

NANTES, FRANCE Travel Book

Thanks to the many members of the Dec 2 and Nov 3, 2002 surgery groups for building this information. John and Carlan edited the first version for the Dec 2 group. Future travelers should contact Dennis dennisbo_nospam@comcast.net of the Nov 3 group who edited the most recent MS Word file for updating. Jack will convert the file and upload it to the forum. This is the 3/23/04 version.

A. Preparation For Trip:

1. Passport. Allow 6-8 weeks to process the application otherwise you will pay a premium for expediting. If you have never had a passport you are going to need certified birth records. Most Post Offices have passport applications; also they can be found in other agencies/offices. Wal-Mart makes passport pictures, as do numerous other locations. Passport application and other useful/informative information is available from the Department of State at:

http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html.

If you are facing a time deadline, you can get up to 24-hour service for a large fee:

http://www.americanpassport.com/Passport_First.html

2. Medical (Records, Medications). Start gathering your records and meds early for the trip. It may be very helpful to write a concise history of your case since the french doctors can usually read english more efficiently than they can speak it. Bring along any test results and MRI films. If you have not had a PNMLT, Dr. Labat will perform this. Dr. Riant will perform a block on everyone, which will cost 300 euros (cash only, paid to him directly; plus a small hospital charge for the C-T scan). You will then have a consultation with all the doctors together at Dr. Robert's office to determine the advisability of surgery (Nov 03 group).

Dr Robert advises you bring your own pain meds for post surgery. Also, do not forget other medication as described in the following paragraphs. Make a return appointment with your Doctor to look at stitches, etc. The stitches used on the author's wife were the type, which totally dissolve on their own. The exterior ends will need to be snipped, and the Dr. will give you instructions.

In addition to bringing pain medicine you need to consider the following medicines for other situations.

Colds, Infections, allergies to smoke. - Amoxil 500 mg capsules (generic is Amoxicillin 500 mg capsules).

Antibiotic for staph infection. Consider starting upon leaving the hospital. Talk to your doctor about what antibiotic would be best for you. The December 02 group had one member who had to be treated for a staph infection. The November 03 group had none. Prior to surgery, all patients in the Nov 03 group bathed their entire body with a disinfectant provided by the hospital. You are responsible for shaving your buttocks so bring along disposable razors.

Water Retention, Swelling - There is no cranberry juice in France that can be used as a natural diuretic. A change in your diet, saltier foods, and a high number of hours involved with traveling may result in water retention and/or swelling. Lasix or Lo-Aqua are two brands (generic is Furosemide) to be discussed with your doctor.

Constipation – Normal to experience this condition after a surgery and an increase in pain medications. A laxative may be a necessity. Some use a light virgin olive oil with a meal (teaspoon) in lieu of a stool softener. Also recommended are pine nuts and flax seeds as natural laxatives (purchase in US and bring with you). Try to maintain high fiber diet. One recommendation for a laxative is a suppository that contains 283 mg Docusate Sodium, known as Enemeez Mini Enema, manufactured by Western Research Laboratories, Phoenix, 877-797-7997 (request your pharmacy order it for you to bring on the trip). Colase is an oral form that can be purchased without a prescription.

Nausea - Especially for post surgery and on pain medication. Numerous members of the December 2002 group experienced varying degrees of nausea. Phenergan suppositories, 25 mg are very effective. Recommend no fluids by mouth during any pain drips.

Females - When taking antibiotic you may get vaginal infection. Take Acidophilus, an over-the-counter drug in US if you start an antibiotic medication.

Wound Dressings – One very effective covering is the 3M Tegaderm product. Comes in various sizes but for this surgery the 10 cm x 25 cm (4 in x 10 in) or 10 cm x 12 cm (4 in x 5 in) is appropriate. Most pharmacies will not stock these sizes on the shelf but will do an order for you. Also, bring sterile gauze to pad over the incision before the Tegaderm covering is applied. The November 03 surgery group found this unnecessary as the hospital dressings were adequate until we returned home.

