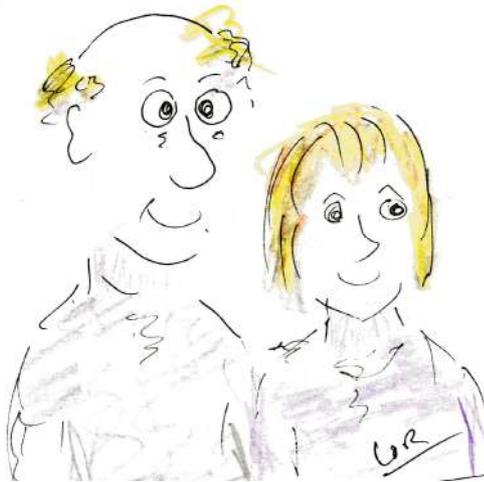
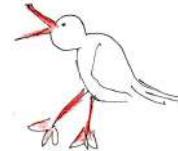


More travel, less travail

Or how we always arrive where I point



Lewis Rivers



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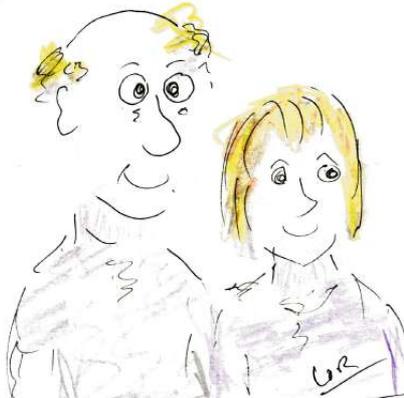
Lewis Rivers





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We are optimistic travellers

Introduction

So often travel turn out to be travail. At least this is what happens for me.

I will give you an example. A few years back on a previous French trip we determined to go to the Airbus factory. The instructions for getting there seemed clear as were the instructions that required visitors to register online for the tour of the factory. Needless to say we didn't manage to register for the tour and we got lost on the way.

The good side, though, is when we arrived at the factory a tour had just started. And two of the registered participants hadn't turned up. The reception staff slipped our 80 euros into the till and shuffled us into the recently started tour. It was all in French too which suited J but left me occasionally bewildered, often baffled, and sometimes klutz-like.

And so on to this book. This is my story about the 2014 journey to Paris and beyond. J, who travelled with me, tells her story in another book. Her writing is much more travel than travail. She tells of the places we went to and the things we did. I guess there is a place for that in travel writing.

Up where we belong . . . business class

One of the many good things about being upgraded is neither the other passengers nor the cabin attendants know you didn't pay for the comfort. If they knew they would likely give those little gestures that showed you were above your station. The subtle display of nostrils and telling you the chicken is all gone and offering you the tofu.

Perhaps it is just Cathay Pacific but I think I can confidently say the free loaders are treated no differently from the payers. Must really tee off the payers. Overall, in life, I am more accustomed to being upbraided than upgraded. I guess, now, every time I fly further than Blenheim to Wellington, I will dream of a good upgrading.



*Searching for our seats in
business class*



More 1960s student bed sit

Our apartment in Paris

I have said to others that we have an apartment in Paris. Strictly speaking this is both true and not true. It all depends on the angle of approach. For example if you come at it from up-wind, the short answer is we do have an apartment in Paris. If you come at it from down-wind, we have an apartment for three months. In short, we rent. But then, as I say with a Gallic shrug, much of Europe rents.

Many know us well enough not to ask to share our Paris accommodation, as in occupy the second bedroom, or even colonise the 'put you up'. In a previous visit to the City of Light we had an apartment in the ninth. It was advertised as having a bathroom that 'opened' on to the kitchen. I pondered this and concluded the bathroom probably had a door opening directly into the kitchen, or perhaps at worst it had a doorway between the kitchen and the bathroom but maybe with a curtain. What didn't occur to me was the bathroom was part of the kitchen and the kitchen was part of the bedroom. The apartment had one room, literally. There was a sort of partition that prevented us from lying in bed gazing at the toilet. You could, however, sit on the throne and stir the pot.

