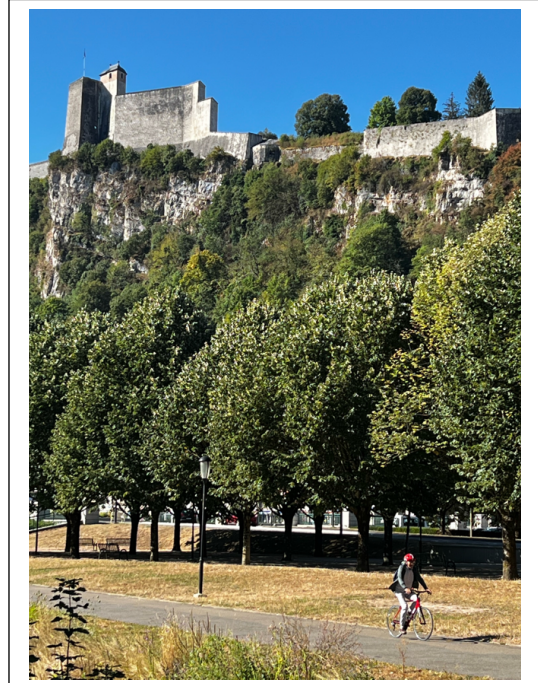


Besancon to Jougne

Km's to Rome:1183

It was with some regret that on Day 33 I left Besancon early in the morning. Besancon is one of my favourite places and because of my late arrival the previous day I was unable to enjoy the city. If you have a chance to visit Besancon take it. This is my parting view of the Citadel as I head to Ornans. There is a great photographic exhibition of WW2 in the Citadel.

I was lulled in to a false sense of security as I followed the river out of Besancon, rekindling my yearning for canals. As I headed off the river and upwards I kept telling myself that this is good training for the Swiss Alps which are slowly inching their way towards me. Only a climb of 450 meters but when you have been walking over the flat country of Northern France for a month it was a bit of a shock especially as the walk was not particularly appealing. On top I emerged onto countryside that was mainly farm land with the dreaded tarmac walking. I have always maintained that no matter how bad the walking on a particular day is there is always something to make it worthwhile, my theory was being tested today. The trail into Ornans is along a disused railway line which had



this still intact fabulous bridge, which was about 75 meters above the ravine. It may not be as good as the viaduct at Spoleto but I enjoyed the bridge after a lacklustre day. The other good thing about today was that the blackberries were ripe so I was able to have a nice sweet feed.

I don't think this fellow was too impressed with the walk either, perhaps I should have given him some of my blackberries.



Ornans is a pretty village constructed around a bend in the river which is a haven for trout so decided that I would partake of the local delicacy and ordered trout for dinner, it was very nice. Had to forgo the deserts though as I already had partaken of my sweet treat for the day.

For those who are suffering from insomnia I recommend you do what I am doing, most nights I am getting up to ten hours uninterrupted sleep usually being asleep before nine. This may

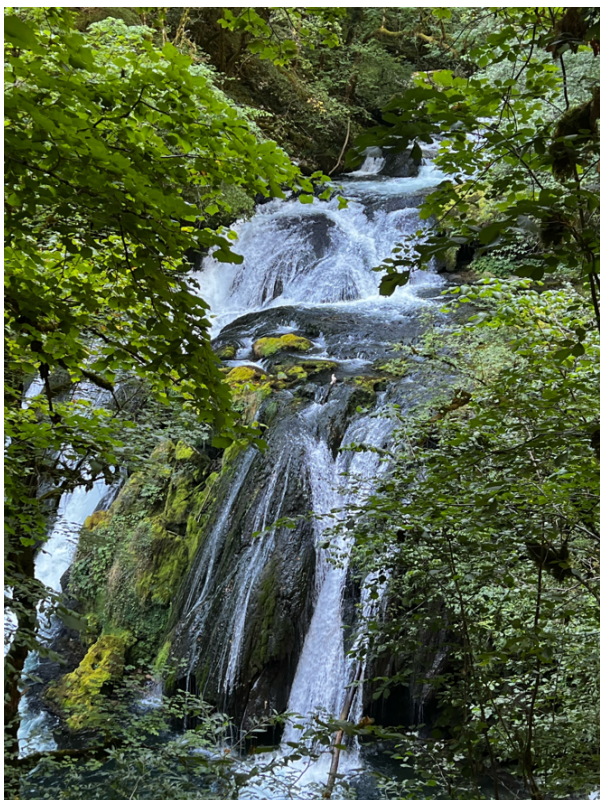
not be much fun for the partygoers but I don't think there was a lot happening in Ornans on a quiet Monday night.

