

Friday, September 14, 2018

American Friends of Versailles in Paris, Part 1



The American Friends of Versailles group in the courtyard at the Palace of Versailles. Celebrating their restoration of historic paintings in Marie Antoinette's Queen's Guard Room, members of the American Friends of Versailles (AFV) spent four days in Paris visiting dignitaries and monuments, dining and dancing.

by Sharon Hoge and Jeanne Lawrence

On a four-day visit to Paris, members of the American Friends of Versailles enjoyed several exclusive events, including roaming around the Élysée Palace with France's vivacious first lady, **Brigitte Macron**; dining with **HRH Prince Charles de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, Duke of Castro**, head of the royal house of France; sipping cocktails with **US Ambassador Jamie McCourt** at the American Residence; and private visits to the Palace of Versailles, topped with a black-tie formal reception in the Hall of Mirrors and an elegant dinner.

Having raised the funds to rescue historic ceiling paintings in **Marie Antoinette's** suite of apartments, the group gathered to view and celebrate the restorations. The formal events that took place at the palace will be covered in another post, but here is an account of some of the other privileged activities.



The AFV assembled on the garden steps of the Elysee Palace, with First Lady Brigitte Macron in front in the white blazer.



Founder Catharine Hamilton and First Lady of France Brigitte Macron.

TOURING THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE WITH FRANCE'S FIRST LADY

The AFV has enjoyed past tours of the Élysée Palace, but the president's wife made this visit especially memorable. As guides showed us through private diplomatic rooms—*voilà!*—the first lady swept in to greet us. Brigitte Macron spent over an hour leading us backstage through presidential offices, state rooms, and store rooms before entertaining us at tea and joining in for a group photo on the palace garden steps.



Our visit started at the Presidential Élysée Palace, analogous to America's White House.



A guide led us through private rooms of the palace.



Admiring paintings in the Salon des Portraits.



Erin and Robert Wilson.



Keith and Elizabeth Parker Crow.



Originally built as the 18th-century Hotel D'Evreux, the Élysée is a fine example of French classical décor.



All of a sudden, First Lady Brigitte Macron bounded in to greet us.



First Lady Brigitte Macron graciously led us through private rooms of the palace.



Family photos and a picture of De Gaulle on the desk of President Macron.



The first lady pointed out a pile of pink folders in her office. Pictures on the mantle were drawn by her grandchildren.



Keepsakes from friends help the first lady feel at home.



We saw the china patterns selected for state dinners. The first lady favors modern designs.



Silver flatware for state dinners includes unusual utensils.



First Dog Nemo ambled in from the garden to greet us.

INVITED TO A ROYAL LUNCH

On another day, we were invited to the opulent Seine-side apartment of HRH Prince

Charles de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, and his wife **HRH Princess Camilla**. HRH Prince Charles is at the head of the historic French and Spanish Royal House of Bourbon. After cocktails on the garden terrace overlooking a spectacular view of the Eiffel Tower, dining room doors were opened to reveal an elaborate luncheon buffet. Grand Master of the Order of Saint George, HRH Prince Charles took the occasion to present AFV Founder Catharine Hamilton with an Order of Merit recognizing her contributions.



Terrace view of the Eiffel Tower from the apartment of HRH Prince Charles de Bourbon des Deux Siciles and HRH Princess Camilla.



AFV Co-founder Olivier, the Vicomte de Rohan, with HRH Princess Camilla de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, who hosted the luncheon at her apartment.



Sharon Hoge and host HRH Prince Charles de Bourbon des Deux Siciles.



HRH Princess Camilla de Bourbon des Deux Siciles with Andre Michaels, Princess Beatrice de Bourbon des Deux Siciles (the sister of Prince Charles), and Madame Audi.



Francine Lefrak and Susan Gutfreund.



Jonathan Marder and Faith Coolidge.



HRH Princess Maria Chiara, Duchess of Noto, records the speeches of welcome and introduction.



Living room of the ducal apartment.



An apartment wall is lined with portraits of past kings of France.



The lavish luncheon buffet.



Elaborate desserts at the end of the meal.



HRH Prince Charles, Grandmaster of the Order of Saint George, presented Catharine Hamilton with his official Order of Merit.

VISITING THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

The new US Ambassador to **France Jamie McCourt** received us for an evening reception at the stately American Residence. After cocktails overlooking the garden dotted with art, the evening concluded with an impromptu piano recital by emerging classical master **Andrew von Oeyen**.



