

Day 2 - 10th September

Exploring Dijon

After a leisurely and hearty breakfast of cereal, pancakes, apple puree, apple slice cake, fruit and yoghurt, we walk to the Cathedral of St-Benigne, with its typical Burgundy roof of multiple zig zag colours. We visit the Romanesque crypt which has a rotunda from 1001, a vast structure with 3 circles of 8, 16 and 24 pillars and a mortuary chapel built in the gallo-roman cemetery. Decorated capitals are in the crypt (Photo 2) plus a pilgrimage site of St Benigne. The Museum of Archaeology is a fascinating cultural visit in the former Benedictine Abbey of St-Benigne next door.



Dijon

It is market day on a Saturday, and the market hall Les Halles is a glass and metal masterpiece designed by Gustave Eiffel (he also designed the Eiffel Tower in Paris!) The market spreads along the Rue de la Liberte, and Mulot de Petitiean sells pain d'épices, and cakes famous in Dijon.

As we explore on foot we see little gold owls in the pavement to show us the best way to go to see the sights such as the impressive Palais de Ducs which includes the famous Musée des Beaux-Arts which is being restored and is one of the richest French museums, with Burgundian art of the 15th – 18th century, and two amazing 14th century altar pieces from Chartreuse de Champmol Church. Two late medieval sepulchres of the Dukes of Burgundy, Philip the Bold and John the Fearless lie in state in the Salle des Gardes and can be viewed from above from a minstrels gallery.

Time for a break

We pop in the Maison Millière tea room, a local patisserie and a good place for a break with a lovely garden, to one of the oldest medieval buildings in Rue de la Chouette. Next door is Moutard Maile, the factory boutique, where we saw the bags of mustard seeds, and the grinding milling stone and you could sample mustard on tap as it came out, with the tangy odour of the sharp sauce. (Photo)



View from tower

Philippe le Bon Tower

We climbed up 316 steps of the Philippe le Bon tower and on the tour hear all the tales of the wonderful names of the Dukes of Burgundy from Good to Bad to Fearless! On the clear sunny day we can see to Mont Blanc, an outline on the far horizon!

Nearby at Notre Dame Cathedral on a pillar on the outside we touch La Chouette, the little owl, for good luck and make a wish.

Crepes

We stop for lunch at a wonderful creperie near the Place de Notre Dame. Andrew selected a buck wheat crepe filled with cheese, mushrooms and leeks with an egg in the centre. I had a delicious apricot filled one.



Crêpe

Art Museum

We struggled to find the Musée Magnin, but it is well worth locating as it is one of the most beautiful 17th century buildings, originally the Hotel Lantin. Jeanne and Maurice Magnin (their portraits are in the house) were passionate art collectors, from Fragonard to the "Parisian Atticism" style set in their home, from the library to the bedroom upstairs. An outstanding collection of French paintings set in their home.

Many of Dijon's attractions are free, and there is plenty to see in the old streets. A wonderful combination of art museums, strolling around old Dijon interspersed with food, such as Charolais beef, snails, and local cheeses (eg Brillet-Savarin) and drink. It is ideal as a train stop for art and food on inter rail. All the attractions are within easy walking distance.