

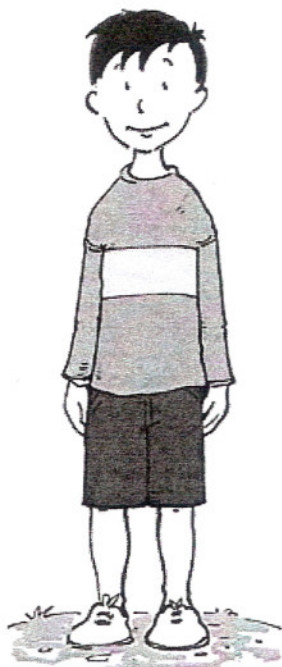
The Adventures of Luc and Lucie

Luc and Lucie in Paris

Episode 11

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Luc and Lucie in Paris

"Hi Mohammed," shouted Luc and Lucie.

There he was as they found him waiting for him at the entrance to the Ecole Primaire de la Seine in the centre of Paris. They had kept in contact ever since the Colonie de Vacances in the Loire Valley and by sheer coincidence their class in Charmante La Forêt was doing an exchange visit with Mohammed's school in Paris.

"Going to this school must be so different" thought Luc as he imagined his normal day; wandering down the lane where sometimes a rabbit or squirrel leapt across his path, crossing the square with hardly any traffic and sometimes chatting to a stall holder in the market before he went through the gate into the yard and the small nineteenth century building that was their school. Here he was in the centre of Paris, crushed against the school wall as cars drove past, dangerously fast, their horns blaring. Shops were open, with their wares spread out on the pavement. Tourists were having early breakfasts at the outside cafés. It was certainly dirtier than Charmante La Forêt but alive and exciting.

Luc and Lucie had come on a day's visit with their class. They'd started really early - too early for them. All twenty of them had met Monsieur Leblanc, their Head, and Monsieur Fouillard at the station and travelled by train to Paris and then by métro. The school was a brand new building of glass and steel and their class waited at the entrance watching as pupils with backpacks crowding along the street converged on the main door.

The Head, an old friend of Monsieur Leblanc, came to greet them and sent them to join three different classes until break. Luc and Lucie went to Mohammed's class and sat with him and his friend, Zahra. Their class was having a French lesson. Much to their relief they found they understood the lesson and could easily keep up. At break they went out with their friends into the school playground. Although it was in the middle of Paris it was still bordered on two sides by trees.

"We're having an early lunch today" said Mohammed
"because we're all going to visit the Musée D'Orsay."

Their school Head appeared. "I'd like you to give our visitors a tour of the school before you have lunch," he said. "Don't forget to take them into the Computer Suite and the Resources Centre."

The computer suite was massive and full of the latest technology. Luc and Lucie had already noticed all the interactive whiteboards in the classrooms.

Luc was fascinated to see some children editing a video they had taken on their school trip to make a film to show to their parents.

"We could have done that in the Alps" he whispered to Lucie. Some others were working on the background music on a synthesiser in the next door music room. They then went into the new 'Resources Centre' where there were all kinds of microfiches, CDs and DVDs, as well as shelves of new books.

Lucie, who loved reading began to look at the books. Her eye caught one on swimming which had a bookmark in the shape of a feather and as she turned the pages a scrap of paper fell out. She bent down to retrieve it and read:

A white polar bear is waiting for you in a station with no trains. Sit opposite him and under the seat you will find what you are looking for.

"Here we go again, that sounds interesting" said Luc, looking over her shoulder. "Whatever does that mean? We must keep on our toes today."

At lunch they chatted to Mohammed about Algeria. Both his and Zahra's families came from there, from Oran, the city where Luc's cousins lived. Luc and Lucie's grandmother was born in Oran and still lived there so they were all going there for a holiday the following December.

"We normally go to Oran in the Christmas holiday, too" said Mohammed. "We might see each other there."

The school, in fact, had over half of its pupils from the North African continent. It was very different from theirs' in Charmante la Forêt.

After lunch it was time to take the métro and then walk to the Musée d'Orsay. The station nearest to the Musée d'Orsay was called Solférino.