<http://products.3m.com/us/healthcare/products/healthcare-medical.jhtml?powurl=N34DZNBCTXbeGSPXKRQCK6geGST1T4S9TCgv98R4L0GCZLg1>.

3. Tourist Office. Contact the Nantes Tourist Office and they will mail you visitor and lodging information. This office is located only two blocks from the Mercure Hotel. Requests may be made via e-mail, response was within 2 weeks:

<http://www.nantes-tourisme.com/>

4. Travel arrangements:

a. Westlake Travel. (800) 700-8747. Speak to Imogene who was able to get excellent group rates for the December 02 and November 03 group at the Grand Mercure. She can also take care of airplane and rail reservations. Imogene's office is located in Chico, California; she is on Pacific Time for all telephone contact. There is a small fee.

b. Personal: If you decide to book your own information, see Internet sites for Air France and SCNF (French National Railroad) in the next section. Delta is Air France's US partner. Keep in mind that if you change airlines, have multiple layovers, or need to retrieve your luggage along the trip, this will be a painful inconvenience, even if you save some money. Information is also available from the tourist office or off the Internet for lodging reservations.

5. Money Exchange: ATM cards are the best way to obtain cash in France. But, it's probably wise to carry some cash and hide it in case of emergency, like the ATM machines are down for some reason. Traveler's checks are no longer the desired means to obtain money when travelling anywhere; though you might want to keep some for safe keeping if it makes you feel comfortable. If you get them for free from your bank, bring some for emergencies but expect to pay high fees for cashing them. Bring credit cards and primarily an ATM card. You can buy some Euros at the airport from the currency exchange both if you can't find an ATM machine on your first few minutes in France and need a coffee, but that really shouldn't be a problem. Euros in the U.S. can be ordered in advance from your bank (for a fee). Appears the ATM machine is the best approach for obtaining funds. The ATM machines this author observed accepted cards with Cirrus and Pulse printed on the back of the card. You may want to notify your bank in advance so that you don't think your card has been stolen when they see withdrawals from France. Unfortunately, the dollar has lost about 40% of its value against the euro in the last few years.

6. Telephone Cards. Buy prepaid telephone cards before leaving US. But check them for rules and rates in France. The Dec 02 author used an 800-minute phone card from AT&T, purchased from the Military Exchange system. The normal cost is \$0.05 per minute in the US. In France, calling the US was \$0.69 per minute. To use the card to call another French number it was \$1.60 per minute. The November 03 author used an AT&T card purchased at Sam's Club that charged \$0.10 per min! to talk from France to the US, so rates may be getting more competitive. Another option is calling direct from your hotel room to the U.S. Dialing direct from your hotel room at the Mercure cost \$0.24 a minute with an additional \$0.29 added for the out of country call. Talking 20 minutes to someone in the U.S. will cost \$5.80.

B. Overseas Airlines Arriving in Paris Charles- de-Gaulle Airport (CDG); Connecting to Nantes (NTE) by plane or rail.

1. Overseas Airlines: The primary airport for international overseas flights into Paris is Roissy Charles- de-Gaulle Airport. Located some 14 miles northeast of the center of Paris, the international symbol for Charles-de-Gaulle is CDG. All flights from the U.S. use either Terminal 1 or Terminal 2. If you were in the military you will like the fact that Europe uses the 24-hour clock, no a.m. or p.m. Non-military types start adding 12 to clock times after noon to get Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). The time 1500 hours is 3 p.m., 2200 hours is 10 p.m.

<http://www.airwise.com/airports/europe/CDG/>

<http://paris-cdg.com/>

Consider obtaining a letter from your doctor explaining why you are going to France and include any special needs in the letter. Use this letter with your airlines to board early and avoid the rush. Definitely show it to the flight crew and if possible use unused seats for lying down. Many in the December 2002 group used frequent flyer miles or purchased additional seats so the PNE sufferer could lie down during the flight. See *attachment Travel Letter Private Physician*. Most major airlines have hospitality rooms for their more important or frequent travelers. American Airlines will (for \$50.00) allow you into the Admiral's Club for 24 hours and since one could lie down on a couch, this might be a wise investment.

