



We last visited springtime Paris several years ago and stayed in a little hotel just across a narrow street from Le Sorbonne. From our room we could look into classroom windows and hallways as the students came and went. There was a flower and tree-lined square on the other side of the hotel where students and others gathered day and night to gab, drink, eat and otherwise act like students anywhere. We happily joined in.

We hit all the tourist sites, including the Napoleon's Tomb, Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre, Notre Dame, Seine River cruise, as well as other historical sites. Of course, we dined at the great restaurants, from little sidewalk eateries to the grand dining rooms of the Ritz Hotel.

We're not smokers, and that bothered us when eating inside and al fresco at Paris sidewalk cafés. Accustomed to the no smoking rules now in effect in most U.S. cities, it seems every Parisian, from teen to dotage, smokes endlessly. We've since learned there are now some rules in place where non-smokers can breathe while enjoying their Parisian wine and escargot. We hope that is so when we visit the City of Light again.

As for the natives of Paris, many are still short-tempered and arrogant to American tourists. Of course, big city rudeness isn't just a Parisian phenomenon. It also happens in New York, London, Moscow, Beijing and Boston.

Special tours to experience springtime flowers, the many gardens and former royal estates in and near Paris are available and relatively inexpensive. As the great Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore once warbled,

*'Til April in Paris, chestnuts in blossom,
Holiday tables under the trees.
April in Paris, this is a feeling
That no one can ever reprise...*

You're wrong, Dinah and Frank. We expect to reprise our Paris visits, if not this April, at other lovely springtimes in the future.