

Title:

Paris is Safe and Well, Thank You!

Word Count:

1201

Summary:

Have you got scared by the media reporting on the recent events in Paris? Phil almost did, but he knows better than just listening to the hubbub. Check with him what's the real story on these events, and if they really should hinder you from traveling to Paris.

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Article Body:

If you watched CNN or Fox News like I did a few evenings ago, you might have been impressed at the student demonstrations in France.

Both TV channels had us sold on the idea Paris was being mobbed by the angry multitude. Pictures of Mad Max-like police trucks hosing thousands of protesters. Scenes of massive gatherings around Bastille square. Interviews of malcontent students. Some pyrotechnics to boot!

Golly!

Though I often travel to Paris, I live in Florida. So I had to wait until the following day before I could call relatives and friends in Paris. I got Vince first. Vince is always a reliable source, he's got the local pulse. When I need to get the lowdown on all-things-Paris, I get it from him first.

"Hi Vince, it's Phil. Gee, how is it today? Have you lived through the night?

"Hi man, what are you talking about?

"Well, I mean, the demonstrations and all. The mayhem.

"Oh yeah, so what about them?

"Well, I was on CNN yesterday, and they were showing all this mess with the police, and students, and cars burning!

"And?

"Come on, man, you can't tell me nothing is happening there!

"Well, there was a demonstration, for sure. Students in the streets. But this was yesterday....

"You mean, it's over?

"Sure, buddy. Guys didn't like what the government handed over, guys got in the street, guys vented their anger, guys go home and watch TV, end of story.

"Oh. But about the cars torched? I mean, we saw it on TV!

"To hell with TV! You see a couple of cars burning, and you think it's the war? OK, that was Vince's input. Kind of reassuring.

Let's ring family. I wanted to talk to Lolo, my brother in law. Lolo was an army firefighter for 15 years, he's cool-calm-collected, and he's used to assessing disasters with a cold eye.

"Lolo? Hi, it's Phil.

"Hi bro, whassup?

"Hey, I just wanted to hear it from you, you know, about the demonstrations, and the mess in Paris.

"Yeah, that was sporty.

"You mean, they wreaked havoc in the place?

"No, I mean it was sporty to get to work on my scooter. I mean, some of the streets near the Bastille Square were jam-packed.

"But what about the protests? I mean, they showed us the stuff on TV; it looked like mayhem with the cops and their trucks!

"That was towards the evening, not during the day. I was not far from the demonstrations when they were full on. The students sure were a loud crowd, but the hosing only started in the evening, and only lasted a couple hours.

"What about the cars burned?

"There were a few. Less than in November, during the events in the suburbs.

"Not many then. And how is it now?

"Quiet. Everybody's home, like nothing happened.

"Do you mean the demonstrations are over?

"Sure. I rode in Paris today, and it was business as usual.

"Is it safe for Americans to come? You know I have this website, Paris-Eiffel-Tower-News.com, and I give travel advice to people. Is it safe for them, or should I just tell my visitors to postpone their travel plans to Paris?

"It's just as quiet today as it was before the demonstrations. Come see yourself if you don't believe me."

Oh I sure believed Lolo, he having served 15 years as a firefighter in the army, and saved several lives. He used to serve in Paris too, so he knows the place like the back of his hand.

But I figured: I'm not gonna risk sending the visitors of my website to Destination Hell. I want proof. Solid proof that it's all over, and there's nothing bad happening now in Paris.

So I called Serge and Tony, two friends who are in the video business.

"Guys, could you do me a favor, and shoot a short video for my visitors, with the time and date on it? I wanna see Paris as it is today.

Serge and Tony are very cool guys, and they sure obliged.

This is the video they sent me: <http://media.libsyn.com/media/hotels/ballade-high.wmv>.

It was shot in Paris, between 1:00 and 2:00 PM on April 3, 2006, in various

well-known places: under the Eiffel Tower, on the Alma Bridge, on the Champs Elysees Avenue, on Place de la Concorde, at St Germain des Pres, on St Michel Blvd, near the Cluny museum, at the Notre Dame Cathedral, on the Cite island, near the Louvre and Orsay museums, near the Opera house, and finally, right in the department store neighborhood.

What it shows is exactly how Paris is at this time. Business as usual.

So how come we have seen such a mess on TV, and there seems to be no trace of it today?

For one thing, student protests rarely last. They are put together quickly, and dissolve even quicker. What we saw on CNN and other news channels was a live-fast-die-fast occurrence.

What's more, TV and the news media rarely report quiet endings. 'News' is drama, war, atrocities, and the like. Uneventful endings never make the news.

The student protests of March 28 were filmed until everybody just went back home after sunset. Then they became much less newsworthy. Or so think the big honchos at CNN, Fox News, and the like. Don't forget folks, these guys think for y'all, the rabble. So shut up and watch.

Thirdly, the French are Mediterranean in character. An argument breaks, tempers flare quickly, bird names are exchanged, and suddenly it's all drama.... Then things resume their regular course, everybody shares a glass of wine, and the argument is soon forgotten.

The French government tried to pass a law which students and unions consider as a danger to job security. When the latter felt this law was forced into their gullets with no negotiations, their temper flared, and in no time they were down in the street. But it ended just as quickly as it all started. A flash in the pan. Within a day, it was over.

There is only one regrettable fact in this: heavy-handed, scandal-happy, war-loving news reporting gives us all a false impression that France is "a dangerous place to travel to these days."

Yet, had TV cameras continued rolling and spent just as much time showing Parisians had returned to their peaceful lives, such impression would have been quickly dispelled for what it really is: 100% false.

And so it is the privilege of regular Joes like me and other honest-to-God travelers to report the happy ending: everything is fine and dandy in Paris, folks. Live your lives as you plan them, and if you wish to travel to France, just don't bother too much with the news.

PS-- Paris is a big city. Demonstrations are mostly channeled along certain boulevards: Nation-to-Bastille, Nation-to-Italie, Bastille-to-Republique, and Bastille-to-Chatelet. Look them up on a map. Look at all the space around these spots. Well, that's your own playground in case new demonstrations occur when you are in Paris. A fact the news media conveniently omit to tell you. It wouldn't sell.

PPS-- To see the short movie, click here:

<http://media.libsyn.com/media/hotels/ballade-high.wmv>