This time we have gone further up the market. If the 2008 trip was akin to Cannery Row, this trip is more 1960s student bed sit.

Voting

We met a fellow Kiwi at the New Zealand Embassy when we went out later in the day to vote. He, like us, was voting. He seemed shy and uncommunicative. I wondered if he was from Invercargill as one of my friends is from the south and seems embarrassed to admit it. The shuffly feet and blushing mumbles are a bit of a giveaway for southern antipodeans.

Turns out, though, the fellow voter was not from the south but a PhD student, studying for a PhD, probably his PhD because he did say 'my PhD', at an école supérieure, which is exactly as it sounds. As an aside, wouldn't it just curdle you up if after four years of peck and squint you found that all along you had been studying for someone else's PhD? He was studying philosophy and mathematics. Probably wanting to come up with the algorithm for legal advantage. I didn't ask him which way he intended to vote because the whole philosophy and mathematics thing generates political outcomes of a certain type. It wasn't till afterwards that I realised he didn't want to talk to me because he thought I was a klutz. I think he was totally over chance meetings with fellow antipodeans.



*Finally it dawns.
He thinks I'm a klutz*



Our favourite café

Café Dose de Dealer

I am writing this in Café Dose, around the corner from our flat. It's one of the few modern NZ-style cafés in Paris serving lattes as I know and like them. The café is in the Quartier Latin so I feel like a young radical student, sitting and writing much like George Orwell when he wrote *Down and Out in London and Paris* (he wasn't writing on a laptop though). Perhaps, to complete the picture, I need a beret and long straggly hair, though anyone with a beret is unlikely to be French and few young French men have anything other than a carefully sculpted coiffure.

The back street tabac brasserie of today is much the same as the hang-outs of the early and mid-20th century writers and friends. The additions are the Lotto counters, but much else is the same as 50 to 100 years ago. Except of course there is now no smoking.

The brasseries which today advertise famous pasts are filled with tourists sitting back under the canvas balconies, claiming a relaxed ownership. The waiters understand how to shift the euros from the tourist to the till. Relaxed tourists exuding ownership are, more accurately, temporary renters.

Snoring Olympics

Now if you are in doubt about this, check it out with Anon of Wadestown. He and I did the Whanganui River a couple of years back and following the last night on the river I was attacked by him in the middle of the night, in the dark, and all because someone snored. It wasn't me. How do I know? If it had been me I would have woken. No one could have slept through the racket he described.

Seems something similar happened in the six-berth compartment on the night train from Paris to Hamburg (port of departure for our container ship voyage). Why do I think I may have been involved? The giveaway was the sleepless chagrined look J gave me in the morning and the completely out of control, helpless, paralytic laughter of the others when they made eye contact with each other after I awoke. None of them would make eye contact with me and J just gave exhausted roly-eyed looks combined with barely audible hisses whenever I started to speak.

So maybe I did snore a bit. But I woke refreshed and ready to face the Hamburg day. And given that I didn't hear a thing during the night, I think the jury is still out on whether or not it was me snoring.

If you ever travel by night train from Paris to Hamburg and opt for the cheapest lie-down option, it could be a good idea to take ear plugs, if not for yourself then maybe for your cabin companions.



*Off to Hamburg with a spring
in our steps*



*Unprepossessing, tired in decor,
and grubby*

Our accommodation finding in Hamburg didn't start well

J says it didn't finish well either. We asked at the tourist information office and were immediately met with the news that Hamburg was booked out. We were then told the system was down and if any accommodation was still available it could neither be found nor booked. Come back later was the instruction. Coming back later seemed a recipe for a night on a park bench. It was time to use my sure-fire-theory-on-accommodation-finding.

Put simply, the theory is to go to the second ring of streets from the station. If there is no luck in this circle then go to the third ring. You do need to stop, though, before you stumble into the outer reaches of the intersecting circles for the next city. You also need to recognise that for each next ring, the quality of both the establishment and the clientele drops off exponentially. As this drops, the chances of being mugged increases by the square of the hippopotamus, unless of course the proximity of the more leafy suburbs (as measured by the Khandallah index) is twice that of the distance between the sum of the interior angles. This theory could well do with a keen PhD student, perhaps someone to write the algorithm.