The AFV group gathered outside the American Residence.



US Ambassador Jamie McCourt welcomed us to a reception at the Residence.



Windows in the Residence overlook the garden.



Jeanne Lawrence, Carolyn Chandler, and Maria Manetti Shrem.



Loretta Lazar and Francine LeFrak Friedberg.



Leslie Keno with Versailles President Catherine Pegard.



Tapestries decorate the Residence walls.



The Residence music room is highlighted with gold details.



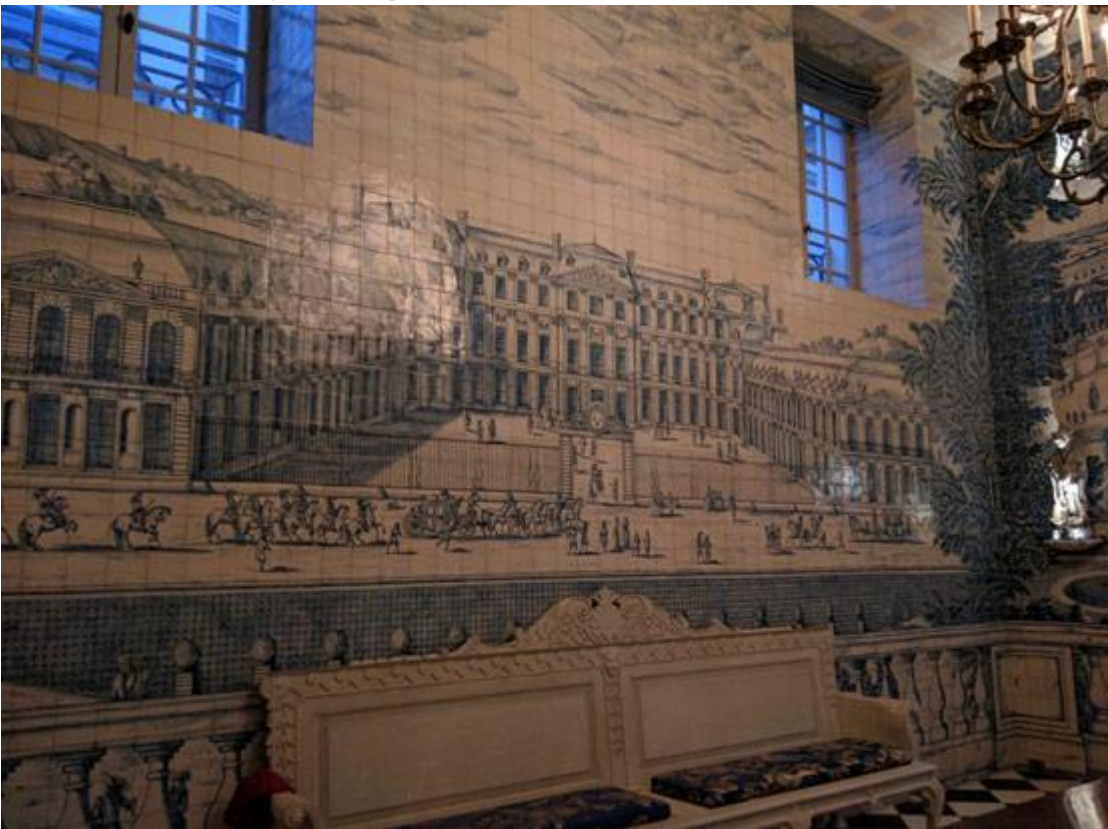
Guest Andrew von Oeyen, a classical pianist, delighted us with an impromptu concert.

MAGICAL MOLYNEUX DINNER IN THE MARAIS

Celebrated international interior designer **Juan Pablo Molyneux** and his wife **Pilar** hosted a cocktail *dinatoire* in their exquisite Hotel Claude Passart residence nestled in the Marais. An AFV Board Member, Juan Pablo has beautifully restored the *hotel particulier*, which was built in 1618 for the King's Secretary and Notary.



A rainy entrance to the Molyneux hotel particulier in the Marais.



The entrance hall is lined with a mural of custom designed blue tiles.



Anne-Marie de Ganay, member of the AFV French Board of Directors, with the evening's hosts, Juan Pablo and Pilar Molyneux.