On Day 34 on my way out of airman's to Mouthier Haut Pierre I noticed that the people living up there appear to have the damage caused by climate change covered. The houses are sited on a small plateau overlooking the village and river, I would imagine stunning views but a bit of a grind for the daily walk to the shops to collect the bread and papers.

As I have done this part of the walk before I was expecting a nice easy day, walking along the River Laou for most of the day with very little hill work. This proved to be the case and I took my time reaching my destination enjoying time by the river.

Mouthier Haut Pierre is a small village and a quick turn around the block disgorged all of its attributes so I retreated to the relative coolness of my room in a very old but well maintained villa. Treated myself to a top grade French dinner of yogurt and fruit followed up by a digestive biscuit, what better could I ask for, probably a lot. This was my own fault as I misunderstood the booking arrangements around the evening meal, the host was apologetic but couldn't do anything to help.

The river Orbe beckoned the following day, this is reputedly a beautiful river down a steep gorge. At the start of the gorge there were some warning signs about the track and a suggestion to take a deviation which meant climbing up out of the gorge. Every damn fool thing you do in life you pay for but I ignored this thought and pressed on. It was a five kilometre walk but the thought of getting close to the end and having to turn back was uppermost in my mind. The gorge and the river are stunning as this photo shows, scenes like



this around every corner turned kept me heading onwards.

About half way through the journey the track started to seriously deteriorate and I was having second thoughts. Just as I about to turn back, around a corner came a person in kaki's carrying a gun, my first thought ran to a hunter and the Deliverance theme started to play in my head especially when he was followed by a further two gun toting characters. My fears were allayed though when I realised that they were army personnel on some sort of manoeuvres, there was approximately fifty of them all trundling down a single lane track. I respectfully moved to the side to let them past but I wasn't able to establish with them if they were coming through the gorge or doing an in and out. I took the risk and headed on reasoning that it was still fairly early and they wouldn't

have had time for an in and out. It was with some relief after a further difficult two kms walking I came across some people coming in from the other end, it turns out that the head of the river is quite a tourist spot as the river starts at the bottom of a cliff, there were

lots off people at the heads including a group of artists painting this scene of the river emerging from the 400 metre high cliff face, quite a amazing thing to see.

There are several small scale hydro electric generators in this region using the rivers as the source of energy, there was two in the five kms I walked today.

I took a risk and it paid off but I was lucky, the track could well have collapsed in places.

My ultimate destination after the gorge was Pontarlier. The walk into the village is horrible being a long walk along tarmac and concrete before reaching a nice Centre Ville where I enjoyed a lovely stay in an old style Maison. The host kept me over breakfast wanting to practise her English on me. She wants to come to Australia to see the kangaroos and the horses. I queried her about the horses but wasn't able to establish where she heard about our "wild horses" she must have seen the man from snowy river, I won't bore you with a tirade about how

much damage the brumbies are doing to the fragile Australian high plains country.

Day 37 was a walk to Jougne, I knew I was getting close to Switzerland as the hills have arrived and the cows are wearing bells. The walk is mainly through pine forests with a little open country walking. I passed many local walkers today and two Via walkers from Belgium.

The first one started in Belgium and for the second it was her first day on the track, both were solo walkers. Here I am overlooking one of the valleys I passed today.



The walking is much better than in the north of France despite the harder work required in the hills. On the outskirts of Jougne I was heartened to come across this first sign pointing to Rome, only 1183 kms to go but I can almost see it on the horizon. Go pies, quack quack.