2. Train or Plane: In the December 02 group about half the group flew Air France from Paris (1 hr) and the others took the TGV (High Speed Train, 2 hrs 51 min). Both have advantages and disadvantages. The aircraft from Paris to Nantes (Air France) was an old Boeing 737 and reminiscence of Southwest Airlines (cramped to say the least). One flight had to sit at the ramp for 70 minutes after loading to meet the stop strike restrictions of the French Air Traffic Controllers. NOTE – short duration strikes are a French pastime for all professions (transportation, services, etc.). The TGV is clean and pleasant but is more expensive and you have to do another baggage drag (cannot check baggage through). Another route to think about if feasible from your departure is flying to London's Gatwick Airport and connecting to Air France. (The only draw back is during the one-hour flight there is no place to lie down since these are leer jets). Gatwick to Nantes airport flight time is 1 hour, and you can avoid Paris if you prefer.

3. Roissy Charles- de-Gaulle Airport: Dirty, crowded, worn. The TGV and trains to Paris (RER) are located between Terminals 2A/2B/2C/2D & 2F. The airport has numerous baggage carts at no charge (unlike many US airports). If you arrive in Terminal 1 there is a shuttle to Terminal 2. See the personal Web Site for Andrew P. for an excellent discussion of the TGV at Charles- de-Gaulle:

ftp://ftp.sonic.net/pub/users/andrew/pne/france_travel.html

4. Train to Nantes: The High Speed Train (TGV) station at Roissy Charles- de-Gaulle (CDG) is in Terminal 2 and it goes to Nantes (3 stops). More expensive than air travel but an experience and you can stand. If you are 60 or older, you can get discounted tickets if the seats are available (Discovery Senior). Review their Internet site for information, click on the British Flag (for English). Reservations are necessary.

<http://www.voyages-sncf.com>

5. Air France to Nantes: After arriving in Paris you can take a connecting Air France flight to Nantes. Shuttle buses will carry you between the international and domestic terminals. The Air France site (in English) is:

<http://www.airfrance.com/us>.

6. Baggage for Air Flights. Baggage weights are taken serious in France. Every check-in location had scales with kg displayed. Maximum bag weight for an international flight is 70 lbs (32 kg) but that is subject to change. Always check your specific airline. A good starting place is

<http://www.andiamoinc.com/airlinebag.html#a1>.

They also take check-in very serious. Unlike the US where the ticket counter may be checking in several flights at the same time, they check flights individually and do not do early check-ins.

C. Arriving in Nantes and getting to hotel

1. Airport Cab. Cab fare from the airport to the Mercure Central (center of Nantes) is about 20 Euros plus tip (~1 euro). Cabs are usually much smaller than US; some in the group could not fit their entire luggage into one taxi.

2. Airport Bus Nantes Atlantique. Cost from airport to place Commerce (center of Nantes and 75 yards from Mercure Central) is 6.00 Euros per traveler. An advantage of the bus is getting your entire luggage on board and you can stand during the trip (15 minutes). Once at the Commerce stop, the Mercure is about 3 minutes away and the Mercure has the airport type baggage carts you can use to transport your luggage. *See attachments; Airport Shuttle Commerce, Airport Shuttle Side 01, and Airport Shuttle Side 02.*

3. Train Station (Gare). Located just 3 Tramway (Streetcar) stops on Line 1 from place Commerce is the main train station. You can either take a cab or the Tramway to place Commerce and Hotel Mercure Central. If you take the Tramway, the direction is Francois Mitterrand. There is sufficient room on each Tramway car for luggage. The

Airport Bus Nantes Atlantique also stops at the train station and then at place Commerce some 5 minutes later.

D. Hotels

1. Reservations. Regardless of what Hotel you decide to reside in, a reservation is a must due to the high volume of business travelers.