A guide was waiting there at the entrance.

"Now children," she said "I'm not sure whether you know that this not an old museum like the Louvre.

It used to be a railway station."

"A railway station!" Lucie couldn't help shouting out.

"Yes, it does sound extraordinary doesn't it - but wait until you see inside. There's a lot to look at but today we'll concentrate on the Impressionist paintings so let's walk all the way down the main hall and then we can go up on the escalator to the top floor."

"That must be it," Lucie whispered to Luc, as they went up five floors. "There must be a painting of a white polar bear."

"Now," said the guide "these rooms are where most of the Impressionist paintings are found. I need a volunteer. What about you?" pointing at Lucie. "Now shut your eyes."

Lucie shut her eyes and found herself being guided across the floor.

"Now open them."

Lucie did so and found herself about six inches from a painting.

"What do you see?" asked the guide.

"Just blobs and blotches in blue and white and grey."

"Now walk backwards."

Lucie did as she was instructed and magically the blobs and blotches turned into boats on a choppy sea, a painting by Manet.

"However do they do that?" she cried.

All the children then tried the experiment and had the same experience.

The guide showed them paintings by Seurat, Monet, Van Gogh and finally sculptures by Degas - one of a little dancer wearing a dress of real fabric. But there was no painting of a polar bear. When the tour came to an end, the children clapped spontaneously. Monsieur Fouillard thanked the guide for a really wonderful experience.

"Now children," he said "I want you to choose a painting and make a sketch of it on your drawing pads or do a different kind of drawing of your own on the same subject.

Lucie tried to copy the boats on a choppy sea while Luc looked intently at the painting of Van Gogh's bedroom and sketched it. All the children worked very hard for more than half an hour. Monsieur Fouillard was amazed how well Luc had copied the pictures.



Finally he said "Pack up children. It's time for a drink and something to eat in the snack bar. You'll have a fantastic view over Paris and then, before we go home, we'll have our final treat - a trip on the Bateaux Mouches.

Lucie and Luc looked at each other in dismay.

"Well I think we've failed this time," murmured Luc.

"Just a minute," said Lucie and she went up to Monsieur Fouillard and looked at him plaintively.

"I've heard there's a beautiful white polar bear here," she said.

"You're right Lucie," said Monsieur Fouillard "It would be a pity to miss him - we could look at him on the way out."

Down the escalators they all went and across the floor and up some stairs and there it was - not a painting but the most beautiful sculpture of a white bear the children had ever seen. It was huge and smooth and proud and gentle.

Lucie rushed across and sat on the black granite seat opposite and made a quick sketch of the bear of which she was very proud. When no-one was looking she put her hand underneath and sure enough she felt a little square stuck to the surface. She quickly pulled it off and put it into her pocket and nodded her head to Luc.



"Now for the Bateaux-Mouches!" he shouted.

"Meet outside the museum exit in ten minutes. Monsieur Fouillard will go there now and will wait for you," said Monsieur Loubignac. "Anyone who wants to buy postcards or souvenirs in the shop come with me now."

Everyone wanted to. Luc and Lucie dashed in and bought their postcards first and then went out into the sunshine.

There was a flash of colour and there was Pirate waiting for them.

"Don't think you've finished for the day," he said. "There's still another square to find before the end of the afternoon."

"Oh no" groaned Luc. "Just when we were going to enjoy ourselves on the boat so where's the clue?"

As he spoke a gust of wind blew from the river and left a scrap of paper at his feet. He quickly scooped it up.

"It said *The Swallows will provide information.*"

"Not very helpful," said Lucie, when Luc showed it to her.

They looked up into some trees nearby but there was no sign of a swallow.

"It's more likely to be at home than here in Paris," thought Luc. Pirate tried to cheer them up.

"You've both been really great," he squawked, "I'm sure you'll find it. You're near the end now. I know you can do it."

Monsieur Leblanc emerged from the Museum with the rest of the group.

