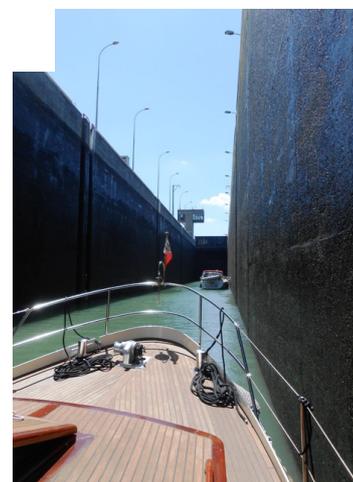
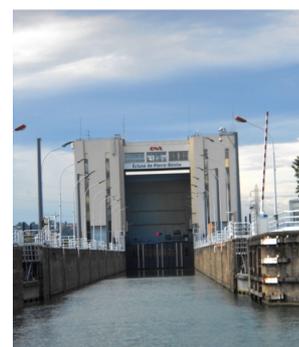


The Rhone - June/July 2017



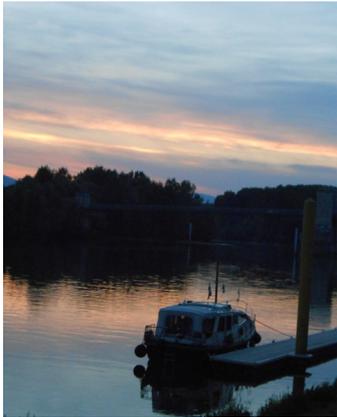
Originating in Switzerland, of its 812 km, 550 km of the Rhone runs through France from Lyon to the Camargue delta out to the Med. It has been one of the major river routes in Europe since Greek and Roman times and connects Lyon with Arles and Avignon. It is a river of fierce currents, tricky shallows, and unpredictable floods in early Spring. But this year, it is relatively tame. A current of 10 km is not unusual. Going "downhill" is not too bad unless the Mistral blows and then you simply can't stop. Battling upstream requires a reliable engine and good manoeuvring, and takes time. It's the river of very, VERY big locks - (10 in all) that lower or raise you from 15 m to 23 m. at a time. It is a very scenic route, with its hillsides lined with renowned vineyards, it's ancient villages and its steep gorges. We have plenty of time, so we stop for several days at a time.



At the lovely Condrieu-les-Roches, we cross with with old sailing friends, Ivan and Mona from "Casseopia" who are going north and swapped info on the best places to stop. We last saw them on Leros 4 years ago but it didn't seem like it had been any time at all and we had a great evening together, their first time on



But even for a big river, sometimes, it's just very, very peaceful...



And sometimes it's a **blast** and a dreary stretch turns into an event that you never could have predicted!☺☺☺ Waiting for the lock to open, 30 inflatables descended on us from upstream and tied up until we were surrounded by the happiest bunch of people you could imagine! A group of 100 - handicapped (some severely so, some blind, some strapped into wheelchairs) assisted by firemen, doctors and soldiers who had all volunteered to give this group a wonderful day out on the water!!! and boy could they move! The lock personnel came down to greet them as we all crowded into the lock and floated 15 meters down together. And every one of them waived and laughed and wished us a good holiday as they sailed out past us. It made our day. It was astonishing and humbling.



Below: the lovely old town of Viviers, close to Montelimar (the home of nougat!), tied up to a pontoon below the hillside town of narrow streets, stone facades and pastel-colours of the south. A lot of atmosphere in the narrow, cobbled streets and stone buildings- some grand, some neglected and some crumbling. Climb to the top to the 12C Cathedral for the views over the Rhone. A large statue of the Madonna is even higher...one in a series we have spotted along the Rhone. It is very, VERY hot. 41C and humid. In a few days we will be in Avignon.

