

# Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

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## VACCINES & VARIANTS: ADVICE FOR WORLD TRAVELERS

For most of July I've been putting the finishing touches on our upcoming trip to France. Sara and I will be leading 4 different canal boat cruises and two driving trips in three distinctly different parts of France. At the end of our time in France we are taking a short, half a week, driving tour through the Netherlands before coming home.

For this year's trip, I've booked: 3 cars, 4 boats, made, and remade, and remade, 17 plane tickets, reserved 34 hotel rooms, purchased 35 train tickets, and written to, and made arrangements with, in French, 8 different small town taxi drivers. I've done this for the 18 people that we'll go traveling with in August, September and October.

How I keep it all straight is almost a mystery to me. But I have a calendar and a formula. I check the calendar, I triple check the calendar and then I just go through the formula: air, hotel, train, taxi, boat, car, taxi, hotel, air. Check, check, check, check, check, check.

We've also done this before. We've been to the places we'll take our co-travelers and we understand, at least partially, the culture of France. This helps put our travelers' minds at ease, mostly.

Every year we lead these trips there is always something that our travelers are concerned with or worried about. It's understandable, travel can be disorienting. For example: one year it was credit cards with smart chips, another year it was data plans for phones, or how to check email without a smart phone, or plugs on boats, or CPAP machines, or hair dryers. Of course this year it's Covid. This is a different kind of worry.

Nothing dominates our current world news like the coronavirus. This pandemic has pushed us like nothing we've been through before. Our ancestors have been here, but for many of us this is new. For many medical professionals, this is new for them too.

This is an odd feeling for me because for most of my life I've known how to travel but now I'm preparing to head off into a different world, one that has changed more than travel did after 9-11. And this new world has new rules and regulations that I'm not familiar with navigating. Once I do it, I'm sure it'll seem fine, even normal and routine, but any new experience can lead to some anxiety. This anxiety always fades by taking action, by doing.

Oh, I can hear you say - "Yeah but, this is different. This is the coronavirus. This is the Delta variant. This sucker is insanely contagious. This thing is out of control, we are out of control!"

True. But I've been vaccinated. All our travelers have been vaccinated. To travel to France you have to be vaccinated. To travel back the the USA you have to pass a negative test even if you are vaccinated. Our country is still closed to everyone except American citizens. To travel on public transport, enter a store, a museum, a restaurant, a cafe or a theater in France you must prove you've been vaccinated. The French are 64% vaccinated, the EU is over 70% as a whole. Traveling in France is probably safer than traveling in Minnesota and certainly safer than most places in the United States.

But here is the big caveat: the vaccines aren't 100%. There have been cases of vaccinated people getting sick. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are 94% effective in preventing serious disease. But nothing in this world is 100%. There is no guarantee of continued life. The only thing that is 100% assured is that we have a finite amount of time on the planet.

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To me this is an important point because for me travel is a transcendent experience. It feeds my soul and my body. It has been something I've always done and I will always encourage doing. Travel opens the mind to new ways of thinking and fills the senses with delights and disgusts in almost equal in measure. Travel has always had an element of danger, some places much more than others, and many destinations are harborers of disease.

In the 20th century science has made incredible progress against human diseases. But nothing is a sure bet, nothing is guaranteed. As an infant my parents vaccinated me and my siblings against many virulent tropical diseases, packed up the family and moved to the Philippines. We lived there for four years as my father's work tasked him with combing the jungles in search of minerals. He did contract malaria, he did recover, and he did get vaccinated for Covid19 this year shortly after his 81st birthday.

Following this life long example, and the advice that has served my family well for over 50 years, I got vaccinated. I'll follow the guidelines set forth by public health experts in Europe. I accept my role as a traveler, visitor, and world citizen. I look forward to our upcoming travels and I prepare, as I always do, for all the hazards of travel.

If you aren't traveling with us this year you can follow along on our social media feeds. Click the icon to follow along.



## Dîner en Blanc Duluth

This is your last chance to RSVP for Dîner en Blanc. If you'd like to come on Saturday please let me know. For those attending, we do have a small supply of chairs and a few folding tables we can lend if you need such devices to comfortably enjoy the evening.

Not sure what this is? Here is a [short video explaining](#) this quirky French picnic. *Dîner en Blanc Duluth* will be on **August 7th, 2021** at our house, 2620 E. Superior Street, in the yard.

Here's what you need to know:

👉 **It is BYOE.** (*Bring Your Own Everything.*) Literally everything. Food, chairs, drink. You can make this as fancy or as simple as you like ~ table and chairs or a blanket.

👑 **Dress code:** mostly white. Really. This is a fancy, mostly white dress up picnic. I did say it's quirky.

📧 **RSVP:** (*respondez s'il vous plait*) to [david@savvynomad.com](mailto:david@savvynomad.com).

🕒 **August 7th, 2021.** Come set up between 6-7pm, share in the *Votre Sante, (to your health)* toast at 7pm. Eat and drink at your leisure.

This is essentially just a picnic at our house, out in the garden. An evening of socializing, eating, drinking and toasting to our collective existence, to life. This is a renewal of our friendships in person, rather than in digital, and an opportunity to enjoy each others company with grace, elegance, food, wine and companionship. Will you join us for *Dîner en Blanc Duluth*?

## WHAT IS EAU DE VIE?

Some of you might wonder how it is that you've come to get this strange newsletter, which is a combination of advice and history on wine, travel and spirit?

And a question I've had a few times is what does *Eau de Vie* mean? Well, *eau* in French is water and *de vie* means of life. So directly translated it means water of life. But rarely do direct translations convey true meanings. *Eau de Vie* in France is often associated with any fruit brandy. While Cognac is brandy from wine and Calvados is brandy from apple cider, all the other brandies such as pear, cherry, currant or any other fruit are collectively called *Eau de Vie*, water of life, or spirit of life.

When I started this newsletter, 32 months ago, I wanted to name it something that conveyed my feelings toward travel, food, drink, and the spirit of sharing these things with others. The term *Eau de Vie* seemed a perfect encapsulation of this to me.

If you enjoy this newsletter consider sharing it with others you think might enjoy it. My distribution method is by word of mouth. If you know someone who'd like to receive this sort of information please send it along to them or pass their email address to me, [david@savvynomad.com](mailto:david@savvynomad.com). Conversely, if you are tired of receiving this just let me know and I'll take your name off the list.

Finally, there will be no *Eau de Vie* editions for September or October because we will be traveling. *À Bientôt!*