In Paris, last fall was summer, winter was fall, and spring was winter.

April announced itself with rain and cold winds, and after a two week heat wave at the end of the month, where everyone worried about global warming, the cold weather returned. People who live in Paris dug into the back of their closets to bring out their winter clothes, and the poor tourists had to layer everything that they had packed just to keep warm. The souvenir shops were selling more umbrellas and rain ponchos than T-shirts and sun hats. It was cold, it rained most of the time, and we felt sorry for the soaked and shivering tourists who, we imagine, had planned their trips picturing romantic strolls along the Seine under a blue sky with warm spring breezes.

In our old home port of Roanne, the constant rain kept everyone from finishing spring boat work, and many boats were still in Roanne when the rain caused a canal bank to collapse. The Canal Roanne à Digoin runs right next to its source, the Loire River, and a breach in the bank not far from Roanne dumped all of the water out of the canal and back into the Loire. The 18 kilometer stretch between locks lost some 500,000 cubic meters of water overnight, and the people in the port of Briennon and along the canal found their boats and their lives on tilt when the woke up the next morning sitting on the muddy bottom.

Friends in Roanne, being boaters who are used to changing plans at the drop of an Avis à la batellerie, just made a slight mental adjustment and started looking at their boats as homes. Instead of cruising along the canals, they are relaxing in Roanne, or taking other types of trips, and everyone seems quite content with the forced change of plans. It is funny to think of the question that boaters are frequently asked by friends who are thinking of visiting during the summer, "Where will you be in June (or July or August)? It just goes to prove that life on the canals is full of surprises, and surely no one in the port would have answered "Roanne" to that question a few months ago. Until the breach is repaired, the boats in the port of Roanne are not going anywhere. The word is that the canal is scheduled to reopened on the 15th of August........on verra!
On May 8th, wearing our Gortex rain jackets and Gortex pants, très à la mode this spring in Paris, we went to the Champs-Elysées near the Arc de Triomphe to watch the annual parade to remember the end of WWII in Europe.

We were not alone. Crowds and TV news cameras were out in force. After the election, everyone was interested in seeing Jacques Chirac for the last time, and maybe even catching a glimpse of Nicholas Sarkozy.

Waiting for the parade to start, the soldiers spoke quietly, and the horse smiled.
The Republican Guard has their stables on Boulevard Henry IV, near the port, and we love seeing the horses as they pass through our neighborhood on their way to special events.
The Republican Guard has a horseback band that is thrilling to see and to hear.
Jacques Chirac passed by in a black sedan with a police motorcycle escort. He waved goodbye to the crowd, and everyone tried to take his picture.
Some of the tourists staying at the Marriott on the Champs-Elysées must have all been out late the night before because they were still in their PJs at 10am, and it looks as though they were wondering who was making all of that noise.

Paris creates one dazzling event after the other, and each one is more impressive than the last. The city leaders are very imaginative.

On May 13th, to celebrate the new world speed record of 574 kilometers per hour, set by the TGV that runs between Paris and Strasbourg, the SNCF, the French National Railway System, ran the train through the center of Paris, on the Seine River!

There were bands on all of the foot bridges that it passed under, and we went to see Jackie, our French teacher, whose band was playing on the Passerelle Solférino, near the Musée d'Orsay. Just as we arrived on the bridge a dark cloud passed over and dumped buckets of rain on the band as they were in the middle playing a sunny little tune. A small crowd had gathered, and everyone scattered, eventually regrouping under the bridge. The music started up again after the band dried off their instruments, and blotted the water off of their sheet music, and after a while, their happy music coaxed the sun out again.
Jackie's band, Afreybo, is made up of people, most of whom, work in the fields of medicine and science. They relax away from work by being playful with their music and their band uniforms, which are lab coats with self-mocking cartoons drawn on the back. For this occasion they were also wearing caps celebrating the “SNCF World Record 2007.”
To announce that spring was here, Paris transformed the plaza in front of the Hotel de Ville, where the skating rink had been during winter, into a whimsical garden.
When it started raining on market day, as it often did this spring, we found a comfortable place to wait out the storm at Le Baron Rouge. You can taste by the glass, or you can buy a bottle and a plate of cheeses and pâtés to share with friends while waiting for the rain to stop. In fact, with its ambiance bon enfant, this little wine bar is not only a warm refuge on a cold or rainy day, but also because of its stone walls, it is a cool hideout on hot days too. We know this because the first time that English friends from the port brought us here, it was one of those hot “summer” days that we had last fall.
On June 21, the longest day of the year, it was warm and although there were clouds in the sky, it didn't rain. It was "La Fête de la Musique", and we walked from the Arc de Triomphe back to the Bastille, stopping to listen to different musicians along the way. Near the Louvre, we found some comfortable chairs near a fountain and we stayed for awhile to listen to the music and to watch the people strolling by, hand in hand, enjoying Paris on one of the best nights of the year.
Even if the seasons seem a bit out of sync, Paris is still a great place to be.