We found the City Hotel, in the second ring, what's more. Unprepossessing, tired in decor and more than a bit grubby. Hot tap worked, cold didn't. We booked three nights, settled in, and then headed out walking.

The Hamburg waterfront includes many museum ships

These include the *Rickmer Rickmers*, a full-rigged ship, and the *Cap San Diego*, a sixties freighter with passenger accommodation. To my surprise we spent the afternoon on the *Cap San Diego* and did not go on the sailing ship at all. We explored from the bridge to the tail shaft.

The waterfront prompted me to explain tumblehome to J. To her credit she did not mention St Malo and the fast ferries, where I had explained to the women behind the counter that the fast ferries were built in Tasmania, could cross the Tasman in about 36 hours and pumped out 20 Olympic-sized swimming pool amounts of water a minute through their jet propulsion. I can sense your eyes glazing over, as did theirs, as I tell you these nautical essentials.

It was a legendary moment in our relationship and J has only to mutter St Malo when I am explaining things nautical to bring a sudden halt. She didn't do this through the whole tumblehome explanation. Perhaps to check if

she was listening you could ask her about tumblehome when you next see her. If she gives a lucid account of gunnels, sheer, bulwarks, capping strakes and baggy wrinkles then she will have clearly listened to my explanation. Just to check you could also ask her about gudgeons.



The Cap San Diego



I gave him a tip for the three-thirty at Washdyke

A tip for the tour guide

There at the Hamburg railway station was a young man holding an umbrella with the words 'free tour' on it. Yes the umbrella was up inside the station so perhaps the whole bad luck thing about umbrellas inside is not universal. Personally I have only ever owned an umbrella once, and raising or not raising it made no difference once the Wellington wind gave it the DCM. Now I asked the young gentleman about the free tour and he told me he takes groups around the inner city and gives them information about whatever it is they are interested in (tempted as I was, I did not ask him to explain the algorithm for legal advantage). He said that if I waited a few minutes to see if anyone else joined us then I could come along on his tour.

I suggested his business plan had a hole in it. There seemed to be no money changing hands. He said if people liked the tour they could tip him and that way he would turn a euro or two for his efforts. I enjoyed both his explanation and talking to him (faultless English, like many young Germans) so I gave him a one euro tip. He said that was a first for him, to be tipped not to give the tour, so I gave him another tip. I said Lazy Jack was fancied for the three-thirty at Washdyke. I am not sure he got the joke, but I enjoyed it.

We are all at sea

We are on the MV Aurora, sailing up the Baltic. There is nothing around us apart from the circle of the saucer. Though we did just pass a tower sticking out of the sea. I did a quick trip up to the bridge to look at the chart. Didn't stay long because the captain was verbally machine gunning the mate, and when he does that no one gets a word in, edgeways or otherwise. He (the captain) talks in extraordinarily long, loud staccato bursts. I wish I could bottle him, take him home and let him loose at a staff meeting, or better at morning tea. That would change things. I wonder if he does it at home or if Mrs Captain puts him out in the yard for a few days when he steps off the bus. He may be captain here but home will surely be a different kettle of fish.

There is nothing to do apart from wait for the next meal while struggling to digest the last. J says she has entered a state of lethargy.

I have been flat out all day. In the morning I worked on the sofa, in the afternoon I worked on the bed.

Too tuckered out to write, right, good night.



He may be captain here but . . .

Just by the by

The chief mate has not been to New Zealand but he has been through Cook Strait. On a voyage from Australia back to Europe, the chief mate passed through Cook Strait on the way to the Horn. He has seen the lights of Wellington but not the sights.

I recall on one of my voyages (Napier-Nelson) rounding Palliser and going through Cook Strait direct to Nelson. I recall at that time feeling the pull of home as we passed by the lights of Wellington.



*The chief mate sees the
lights of Wellington*

We are back on the Kiel Canal, going the other way

It is a typical day for this part of Europe, warm, muggy and grey. There is a low cloud ceiling sealing in a layer of smog made up mainly of second-hand smoke. Much of the smoke comes through the air conditioning vent. It comes directly from the chief engineer's cabin which is adjacent to ours.