2. Mercure Central. *See attachments: Hotel Mercure Commerce, Nantes Central + Train for location of the hotel.* Located at 4 rue du Couedic, telephone 33 (0) 2 51 82 10 00. There is more than one Mercure in Nantes. If you can get a group rate, as the December 2002 and November 2003 groups were able to accomplish with a travel agent, this is the best deal. It is a four star hotel. The cost to the group was 88 Euros per night in Nov 03 and included breakfast. The buffet breakfast was exceptional; scrambled eggs, ham, bacon, sausages, cheeses, yogurt, figs, prunes, bananas, oranges, apples, omelets upon request, fresh juice, decaffe tea, tonic water (good for muscles), coffee, and several types of bread with jellies. One will never forget the breads of France...simply delicious! The hotel is centrally located, just 3 minutes from place Commerce (bus, tramway, airport bus), five minutes walk from the hospital and shopping all within easy walking distance. The staff was first rate. TV included BBC News and several French Channels. Safety deposit boxes were available at no charge. The showers were great although it was difficult to get into the tub/shower due to the height of the tub. The closet was only 27 inches wide; you may have trouble getting all your clothes into this tiny space. Consider bringing a plastic over the door hanger (Wal-Mart, Lowe's, etc). *See attachment Closet Help for a photo of a typical hanger that will help.* Dresser had two drawers. Do not over pack clothes.

3. Jules Vern Best Western. *See attachment Hotel Jules Vern for a photo of the hotel taken across the street from the Mercure.* Just across the street from the Mercure, appeared to be nice but with less amenities than the Mercure. It was booked solid during our stay.

4. Holiday Inn Garden Court. Appeared to be a large hotel, convenient to the hospital but not as centrally located as Mercure/Jules Vern. It is located on tramway line 2 and just minutes from the hospital.

5. Gare area (Train). There are numerous hotels across the street from the station. Not as nice as the Mercure but more reasonably priced. Location to center of town is good being only 3 stops away on tramway.

E. Medical Appointments

1. Tentative Schedule. Before you leave for France, you will be given a schedule of your medical appointments with Dr. Labat, Dr. Riant, and Dr. Robert.

2. Dr Jean Jacques Labat. He does the PNMLT and the limited history intake. He speaks limited English. He is the one who will first read what testing you have previously accomplished and any previous diagnosis (bring your records to him for his notes). The cost was 300 Euros, cash only (no credit card). He practices in a large Clinic at 25 rue Mauvoisins, 44200, Nantes, phone 02 40 03 49 09 (Centre Medical Mauvoisins). *See attachment Nantes Dr. Labat for a map to his office.* If you have an appointment later in the day allow 1 hour. Around 1500 the traffic in the Mercure area becomes extremely congested and taxicabs seem to disappear. May want to explore the bus idea for his appointment if the weather is good. Women, if you have not done so already, lose your modesty. It was strip down below the waist and lie on the table. No sheet or nurse present. The test for women was unpleasant but they seemed to tolerate it much better than the men who claimed this to be the most agonizing event ever recorded in their lifetime.

3. Dr. Thibault Riant. He now does the Nerve Blocks instead of Dr. Bensignor. He speaks good English, though he is rather humble about it. He is located in the medical center: Centre Catherine de Sienne, 2 Rue Eric Tabarly. This road is a little difficult to find because old maps refer to it as “Rue des Abattoirs”. From Commerce or Hotel Dieu Station, take the red (#2) train south. Get off at the Pirmil station (3-4 stops). Walk across the tracks and across the street in a 10 o’clock direction and cross the bridge. The new medical center is across the river on the right side. Alternative transportation is taking a taxi from Dr. Labats office to Eric Tabarly (can not walk the distance between the two places); the receptionists at Dr. Labats office will call a taxi for you. Check in at the front desk. Dr. Riant is paid 300 euros cash that he will ask for after the procedure. There was an additional hospital charge (about 30 euros?) paid upon departing the center.

F. Hospital Stay and Charges:

1. Hotel Dieu (the Hospital of God) *See attachments; Hospital Exterior 01 & 02 for photos of the hospital exterior.* Hotel Dieu (Central Hospital for the University of Nantes) is a 915-bed teaching hospital. The building is old, but the equipment is modern. It can in fact be a shock to someone unaccustomed to the frugality of a teaching facility. The hospital has smoking areas although rooms are non-smoking. Though rustic in some areas, hospital was clean.

