There is no such thing in France as Bastille Day, even though most anglophones call it that, but there is **Le 14 Juillet or La Fête Nationale** and it is a wonderful time to be in Paris, and a great time to have friends come to visit.

Jim is an old San Francisco childhood friend and his wife Evelyne is French. It was fun to take them around Paris, a city they have been to many times of course, but over the last few years mostly just when changing trains as they go between their home in the Haute Savoie and their property on the Atlantic coast in Bretagne.

The 14th fell on a Tuesday, but really everything had gone into holiday mode as early as the Friday before, and the mood throughout the city was laid back. The day that they arrived, we went out to lunch and then came back to sit on our back deck. We discussed "culture shock", life in France vs. life in the States, etc. We introduced Jim and Evelyne to friends that we have made here in Paris, and had a multinational conversation over drinks and dinners, flipping back and forth between English and French and talking about things that are different and things that are the same in our cultures. Everyone was enjoying the exchange of ideas as the sun set on the Bastille monument.

The holiday events started on Monday night with **"les bals des pompiers"**, and as always, we went to the Marais because it is close and fun. Friends met at our boat to have a light meal and some Champagne before we walked over to the firehouse together. After dancing, drinking more Champagne, laughing and talking, the older contingent of our group went home at about midnight, but our younger friends stayed on to drink more Champagne and smile a lot.

The next morning, on "le 14 Juillet", we were on the move early hoping to get a place on the barrier on the Champs-Elysées, but getting 4 people out the door is never easy and by the time we reached our destination many others had come before us. We arrived at about 9am, and we had to settle for sneaking a peek through the glass of a bus shelter while standing on tiptoes, and we envied the people who had great views because they had friends in high places.
After the parade, we walked away with thousands of others and finally settled in a café for lunch just to take a break and let the crowds disperse. Young men and women in uniform came in to sit and enjoy a meal with their families, and they sat up very straight in their full dress uniforms, and of course, we couldn't help but smile at how proud their families were of them. After more conversation and a leisurely lunch, we continued our walk across the city to the Bastille and arrived back at the boat at about 5pm, just in time to see the finish of the day on the Tour de France. We couldn't have been home more than 20 minutes when friends that we had recently met in Paris arrived, and we suddenly had another party on the back deck this time with other friends from Paris, Manchester and Montreal.

When everyone had to leave for dinner engagements, we set out to find a dinner spot ourselves, and after a couple of false starts we settled on Chez Margot, which might become a new favorite as the atmosphere, food and prices were great. Then we squeezed ourselves on the very crowded métro, and went to watch the fireworks at the Eiffel tower. In the confusion of the day, we forgot to bring our camera, but someone else on youtube did a good job of capturing the splendor of the evening. So thanks to Vandicla for this great video.