Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

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NYC to Paris for $149!! The truth about Budget Airlines.

There is a new budget airline in town. If...your town is New York or Los Angeles. They are called *Norse* and are a Norwegian Airline. And this got me thinking.

Could I use my annual *American Express Delta Credit Card Companion Ticket* (good for one, buy one - get one free ticket, on a domestic flight) to fly Sara and myself from Duluth to NYC? Then I'd take one of these cheap *Norse* flights from NYC to Paris. If the numbers are right this could be a good deal.

So I did the maths. Here's what I found:

To establish a baseline ~ over the years, I've been able to book flights from Duluth to Paris via Minneapolis for around $1300. Sometimes more, sometimes less. But $1300 is my go to budget number and I strive to find tickets for this or less.

For this price, I get a seat in the Economy section, a carry on, a personal item, 1 free checked bag, 2 meals on board with wine, I get to pick my seats, and thanks to Covid my reservations are now changeable without a fee and cancel-able with a credit.

Now that we know what I've paid historically and what service I expect, let's see what *Norse Airlines* can do. For this little exercise I'm going to use my fall 2023 travel dates to France which are August 27 to October 5.

When I plug these dates into *Norse's* reservation system I'm greeted with a series of options.

Option 1. Choose either:
1a. Economy for $311
1b. Premium for $611

I choose Economy.

Option 2. Choose either:
2a. Economy Lite $311
2b. Economy Classic $411
2c. Economy Plus $591

Economy lite allows only a bag that can fit under the seat in front of you and a change fee for $200.

Economy Classic allows for an under seat bag, a carry on, a checked bag, 1 meal and a $200 change fee.

Economy Plus allows for all of the above bags and I get to pick my seat. *Norse* fly Boeing 787s configured in 3x3x3 seating.

I choose Economy Plus because I'm not getting stuck in the middle! For the outbound I'm at $591. On my return, using the same options, it costs $475. The plane is arranged in 3x3x3 seat format so... I pick two aisle seats for Sara and myself. This isn't optimal but better than someone (Sara) being stuck in the middle. This brings my total up to $1064.39. But wait! There's more. Checking my bags is an additional $10 per flight. So my total is now $1084.39....but I still need to book a flight from Duluth to NYC on Delta - currently the cheapest is: $767.00 and I have to leave a day early because the *Norse Airlines* flight leaves at 12:30am! Talk about taking the red eye flight!

For Sara and I, the math works out to:

DLH to NYC $767 x 1 (because I have a free companion ticket).

NYC to CDG $1084.39 x 2 = $2168.78 for a grand total of $2935.78 which is $1467.89 each.

Bah! That's a lot of changing planes and picking up luggage and checking luggage and other malarkey to get a worse experience, with less food and no wine, that costs more.

I'll just fly Delta. It's cheaper.

Valentine Wine buying Advice:

Chocolates, Champagne and a dozen roses - the classic Valentine Day gift for your sweetie. Oh so romantic, pop the bubbly, take a sip, then slide a luscious, silky smooth chocolate in your mouth and...gag.

Classic, only in the movies. In truth, terrible! Let me say this as clearly as I can: Champagne and chocolate do not go together.

Champagne does go with oysters on the half shell. It does go with mac and cheese, french fries, tater tots, aged cheddar and salty, fatty, food. It doesn't go with sweet.

Chocolate goes very nicely with Napa Cabernet Sauvignon, new world style red blends, Zinfandel and Ruby Port.

Do not commit the classic blunder. I'm not talking about starting a land war in Asia or making a bet with a Sicilian when death is on the line, I'm talking about pairing Champagne with chocolate!

Stick to either Champagne and Roses or Roses, chocolate and Zinfandel. Click the thumbnail link below to see a full explanation.

Happy Valentines Day!

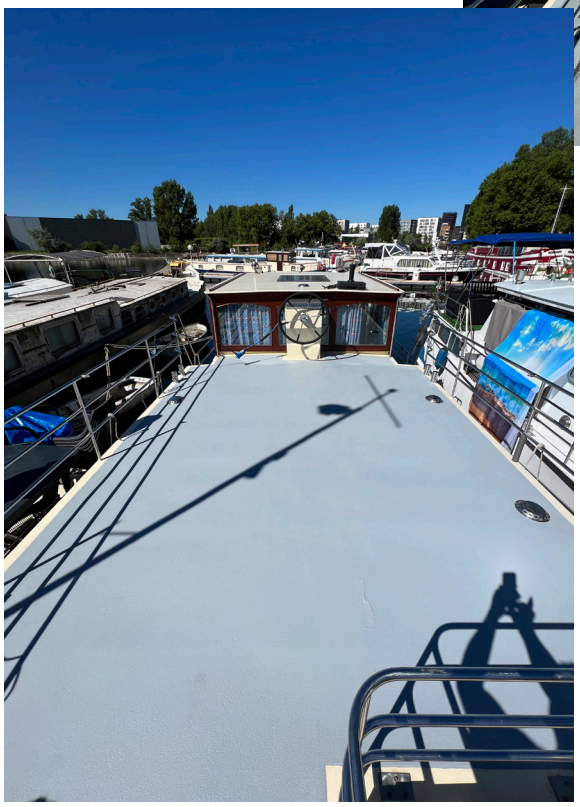
Boat Tour!

Click the thumbnail link above to take a tour of our boat the Relax Companion.

Last summer, while I was grinding away old paint chips on the aft deck, Sara made some interior and exterior videos of the boat. These have now been edited and uploaded to YouTube.

AND...

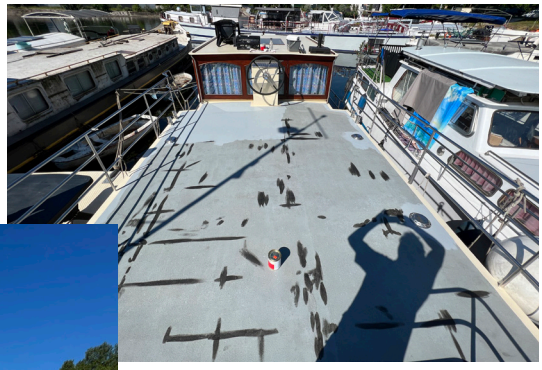
if you watch the boat tour video, you'll see that I was working on the deck. Some of you, DIYers at heart, may want to know how the deck turned out. Here are a couple photos of how it proceeded and finished.



Free Yoga With Sara

Sara has been uploading to YouTube some of the classes she taught during the Pandemic. These classes are focused on relaxation, meditation and gentle movement.

These classes are about one hour long and require no previous skill, physicality or flexibility. Click the thumbnail link below:



For lunch onboard, Sara makes some stellar salads which we wash down with cheap Savignon Blanc. Ahhh, France.