Surgery. 2000 Euros for the surgery and 2 nights in the hospital. Some earlier patients said they stayed three nights and were charged 3,000 euros, so this might arise. MC, Visa, Cash are accepted; no American Express. That translated into \$2,380 American on a credit card on 11/03. *See attachment Hotel Dieu Bill for a copy of an actual bill.*

You pay upon admission when you walk in the front door of the hospital. To the left of the gift shop is an aisle with a row of doors on the left side of it, and a row of chairs on the right side of the aisle to sit and wait your turn. That is where we checked in and paid with a credit card. There always seemed to be someone there who spoke fairly good english. They will then send you up to your hospital room where you will await your

turn. After the final consultation with Dr. Robert (1 wk post-surgery), there was an additional consultation fee of 137.25 euros, which translated into \$163.61 on 11/03.

The week prior to admission to the hospital, Dr. Riant performed a block on everyone in the Nov 03 group except those who had had a block in Nantes previously, which will cost 300 euros (cash only, paid to him directly; plus a small hospital charge for the C-T scan).

Room assignments other than same sex was the luck of the draw (private vs semi-private, no choice). Not unusual to have a French patient roommate in your semi-private room. Rooms were large, sparsely furnished. Very clean. No shower in rooms but did have a private commode with lavatory. Go down hall to a shower room. *See attachments; Hospital Water Closet & Hospital Room.*

TV was available for about 7.50 Euro daily. About 10 French channels and 1 BBC News channel. Telephone service was about 3.50 Euro to activate, small phone charge after that. Phone service was not reliable and was unavailable during certain hours.

Nurses spoke little to no English. Enclosed in package is an English to French phrase sheet. Use it to help you but even this sheet needs to be expanded. *See attachment English to French an example of a hospital "cheat sheet"* In general, the care and attention by the doctors and hospital staff was excellent.

Professor Robert is located on the 3rd floor - Chief of Neurology. *See attachments Hospital Prof Roberts Floor 1 & 2 photos of his floor.* He will probably not see you after surgery until the next day. All of this depends on his caseload and schedule. On the first surgery day for the December 2002 group he taught class and performed 6 PNE surgeries. For the December 02 group, all doctor visits were at least the next day. Dr Robert is a Christian and explained that he just does a simple procedure and only God can explain why it happened and for sure, if a complete recovery is possible. He also has a sense of humor and told us a Texas joke after listening to our accents. We never understood the joke. For the November 03 group, he performed 5 surgeries on each of three successive days, but he still stopped by the following day to check on patients.

Dr. Robert's secretary's name is Jennie (pleasant gray haired woman in her 40-50's). *See attachment Hospital Prof Roberts Secretary for a photo of her office.* Her office is in the 3rd floor wing for consultations, near Dr. Robert's office. She has almost no understanding of English, so communication can be a bit of a challenge. It may help if you know what you want in advance, to have someone write it out in french and hand the note to her. She will provide a Travel Letter if requested, though this was not of much use to members of the Nov 03 group on Air France. *See attachment Travel Letter Dr Robert for a copy of the letter.*

Hospital food for the most part was pretty much as bland as American hospital food. Some of the fish dishes were good (salmon) and this is expected, Nantes is a seaport city. Some patients were served a small bottle of wine with a meal in the Dec 02 group.

Special dietary needs (vegetarian, lactose intolerant) will be accommodated if you mention this; it's best to have a note in french to give nurses.

No surgical waiting room. Support folks waited in the patient's room. Surgery was 30 minutes each side. No one in the December 02 or November 03 groups required a blood transfusion. Morphine and pain drips were used post surgery unless rejected. Be cautious about taking anything orally until you have been up and possibly use a rectal suppository for nausea. Two of the December 02 experienced nausea and vomiting. Recovery Area (Awaking Room to the French) time (very lengthy) was at least 3 hours before you were returned to room. According to the surgical patients the operating room was state of the art.

