

Notes From Europe

Although I had viewed countless times the address of our home for the month of July on Google maps, nothing quite prepared me for the narrow ascending gravel road that lay before us. Yes, I knew that the farmhouse was located just outside the local village on a dead-end road, but this incline was something I clearly missed. Grateful Joachim was at the wheel, I found myself holding my breath as he shifted gears and the tires struggled to maintain traction. In all the details I had investigated, here was one I had somehow ignored. I am the big picture planner in our partnership; he usually attends to the details and this was one we both had missed. The house was of course set at the very top of the hill on a level plain that overlooked the dense forests below. While the view was remarkable, I was immediately thankful to have groceries for the upcoming days, I would be avoiding trips down until I recovered from this shock. So, it seemed, living in the mountains might require me to develop some new skills and overcome a fear or two. Hmmm, another detail.

Having survived that experience and happy to be out of the car after two days of travel we quickly set about the task of settling in. There is something grounding about the blending of our energy with that of the house itself. My next hour or so was filled with my making friends with the kitchen. As important to me as the breathtaking views would be the meals I planned to prepare each day with local produce. I busied myself with unpacking our fresh produce from market shopping on our two day road trip along with the organic staples I bought in Ohringen. Joachim investigated the cookware and appliances at our disposal, rating each on its functionality. With the kitchen well stocked and the tools tested it was not long before I had a simple classic of aubergine, tomatoes, mushrooms, onions and Herbes de Provence simmering on the sleek gas range in the smartly remodeled farmhouse kitchen.

Joachim then took on the task of setting up what would serve as our dining room in the garden for the next four weeks while I pan roasted a packet of ready-made gluten free gnocchi and put together a simple salad of local melons to start. We were both surprised by our ferocious appetites, so it was no surprise there wasn't a bite left. After a quick cleanup an evening walk directly from the house into the forest was all I needed before falling into the deepest most restful sleep we had in months.

I awoke to full on daylight at 7 am on day one of this much anticipated experiment. The question being put to test was whether I can create a life that allows for a balance between the rich busy-ness of family and urban living in Texas and the remote simplicity of time in the Pyrenees Mountains in France? I expect to gain considerable insight these next four weeks with the feasibility of it all revealed. It certainly helps to have a willing partner and one who shares a similar longing to live at a slower pace. I am also fortunate to have children who, if not completely agreeable, certainly cheer us on and humor our endeavor. Because our ideas of rustic simple living do vary, my daughter Kate was particularly relieved today to learn we had a house with running water.

Today, the primary goal was to allow ourselves the opportunity to come down from the two month long emotional roller coaster of selling our Austin home of ten years and packing it all away in storage until a new house can be built for us in San Marcos. It's amazing how much easier this is accomplished given our setting. Knowing our first work day was just ahead we spent the afternoon creating comfortable workspaces for ourselves. With just a bit of furniture rearranging and out of the box thinking we were able to put together a standing desk for me with a beautiful view of the mountains as well as an outdoor option on the stone terrace that overlooks the garden. I could certainly get used to these options. Joachim claimed the dining room table which we don't expect to be using given

our preference to dine outdoors and taking full advantage of the fact that we can.

And not to be forgotten was the fact that I set out to overcome my fear of the crazy steep road that leads to our house. Two times down and one up and I think I've got it. I was even able to breath the last time!

As I look at the days that lay ahead, the word rhythm comes to mind. I see this time as an opportunity to establish one that allows me to live the life I aspire to live. Finding rhythm to our days is quite different than setting a routine. Rhythm allows for the highs and lows, the demands of the day, and the rich moments that feed our soul. What thoughts come to your mind when you think of your daily rhythm? I'll certainly be thinking more in the days ahead about establishing a rhythm that allows for spaciousness and yet productivity. Looking forward to sharing further thoughts and experiences with you next week.

Follow me on Instagram, @Laurenhubele, to keep up with my daily excursions in the Pyrenees.