This is a special feature for passengers who smoke and have run out of cigarettes. The notice on the wall says 'Place Nostrils near Vent for Full Whack'. A footnote say 'If desperate, lick edges for nicotine drops'. It is in both Russian and German.

Hamburg is just around the corner. I wonder if I am over this voyage.



The chief engineer



Out of the Baltic and back into the Kiel Canal



There is little a cup of good coffee can't put right



*The Rickmer Rickmers has room
for a greenhouse on deck . . .*

Boats and gardens

Some have suggested we may be better to holiday apart. Others have suggested perhaps we already are. Apparently our blogs differ significantly. Now, to put the record straight, J and I get along like a house on fire. Sometimes this is before the local volunteers arrive and at others it is after the clean-up crew have knocked off and gone home. I think we are fortunate because we have similar interests: gardens and boats. If we could find a patch of ground on the deck of a derelict peniche I would be home and J would be hosed.

Yesterday J enrolled in a language course

It is, I hope, a French language course. It strikes me that it would be silly to come all this way to enrol in plain English, or Spanish, or some other language that would be less than useful, given our holiday is largely in France. I did think Russian or Ukrainian would be a goer if we took another freighter voyage. I have not yet suggested this, the time does not seem opportune.

The language school is for five afternoons next week. It is in the neighbourhood where we had an idiosyncratic studio in 2008. I think it is great J is going off to a language course. I will have five afternoons of stacking zeds while pretending to write. Can't wait.

Yesterday we went to the footie

It came about because N-from-the-office is in Paris. N is 2-IC to Mrs Red Pen.

We had a most enjoyable time with N and her husband, G. We went to a bar, Eden Park, and watched the whole drama of the All Blacks playing the Springboks. It was fortunate G was accompanying us as he turned out to be an excellent comments man.

I limited myself to the occasional 'They put the wood on them', or 'Cricket will never catch on until they sort the lineouts', or 'Try a droppy, go on, a droppy'. This last contribution requires a degree of technical knowledge to get the moment right. I recall shouting it at Zinny some years back. There was a remarkable outcome that left those around me stunned and amazed at both Zinny's droppy and my timing. Another comment I always put in if we are losing is 'The ref's blind'.

This comment went down well with G. The ref for the match has apparently been regarded as blind for some years now, at least by the New Zealand contingent.

Sadly and predictably the All Blacks lost. Predictably because J was watching. Of late there has been a correlation between her watching and New Zealand losing. Even when she watches the netball live scoring on the internet, the outcome is dismal. It would be superstition to blame J for the loss but I will anyway. The major problem, as I have explained to her, is skimping on the stretchies. Any elite sports person will tell you skimping on the stretchies is doomed. Just by the by, sofa time, regardless of posture, does not qualify as a stretchy.

Following the footie we retired to a burger restaurant where we chewed over the loss.



We went to a bar, Eden Park, and watched the whole drama of the All Blacks playing the Springboks

My Pop could have set Rolls Royce straight

I was tempted to leave a note at the Paris Motor Show (for Rolls Royce, not my grandfather). However, it may have become lost in the translation.

Let me apprise you of where Rolls Royce have gone wrong and why my grandfather could have put them right.

My brothers and I would be taken out on Sunday afternoons by my grandfather. When we got home from the outing to the beach or river (water always featured), Pop would stop the car at the gate to his place, allowing us to leap out and run along the footpath to home, two doors down. This all used to go swimmingly unless the last boy out forgot to shut the car door.

Now here's the rub. The rear doors opened the opposite way to the cars of today so when my grandfather accelerated up his drive way, the open rear door accompanied the car for a short time only. The gatepost would catch the door and rip it off its hinges. The back door would lie forlornly on the footpath. Pop would pick

up the door, take it to his hospital workshop, and weld the whole caboodle back together.