After a two-day stay in the hospital, we stayed at the hotel for one week to recuperate and have our incisions checked. Dr. Robert will see you at least once before you leave and give you a written medical report, part in English and part in French. Make sure that he completely explains to your understanding exactly what he did. Ask him where you were entrapped and what the condition of your nerve is. If he suggests follow-up caudal blocks find out where he wants these blocks to be done. Get instructions for post-surgical care. While you are recuperating you will have a chance to tour Nantes. *Attachments: Operative Report p01, Operative Rpt 02, and Operative Rpt 03, are an actual postoperative report with page 3 transcribed into English. Page 1 & 2 are generic statements about PNE and page 3 is more specific about your case, the later being in french. Getting page 3 transcribed into English is a continuing issue. Only with the volunteer efforts of some folks on the PNE web site were we able to get this done at no cost. Judy, the translator, did this for most of the Nov 03 group for a nominal fee.*

G. Getting around in Nantes:

1. Place Commerce. There are 2 train Station Commerce's. One is for N-S directions, the other being E-W directions. They are around the corner from each other, just around the corners from the Mercure. *See attachments Commerce Station Tramway & Commerce Station Bus for photos of the station Commerce.* The Airport Bus, Tramways, and Buses use the station. The Bus stops are scattered along the street and well marked.

2. Bus. Bus schedules are easy to figure with a minimum of study. Very clean. Can stand. *See attachment Bus Schedule Sample for a copy of Line 26/28l.*

3. Tramway (Streetcar). Great way to travel. Very clean, can stand After boarding the Tramway, the traveler is supposed to punch your ticket into a small ticket box on each car. This will cause the ticket to become validated. Virtually no one does this, either they have procured monthly-unlimited passes (most likely) or they just ignore the rules. Please buy and validate your tickets.

H. Dining

1. EXPENSIVE. McDonalds for big Mac, large fries, drink, 6 Euros. Cafes and restaurants were plentiful, almost on every corner. Since some could not sit, this author did not dine in one. Sandwich/subs and pastry stores conveniently located in area. Most sandwiches were 3 Euros. There are some very good restaurants available. We are asking people to recommend their favorites but be aware of French smoking; it can put a damper on your meal. Pork – appears to not be precooked as in US. Very salty, may want to avoid. Baked Salmon was excellent except for the salmon sandwich. Chicken sandwiches were excellent. Beautiful fruits, cheeses, juices, breads. Try Tonic Water with Quinine for help with muscle cramps. Scrambled Eggs at the Mercure appeared to be undercooked. They will prepare an omelet upon request- Bring can opener and few utensils (sharp knife, fork). French dine late so early reservations are the easiest to obtain.

2. Inexpensive (carryout). There are numerous street vendors of excellent sweets and sandwiches that sell fresh and modestly priced foods along many streets and byways within a few blocks of the Mercure Hotel. These are quality family establishments which sell food directly out to the sidewalk, and are not to be passed up just because they don't have table cloths. Watch for the ones with the long lines of french commuters at rush hour. This author from the Nov 03 group found these foods especially usefully post-surgery when I was lying down almost all the time. The Brioche is fabulous!

I. Shopping

1. Hours. Small shops are open Tues through Sat; hours 1030-1230; closed for lunch, reopen 1430-1900. Larger stores are open 1000-1900 Mon-Sat.

2. Flea Markets. Saturday morning 0900-1400 (take Tramway). Bargain with them or walk off, they know you are a tourist unless you speak impeccable French. Try to find vendors who are very busy to buy from. Typical items seen were wooden shoes (which required cleaning), old silverware, glass bottles, signs, teapots, glasses, some jewelry, and the typical strange items. *See attachment Nantes Central + Flea Market for a map to place Viarme's flea market.*

3. Grocery Store. Monoprix - convenient, and open the most hours. *See attachments; Monoprix & Nantes Central for a photo and map.*

4. Dry Goods/Linens. Bouchara, next to the Monoprix. Bargain bins in front of the store. Reasonable priced washcloths and French hand towels. Also available are the Carrefour (similar to Wal-Mart) and IKEA, both of which are in Shopping Centers. *See attachments; Nantes Central + Carrefour & Nantes IKEA Store for maps.*

5. Pharmacies. Excellent soaps for use in drawers, small gifts, etc. However, their over the counter drugs are not nearly as prevalent and available as in the US.

