

Olga's Hemingway Walk

By Mark Goodall

While in Paris in 2018, I booked a Midnight in Paris themed Hemingway Walk guided by Olga, a Russian art historian, who studied at Oxford and Ecole du Louvre. We were to meet on Monday, November 5, at the fountain near the Place Monge metro station. As it happened, I was the only guest. I suggested that I would be happy to join a tour another day if that made more sense. She declined the gesture, and we were off, exploring Hemingway's roaring twenties haunts including favorite streets and places that had included Fitzgerald, Stein, Pound and Joyce in the Saint-Germain de Pres area, and the Saint-Sulpice Church. Owen Wilson would have loved Olga.

The walk ended with conversation and a glass of wine at a café terrace. I happened to have, and gave her, a copy of Thomas Wolfe's *The Painted Word* as we discussed the role of art criticism in the prominence of the Mona Lisa.

Olga was curious about my Paris lodging, and I described Catherine's chic, iconic, large flat in Haussmann Paris near the opera, suggesting, if Catherine was amenable, she join us for breakfast during my stay. I was able to invite her to visit a couple of days later. Catherine served, and joined us for, breakfast, then gave Olga a tour of her elegant Paris apartment

I also invited her to share my penchant for an intimate three-hour dinner – my treat. I like my guest to choose an interesting venue, manage the servers and menu, select the wines, and indulge a little in generous funding, say 200 euros, with an indication of another hundred if appropriate. A 200 euro allocation is usually ample for dinner, desert and a couple bottles of wine.

Her husband in London, Olga suggested we meet Saturday evening at Brasserie Lipp on Boulevard Saint-Germain, across from Café de Flore. Lipp was a favorite of artists, writers, intellectuals, politicians and dignitaries – and, of course, Picasso and Hemingway. It was a quintessential three-hour dinner covering a range of topics and some pleasant interaction with adjacent patrons. Pommes à l'huile is no longer on the menu – smile. Oh, she brought it in just under budget.