

Travel | way gone

A great trade: cancer books for guides to Paris

By Lisa Everitt
Special to The Denver Post

The Eiffel Tower looked close enough to climb from Lisa Everitt's vacation rental. (AP / Francois Mori)

Every couple of months I get an e-mail from Paris Perfect that reduces me to a miserable little ball. Paris Perfect rents apartments in the Seventh Arrondissement, and I would like to fly there right this minute and stay in one of them. But I can't. C'est dommage.

It took me 29 years and one bad disease to get to Paris . I started taking French my first year of high school and stuck with it for five years, then added German and later took a year of Japanese. I had two things as a girl: a facility with languages and seemingly not a snowball's chance in hell of actually visiting any of these places.

When I got breast cancer in early 2002, someone advised, "Plan the best vacation ever while you're in treatment. It will a public fit. Mark ate one and liked it. He still has the shell.

The lady of a certain age who chided me in English, as I looked at a bus route map, "You should ask us for help. We French are not mean. We are nice." So I asked her which bus to take, and she told me, very nicely, and then told my husband that he shouldn't let me boss him around.

The holiday trappings of Paris : the free carousel rides in every arrondissement, the skating rink outside the Hôtel de Ville, the animated Christmas windows in the department stores.

Waiting in line for the Eiffel Tower one night and watching the international collection of college kids checking each other out.

All the people to whom I began speaking in French who answered me, very kindly, in English.

The recurring thought I kept having: I am in PARIS .

Pain au chocolat, anytime, anywhere.

The day that Sara's Hello Kitty sneakers from Target gave up the ghost and we went to DPAM, a children's clothing store recommended by Madelyn as both cute and reasonable. Sara made a beeline to the most beautiful boots in the store, shiny patent and faux ostrich in marron, which is a rich chestnut

brown. When your child demonstrates good taste in shoes in Paris , how can you not purchase them?

Trying to buy a pair of pliers when you don't know the French word for "pliers."

The children writing notes to God in Notre Dame. Walking down rainy streets to the sound of church bells.

Having shown the kids the musical "Gigi" before our trip, and warning them that Paris was not exactly like the movie anymore, finding "Gigi" on the television on New Year's Eve. Watching Maurice Chevalier overact in French.

Watching "The Simpsons" in French.

The old man and his West Highland terrier who dined next to us at Brasserie Thoumieux the night before we went home. He told me Sara was beautiful, asked if we were English or American, and then asked (this was late 2002, remember) whether we thought Monsieur Bush really meant to invade Iraq . This allowed my husband, Doug, to use the only French phrase he had insisted I teach him: "I did not vote for him."

The perfect cassoulet at Thoumieux, washed down with Gigondas. The waiter speaking to the old man's dog.

Being able to remind my daughter, when she is a bit older, that a Frenchman once said of her, "Elle est ravissante."

Four years have passed, and I am not dead. We still have the credit card debt, but more important, we'll always have Paris .

Lisa Everitt is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Arvada .

The details

Paris Perfect (parisperfect.com) offers 20 apartments, most in the Seventh Arrondissement of Paris on the Left Bank of the Seine, an easy walk from the Eiffel Tower , the Champs de Mars, and the Pont de l'Alma and École Militaire Metro stations. The Paris apartments range from the Kir, \$169 per night or \$1,183 per week for a 160- square-foot studio sleeping one or two, to the Gigondas, \$945 per night or \$6,615 per week for a five-bedroom, 2,000-square-foot apartment that sleeps as many as nine. Rates are all-inclusive; there are no additional taxes or fees except for phone. Contact Madelyn Byrne and Philippe Willens in London : (011) 44 207 938 2939 or pariseiffel@yahoo.com.