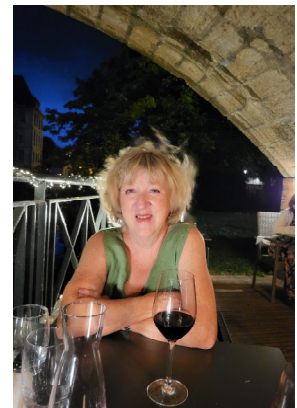




Old & New, Stopping & Starting....Le Doubs - Aug. 2023



We were already on Plan C when we arrived... once again in the heart of the Cotes d'Or wine region. Excited to see our newly sanded, painted and polished hull. Gleaming, gorgeous...We painted, polished the upper sides, chrome, brass, washed seat covers, replaced taps, bought new cushions....But before we left the quayside, the yard managed to scrape a large chunk of it moving the boat to make way for another. Much arm-waving (theirs) and raised voices (mine), it was agreed they would redo it next winter at no charge. Bon. C'est la vie. And did I mention the 4 new (huge) batteries we needed to replace at the cost of a petite maison? After 2 years away, back in St. Jean de Losne yet again, the canals have dried up, maintenance has closed others and weed is choking many of the routes. The only alternative left is the canalized River Doubs that stretches from the Saone all the way past Besancon to the Rhine up near Mulhouse and beyond. We decide to give it a go and see how far we get.... Not far as it turned out.





249 km and 115 locks up and then back the same way....lots of time. This is an area of small and beautifully green canals and woods that, in the 18th century, supplied timber for building in the south of France. Timber that was cut and assembled into log rafts that were floated all the way down the Saone and Rhone Rivers. It was a difficult river to tame and still is....weirs and flood gates control the waters when it floods. The first barges (at one time 2000 in the first year as business boomed) were pulled by hand (using breast harnesses, then later by horses and donkeys). "Our" own base, St. Jean de Losne, is the Waterways (barge) Capital of Burgundy and many old barges are still moored here, some being refurbished as hotel barges or private homes. It was a special life and, in the old days, families of up to 4 people lived and worked their whole lives on the traditional Freycinet barges- in a space of 38.5 x 5.30 m. The canals were designed to fit them exactly. After WWI, other means of transportation overtook them.

The Doubs looked promising...It's extremely peaceful...lovely little stops along the riverbanks at small pontoons in tiny villages. At the first one after a handful of locks, the joystick for the bow thruster packs up. We rely heavily on the bow thruster to manoeuvre in and out of the very narrow stone-walled locks. We are only 9 km away from St. Jean... 5 1/2 hours by bus! Jan goes by bike instead...a hot and dusty trip. We are entering the French heatwaveit will reach 46C on the boat later this summer. OK we're off again... All the time in the world (little did we know...).

And then we discover **Dole**...and stay a week because it's so gorgeous...it oozes charm with it's beautiful renaissance-style facades, Notre Dame Collegiate Church perched above the riverside marina, the Quartier des Tanneurs, medieval city centre, bridges and great restaurants and cafes....it's buzzing with life as we arrive in the sunshine....we love it! Once wealthy from the tanning industry, it still has tremendous character. It's also the birthplace of Louis Pasteur, microbiologist and chemist, who gave us pasteurization and the rabies vaccination. After a huge thunderstorm it's time to move on....