"Now children," he said "I know you've had quite a long day but we are going to walk to the Bateaux Mouches. We'll all stay together, of course, but remember Pont D'Alma is where we're going should be any chance anyone get lost." By the way he said it, the children knew that they HAD to stick together so no one WOULD get lost - and nobody did.

They crossed on to the right bank of the river Seine over the Pont D'Alma and there were the Bateaux-Mouches.

"This is our boat" said Monsieur Leblanc. "Form an orderly queue and go on the boat immediately. They're waiting for us." As they passed the ticket office they were given a leaflet with a map of the river Seine.

"Luc, look at the name of the boat," cried Lucie as they climbed on board. "It's the Swallow."

The gangway was removed and they felt the engines throb.

"Excellent," cried the Parrot swooping overhead casting his eyes jubilantly over a grey form left helplessly running up and down on the bank in a frenzy as the boat moved into the middle of the river.

"OK," said Luc "we're nearly there.... the clue says it provides the information but where?" They opened their leaflets to look at the map.

"Have you got something in yours?" said Zahra.

"Yes I have," said Luc with some relief. "I wonder what it is?"

But before he could say anymore, a voice came over the loudspeaker welcoming them on board and wishing them a good trip.

It was a VERY good trip. They set off, crossed the river and passed under the Pont des Invalides and the magnificent Pont Alexandre III. There was a commentary in several languages but their friends were keen to be the guides too.

"Look, there's the clock we saw in the Musée d'Orsay."

Mohammed was the first to show them the sights. The children from Charmante La Forêt had seen pictures of Notre Dame in their school books and soon spotted it in the distance on the Ile de la Cité. It looked really imposing in the centre of the island and they could easily imagine Quasi modo ringing the bells in one of the towers.

"It's a pity we can't get off and have a closer look," said Mohammed "but we are going to go round the Ile Saint Louis and then turn back. If you ever visit the Ile Saint Louis you must buy a special ice cream there. They are called Berthillon ice-creams."



"They're delicious," added Zahra.

As the bateau-mouche passed the Ile de la Cité again they could just about see the spire of the Sainte Chapelle.

Soon they were passing the Musée du Louvre. "Who remembers what famous painting is in the Louvre?" asked Monsieur Fouillard. All the hands shot up! Denis was chosen.

"It's the Mona Lisa by Leonardo de Vinci isn't it?" All the children agreed.

"Now," Zahra pointed out "you can just see the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde."

Pirate, now hovering overhead, added excitedly "This is where King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette had their heads chopped off by the guillotine." All the children on the boat looked up in amazement at seeing this knowledgeable, talking parrot.

The children craned their necks to see more and took little notice of their teacher who was already pointing out the next sight, Les Invalides.

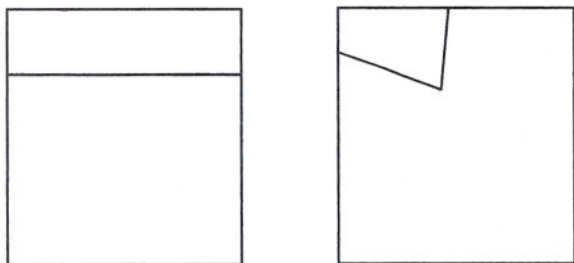
As they passed the Eiffel Tower, Luc and Lucie chatted to each other remembering how they watched the fireworks there on the 14th July.



Finally the bateau-mouche turned round and headed back to the Point de l'Alma. All the children took the photo of the Statue of Liberty with the Eiffel Tower in the background.

An hour and a half had seemed to whizz by and soon they were thanking their friends at the Ecole Primaire de la Seine who were to visit their school at Charmante La Forêt in the Autumn, and were on their way by metro to Gare St. Lazare and then home.

On the train Luc and Lucie managed to look at the two squares. The first was very familiar, but the second was different.



"It looks like time again," said Lucie "What time is it now?"

"A quarter past six," replied Luc.

"Well, it could be twenty past six or a quarter to seven, depending on which way round you turn it."

Twenty past six came and went and so did a quarter to seven but nothing happened. The children, however, didn't know that as they had fallen sound asleep breathing deeply to the rhythm of the train, and dreaming of computers and boats and bears.