

## Cotgrave U3A goes to Rouen

On 12<sup>th</sup> April, 23 members of Cotgrave U3A, some accompanied by family and friends, visited Rouen in France. The trip was organised through Riviera Travel and, as the U3A is Riviera's chosen charity, resulted in a sizeable donation back into our funds. That is what is known as a Win-Win situation!



We departed early from Nottingham Station to St Pancras and then boarded the Eurostar to Paris where we were picked up by coach for our onward journey through to Rouen. Hannie, one of our U3A members and also, serendipitously, our Riviera Guide, introduced us to Anja, our very competent driver, who whisked us away to the 4 star Mercure Champs de Mar hotel where we stayed on a bed and breakfast basis.

Hannie very quickly took some of the group to reconnoitre the immediate area while others chose to relax and enjoy their evening meal in the hotel.



The following morning found us all eager to explore Rouen, and Hannie led us on a guided tour around this famous town which boasts many well preserved medieval buildings. We saw the cathedral which inspired Claude Monet, and wended our way through narrow streets to see the famous astronomical clock (The Gros Horloge) – the movement is over 600 years old and the facade dates to 1529. Several of us stopped for a much needed coffee in the square in which the modern church dedicated to Joan



of Arc is located, and it was very moving to see the huge tall cross which is located in the exact place where she met her fate.



After lunch, several of the group went on the coach to visit the distillery of the famous Benedictine liqueur in Fencamp. Apparently all came back sober (or so they said)! A few others stayed behind at the hotel and enjoyed a game of Bridge – we can now say that Cotgrave U3A Bridge Group has played at an international venue!

Our next day was spent in glorious sunshine and we all headed for the seaside - in fact to the picturesque coastal town of Honfleur. Not only does Honfleur boast a super little folk museum, a wooden church, a great street market and other attractions (many excellent colourful harbour front restaurants for example), but it is famous for the beginnings of impressionism as it is the birthplace of Eugene Boudin who had Claude Monet as one of his pupils. A minor, but nevertheless significant, highlight of the day was sitting on the harbour wall in the heat of the day, watching the world go by, whilst eating ice cream. Small pleasures are quite often the most appreciated.





On Sunday we were taken to Bayeux where the majority of the group visited the museum and, of course, saw the famous Bayeux Tapestry. That trip resulted in a few ticks being placed on a few 'bucket lists'. Many thousands of feet have paraded past the ancient tapestry and it is definitely a sight worth seeing.



Our journey continued through to Arromanches – made famous on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 by the D-Day landings of the allied forces. We visited Gold Beach, explored a little and marvelled at the remains of Mulberry Harbour. We visited the excellent museum which had lots to see including models, memorabilia and films which enabled us to gain just a small insight into what had happened all those years ago.



Thanks to Hannie and Anja, our final day was made extra special. Instead of heading straight to the Gare du Nord in Paris (as had been expected), we had time to have a short bus tour along the banks of the Seine and then most of the group enjoyed a fabulous and very relaxing trip on the Seine on a Baton Mouche.



Most people practiced their French during the trip – some were 'Par Excellence', some were 'comme ci, comme ca', and others were ...well...oh la la! It was great fun and the company throughout the trip matched the weather – excellent and extremely enjoyable.

The journey back was relatively uneventful and we all returned home with photographs, sore feet and many happy memories – perfect!

On a personal level I would like to thank Hannie and Anja who looked after us all so well