

## Title:

France at 200 kph - of Grandmothers, Lyon and Rain

## Word Count:

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## Summary:

In my teens, I traveled to France with my mother, father and grandmother for a month of sightseeing with a rental car. Michael Schumacher and Formula 1 have nothing on my father and our Opel rental car.

## Keywords:

france, lyon, churches, travel journal, france story, france travelogue, trips, family vacations

## Article Body:

In my teens, I traveled to France with my mother, father and grandmother for a month of sightseeing with a rental car. Michael Schumacher and Formula 1 have nothing on my father and our Opel rental car.

American fathers have an interesting if somewhat aggravating habit on trips. Yes, I am talking about the desire to see everything there is to see. This was particularly problematic in France, which has a gazillion things to see. For some reason, my memory is a blur! I'll have to refer back to my Nomad Travel Journal, but here we go...

Churches. Big churches. Small churches. Church ruins. New churches. For three days, my grandmother had insisted we stop at every church we passed. She is just about the greatest grandmother a kid could hope for, but she had been a grade school teacher for forty years and there is just no disobeying. Did I mention we looked at churches?

We pulled into Lyon as the third day turned to evening. It was raining. We were tired and grumpy. After a minor argument, we pulled up in front of an older hotel with vacancies and checked in. Family arrangements being what they were, my parents had one room while my grandmother and I shared a second. We all agreed to take a nap and meet a little later.

As I lay on my bed, I watched the rain come down hard on the windows. I also admired the old, intricate wood structure that was our hotel. I dozed off and was awoken a few hours later by my grandmother.

"The door is stuck!" she told me.

Grumbling, I walked over to the door and gave it a yank. Then I gave it another yank. Like a bad comedy, I put one leg up on the wall and yanked again. Alas, the wood seemed to have swollen and jammed the door shut. I couldn't budge it.

At this point, my grandmother made a passing comment about the two years of French I was taking in high school and pointed to the phone. Dutifully, I called down to the lobby and chaos ensued. Somehow, we had lost the key, so I couldn't tell them what room we were in. It just got worse.

What is the French word for "door?" Don't know? Neither did I nor do I now. All I could say to the person at the front desk is, "We are stuck!"

To top matters off, I also started yelling my last name, Chapo, thinking they would at least come investigate. After being hung up on twice, it occurred to me that the pronunciation of my last name means "hat" in French. Yes, I was yelling,

"We are stuck! Hat!"

"We are stuck! Hat!"

Intensely cussing up a storm, I walked over to the door and banged it with my fist. It bounced open. My grandmother and I stared at each other and burst out laughing.

I hoofed it to my parent's room to tell them the story. Half way through the tale, my mother plugged in her hair dryer, flipped it on and blew out the electricity for the entire floor.

We left very early the next morning.