Juan Pablo Molyneux is a highly regarded interior designer.



The home is a pinnacle of warmth and style.



Truffle risotto was served in individual dishes.



Hostess Pilar Molyneux and Anne-Marie de Ganay.



Catharine Hamilton, her brother Richard Cline Jr., and Becky Dodson.



Curry Glassell, Kaitlyn Esposito, and Nathan Glassell.

CRUISING THE SEINE BY STARLIGHT

One evening featured an upscale dinner cruise on the river Seine. Setting out from near the Eiffel Tower, we passed a three-quarter model of the Statue of Liberty that Americans presented to France in 1889 to commemorate the centennial of the French Revolution. Like the projects of the AFV, it represents as a gesture of Franco-American friendship. After a seated meal of French gastronomy, a Parisian DJ supplied tunes for dancing before we disembarked into the “City of Lights.”



Boarding the yacht Excellence for a cruise on the Seine.



Sailing past France's scale model Eiffel Tower.



Smiling beside James Conrad Hanson is the cruise Guest of Honor HRH Princess Beatrice de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, who has helped organize several AFV trips and outings.



Michèle Fieschi-Fouan, Katherine Harris, Sarina Russo, Libby Horn, and Jeanne Lawrence.



Catharine Hamilton with HRH Princess Camilla de Bourbon des Deux Siciles, and the young princesses Maria Carolina and Maria Chiara.



Baron Roland de l'Espee, with Nathalie, Comtesse de La Bédoyère, and Richard Holthaus.



Joseph and Laura Street with Richard Ware.



David Horn, Allison House, Craig Hoffman, and Libby Horn.



Francine LeFrak Friedberg and Sarina Russo.



Tables set for dinner aboard the yacht.



The dinner menu was gazpacho, salmon with foyot sauce, and a frozen wild strawberry bagatelle for dessert.



Sharon Hoge with David and Libby Horn.



Jeanne Lawrence and Olivier, the Vicomte de Rohan.



Disco dancing on the yacht.



The Eiffel Tower aglow in the City of Lights.

TOURING A FASHION POWERHOUSE

Founded in 1634 in the middle of Paris, comprising eight courtyards and ten acres, the historic Hospital for the Incurables has been restored by **Francois Pinault** to house Balenciaga and other luxury brands of Kering S.A.



Kering S.A. headquarters, a historic hospital restored by Francois Pinault, now the home of several luxury brands.



Kering headquarters occupy ten acres in the center of Paris.



A guide led us on a private tour of the offices and courtyards normally closed to the public.



Pinault has maintained the ascetic character of the building in the reception room and throughout.



The chapel dates back to the reign of Louis III.



The hornbeam tree represents Pinault's start in the lumber business.



Able to rotate their heads 270 degrees, owls are said to emblemize the company's extraordinary vision.

LUNCHEON WITH THE COMTESSE

After a tour through Kering's renovated chapel and gardens, we proceeded to luncheon at the lovely 8th arrondissement apartment of board member **Nathalie, the Comtesse de La Bédoyère.**



Sandy Parkerson with luncheon hostess Nathalie, Comtesse de La Bédoyère.



Co-host the Honorable Pascal Clement, former French Minister of Justice, with Vicki Hood.



Guests assembled in the living room decorated in nineteen shades of pink.



Jewelry designer Kirat Young, Joseph Street, Jonathan Marder, and Laura Street.



Richard McGinnis on the apartment terrace, steps from the Champs-Élysées.



Richard Holthaus and Faith Coolidge.



Sandy Parkerson and Bonnie Deutsch Hartung.



Christina Cressey and Gale Arnold.

PRIVATE TOURS OF MUSEUMS AND MONUMENTS

Other activities included private tours of the Musée Marmottan Monet and the Musée Nissim de Camondo, both housed in private mansions, and a visit to the ornate state rooms of the French Senate located near the Luxembourg Gardens.



Jerome Fouan in the chambers of the French Senate.



In the Senate Library, the curator presented a book with 1684 engravings of Versailles.



Visiting the halls and grounds of the French Senate's Luxembourg Palace built in the 17th century for Marie de' Medici.



One engraving depicts the Bosquet des Trois Fontaines, the first AFV restoration project.

Photography by by Francis Hammond, Keva Studio, Sharon Hoge, Jeanne Lawrence, and Michèle Fieschi-Fouan.