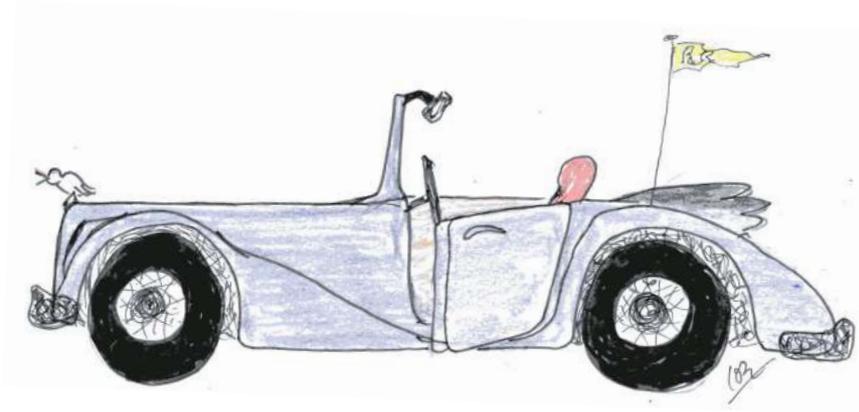
There at the Paris Motor Show was the latest Rolls Royce. The doors opened the wrong way. They just begged to be ripped off as the result of some klutz leaving them open while the driver accelerated through a gateway.

You would think Rolls Royce would have thought of this and attached the doors the other way round. My grandfather could certainly have given them some guidance in the back door department. If Rolls Royce had been hell-bent on having the doors opening the wrong way, Pop could have advised them on how to make it easy to weld them back on after an outing with the grandchildren. Over the years he'd become an expert at this repair.

On the Sunday evening, Pop would visit. He would tell my mother the sad tale and she would express sympathy. Both Pop and my mother would then look at me and sigh. Why blame me? Well, there were four

boys. Number one sat in the front, number two sat directly behind my grandfather, number three sat on passenger side by the window and number four sat in the middle of the back. I was number four. The egress

was number one out the front, number two out the driver side back, number three out the passenger side back and number four, last out, through which ever rear door became ripped off.



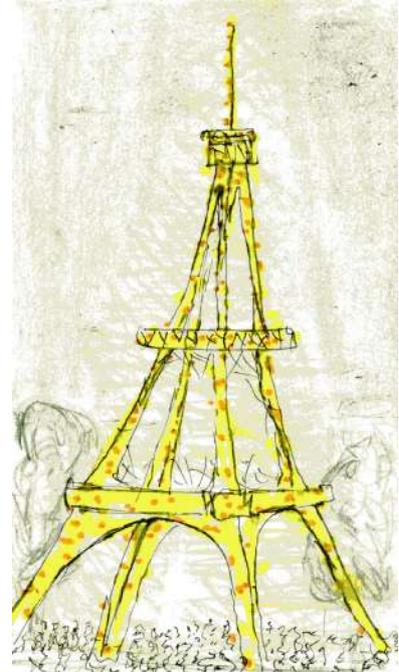
A Paris outing

One evening, following dinner out (our second eat-out dinner in Paris), C, our landlady, took us around Paris by night in her car.

It was raining and I sat in the front because there was more knee room. J sat in the back, doing her crouching tiger impersonation.

I didn't see much because I had my eyes either closed or covered. For me it was terrifying. There are few road markings on Paris streets, the cobbles rattle, and the rain-riven swish of overtaking vehicles all combine with seemingly random horn shrieks and klaxon wails. Paris could do with its own 'save the wails' campaign.

We did, though, enjoy the night time visit to the Tour Eiffel. Currently it is lit with a soft golden glow, completely illuminated and beautiful. Every hour, for ten minutes or so, thousands of strobes flash. These lights are dispersed over all of the Tour.



It is 5.30 Wednesday morning and just three days to go

It's Halloween week. The boulangerie on our corner has a large chocolate witch in the window. It's our last few days in Paris. Must be time to think about our the next trip. I am looking forward to reading J's blog so that I can find out what happened on this one. I always have a collision of memories and her blog will set me straight.



CATHAY Pacific
Hong Kong (HK)
Auckland (NZ)

GATE
82



W.B.
Home ward bound

