

## Les 3 Vallees/Paris, France

By Carol Barkman



Last March 45 expectant Sanctuary members made their way to the quaint village of Brides-les-Bains situated in Les 3 Vallees, France, the world's largest ski area. Our Hotel Amelie was literally steps away from the Olympic Gondola to Meribel from which we could further access Courchevel and Val Thorens. About 12 members did not ski but still enjoyed the lovely terrain, taking the 20 minute gondola ride up to meet the skiers for lunch and visiting the shopping areas that abound in ski country. Most skiers commented that the skiing was absolutely the best they had ever enjoyed in Europe. The sunny skies, great snow conditions, vast terrain and warm temperatures made each day a memorable experience. It just doesn't get much better!



On Monday an optional day trip included a coach ride to Moutiers to visit a cheese factory, wine shop, and have lunch at the quaint L'Auberge de Savoie. On Tuesday about 30 chose to go to Annecy, the Venice of the Alps, where we took a walking tour of the old city and visited The Palais de l'Isle, also called the "old prison". Taking up most of the island in a canal, it is the symbol of the town and is among the most photographed monuments in all of France. Our tour also took us up the hill to the castle of the Count of Geneva. Around noon we strolled the markets. The unusually warm temperatures allowed us all to enjoy the outside cafes for lunch. On Thursday most of us bused to Chamonix, the site of the first Winter Olympics. A few chose to ski, but most took the gondola up to the spire overlooking Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps. A couple of us took the cog railroad up to the glaciers and then descended 320 stairs to walk into the glaciers and, of course, 320 stairs back up. The views of the town, the glaciers, and the mountains were awe inspiring. The town was full of charming outdoor cafes, and as the weather was beautiful, we made good use of them.



On Saturday, March 20, we bid ten of our group au revoir as they returned to the states, and we went on to Paris. The Mercure Eiffel Suffren Hotel was just a couple blocks from the Eiffel Tower. We soon learned to master the Metro and bus system, although because of the marvelous weather, we came to appreciate Paris as a "walking city". By buying a museum pass, we were able to bypass the longer lines of those buying day tickets and venture in and out of the major museums at will. Several of us took Fat Tire Tours of Paris at night and a day trip by train and bike to Versailles. After buying lunch items such as bread, sausage, cheese and wine at the local market, we biked the grounds of the Chateau and then went inside for an audio tour.

Again, our experiences are as many as our numbers. On Thursday, March 25, we again were bused to Charles du Gaulle Airport for our flight home. Thanks go to Georgia Lange and to Candy Cash, her trip assistant, for a most memorable 14 days.