6. Glassware - Villa Saint Pierre (in Plaza of the main Cathedral). Jules Vern Bus 11 goes by. A 25-minute walk from the Mercure. Really a bridal shop, which offers a beautiful selection of Christmas ornaments, dining ware and was reasonably priced.

J. Laundry Self Service - Laverie libre Service

1. General. Found three. Two were relatively close, both were dirty and crowded. Best laundry found was about 15-20 minute walk, and worth the walk. All require coins.

2. Laverie on All. Baco. Small but very close, a five-minute walk from the Mercure. *See attachment Laverie All. Baco for a photo.*

3. Laverie on Chauss de la Madeleine. Very small, dirty, a seven-minute walk from the Mercure. *See attachment Laverie Chauss Madeleine for a photo*

4. Laverie on Rue Copermic. Very clean, large, open 7 days week, 0700-1900, **Attendant on duty** 1030 – 1530, 15-20 minute walk from the Mercure. Directions are, Place Royal to rue Crebillion to Place Graslin, rue Racine until it ends into rue Copermic, Laverie is 30 yds on the right hand side of street. *See attachment Laverie rue Copermic for a photo.*

No coin changers were present so bring coins (1 and 2 Euros). Control panel on wall operated all washers-dryers. Watch someone on how to operate, not difficult. Washing machines sizes were 5kg, 7.5kg, 15kg (1kg = 2.2 lbs). Dryers were large, all same size. 15kg load was 6.00 Euros, 7.5kg load was 3.40 Euros, 5kg load was 2.30 Euros. Rue Copermic did have machine from which to buy soap. Dryers were 0.10 Euros per 6 minutes. Rather than adding money every 6-minute point, keep adding coins at initial setting until you reach your desired drying time.

K. Natural Pain Relief Techniques that some have found effective:

1. Yawning. Make yourself yawn to help relax muscles.

2. Gravity Stretch. Lie flat on bed with leg (on trapped nerve side) dangling off side. Let gravity pull and stretch the PN muscle. If both sides were trapped, rotate sides of bed. Pillow between legs, reduces tension on spine. Lying on stomach with pillows under stomach to release all pressure on PN area.

L. General Comments:

- 1. Weather.** Nantes is on the north Atlantic coast and is cold and wet between October and May; much like New England. So dress accordingly. People are friendly and very helpful.
- 2. Smoking.** People smoke everywhere including inside the hospital in designated areas. There are also lots of dogs, so watch your step.
- 3. Other personal items to bring.** Books, Lysol air spray, a container to wash small clothing articles, clothespins, reacher, sweats, manicure scissors, a female urinal (unless you want a metal bedpan handed to you), casual clothes (comfort is key), cold weather type for the season, umbrellas, gloves, rain coat with hood, washcloths, battery operated alarm clock. A small pocket French-to-English book is a necessity.
- 4. Personal behavior.** In general, the french do not speak loudly when in public. This can be difficult for Americans, but try to keep voices low when talking in the hospital and in restaurants. When talking in english in a public place where you can be overheard, you should not assume that the people around you cannot understand you.

M. Recovery:

- 1. Exercise.** Everyone is unique. But, most people benefit from walking as soon as possible after surgery. The first day, you'll not move at all. But, the second day you might be able to take 1-2 short walks of 5-10 min. Try to build on this over the next few days so that by the time you're flying back you might be up to 2-3 walks of 10-15 min.

Walk, walk, and then walk some more. Rest, and then start walking again. This keeps the muscles loose and those who were doing the best were those who were able to do a lot of walking. TV is limited, so bring good books and do lots of walking. Window shop, visit the Cathedral, the Château, and the park across from the train station. Walking prevents muscles from tightening.

