an unpleasant experience. The village was desolate and hot, I thought I could see some tumbleweeds rolling down the main rue. There were no shops opened, in fact there were no shops only a closed pizza shop. So I headed to my accommodation for the night, I had made good time and arrived at 12.30 but booking time was 4:00. The host was there and he said it was not possible to book in early and I would have to come back, I asked him if I could sit in the grounds in the shade which he reluctantly allowed me to do. While no one was watching I snuck into one of the rooms to get a drink. He was a little flustered by my arrival as they had had a big wedding the night before and they were still cleaning up, he had to do some shopping and he had a ninety minute phone meeting (lots of hads).

To his credit he came back at 2:00 and took me to a splendid room overlooking the grounds of the Chateau. In the evening they provided a locally inspired meal which I ate outside in the



evening shadows. One of the dishes was simply slices of tomato with slices of mozzarella cheese. The tomato was grown in their own plot and was just full of flavour, just like the ones we ate when tomatoes were only available in season.

The host has an interesting story, his parents fled Russia at the time of the communist revolution and settled in France, the immigrant story again, he worked in tourism and purchased the chateau in 2017. Prior to this he married a Russian who goes back to Moscow for two months in each year. He volunteered that his wife was happy with Putin's rule.

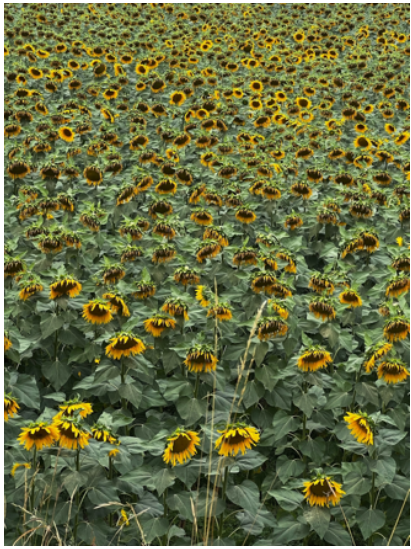
Day 21 is forecasted to be the hottest day on record so I started at 5.30 for an early morning walk to Vitry Le

Francois. After a shortish walk along roads then some back roads I connected to the canal again. I made good time as the sun didn't have much sting in it until around 10:30 but after that it got hot very quickly. The breeze off the canal was a big help to cope with the soaring temperatures. I later learned that the temperature reached 40.3 which turned out not to be a record, 40.3 is 104.54 in the old language.

I managed to cope with the conditions well due mainly to the early start, I wish I had the gaggle of climate change deniers waddling behind me today experiencing these conditions. Every local you talk to complains that conditions have never been like this with crops maturing earlier and in some cases not reaching full potential because of the heat, following is an example of some sunflowers, which appear to be the dominant crop around here showing the effects of the heat.







They would normally be standing to attention drinking in the sun.

I stopped for a rest on the side of the canal and a black mass of small catfish swam towards me, at first I thought they were the black guppies we buy for our home aquarium. It was impossible to count them but there must have been hundreds. A large parent fish was constantly herding them keeping all of them together in a bunch.



I arrived at Vitry Le Francois and just lay on the bed for the rest of the day, nipped out to buy something for dinner and retreated back to my room. Fortunately during the night we had a thunderstorm which cleared the air.

Day 22 was a short walk to Chavanges, I have lost my cherished canals but it proved to be a nice walk through small villages and country back lanes. There was partly a walk beside an old railway track which was fully maintained. I passed a couple of railway stations which had been converted to homes so not sure why the tracks are being maintained, there is a defence base near by so suspect that has something to do with the reason why.

In this area there are lots of houses in the Tudor style. They are very old so they may be a leftover from when this part of France was part of England. The style extends to all types of



buildings including shops, churches and farm buildings. This is an example of one that has been painted but they are mostly white with unpainted timber. My memory is that the Tudor style in England has the timber painted black.

I found my accomodation's address in Chavanges and a sign pointed me twenty meters up a rather overgrown lane to an uninspiring entrance to a hotel. I thought this was going to be the hotel howler I booked for this trip. But I was greatly mistaken, the host was charming and helpful and showed me to a well appointed room. She also offered to wash my clothes which I gratefully accepted, a thousand words will not leave as deep an impression as one deed. The hand washing does have its limits. A fish and rice dish was presented for my evening meal and I was very pleased, which all lead to a memorable

experience and a very good nights sleep.