- 2. Trip Home.** Be good to yourself. Lie down across three seats if possible. Upgrade to business class. Use a cushion. Do whatever it takes. Go to the galley area in the rear of the plane and stand. Avoid too much stretching and NO squatting.

- 3. Paris.** If you have a need to go to the center of Paris, recommend the use of Air France Bus Coaches in lieu of the RER (train) and Metro system. We took the RER B and M1 Metro to the Arc of Trimpuph region for 7.70 Euros each. The trip was through filthy, urine smelling and congested areas of broken escalators. Our return trip was via Air France Coach service. The price was 10.00 Euros each on a clean and quiet bus, luggage loaded in the luggage compartment. You do not have to be an Air France ticket holder to use this service (CDG to Arc of Triumph area). The Air France bus makes

numerous stops at Terminals while the RER train is located in the middle of Terminal 2. *See attachments; Air France Coaches to Paris Info & Air France Coaches to Paris Map for information concerning the Air France buses.*

4. Next few months. There will almost certainly be ups and downs. The challenge is to avoid overdoing it and irritating the nerve, while building your muscle strength and maintaining your sanity. You also want to gently move the pelvic areas periodically so that it is limber and scar tissue does not surround and entrap the nerve in its new location.

Most important, everyone is unique! While we all have PNE, we have had it for different lengths of time and we have had entrapments in different branches of the nerves. So, most of all, listen to your OWN nerves.

Gradually increase your walks over weeks and months. Consider using a watch or timer to be sure you don't accidentally overdo it. Do not make significant jumps in duration or intensity of activity. Many people report that the consequences of an activity are not felt for 1-3 days later, so wait after trying something new to see if you tolerate it before trying it again. This delayed response may be due to delayed inflammation, much the same way you may feel sore after playing ball or lifting weights 24-48 hrs afterward. It may seem odd since the amount of activity might be as minor as walking or standing, but it's still relatively stressful considering your current situation.

Medications may be necessary for a few to several months after surgery. Some of the most common mentioned are amitriptylin, oxycontin, hydrocodone, percocet, ultram, and neurontin. Consult with your physician for the best strategy.

Dr. Robert and Dr. Riant suggest that an injection of steroids on the nerve may be beneficial at two months post-surgery. This can be done in Nantes or Houston. There is debate about the relative merits of this procedure, with no conclusive evidence either way. No one in the Nov 03 group did this. A less potent alternative might be to take an oral anti-inflammatory drug.

At some point you should consider physical therapy to strengthen the pelvic floor. The time post-surgery to begin this will vary for the individual. Recommendations have been from 4-12 months. You should find someone with experience in pelvic floor stability.

5. Work. If possible, try to take a leave of absence to allow for healing. Check on disability insurance. Try to work from home, if you have the type of job that permits this.

Attachments:

1. Travel Letter From Private Physician
2. Airport Shuttle Commerce
3. Airport Shuttle Side 01

4. Airport Shuttle Side 02
5. Hotel Mercure Commerce
6. Nantes Central + Train
7. Closet Help
8. Hotel Jules Vern
9. Nantes Dr Labat
10. Nantes Dr Bensignor
11. Hospital Exterior 01
12. Hospital Exterior 02
13. Hospital Water Closet
14. Hospital Room
15. English to French
16. Hospital Prof Roberts Floor 01
17. Hospital Prof Roberts Floor 02
18. Hospital Prof Roberts Secretary
19. Travel Letter Dr Robert
20. Hotel Dieu Bill
21. Operative Rpt p01
22. Operative Rpt p02
23. Operative Rpt p03
24. Commerce Station Tramway
25. Commerce Station Bus
26. Bus Schedule Sample
27. Nantes Central + Flea Markets
28. Monoprix
29. Nantes Central
30. Nantes Central + Carrefour
31. Nantes IKEA Store
32. Laverie All. Baco
33. Laverie Chauss Madeleine
34. Laverie rue Copermic
35. Air France Coaches to Paris Info
36. Air France Coaches to Paris Map

.