

Grapevine article on the Gennetines (Grand Bal de L' Europe) festival in France 2014.

In July this year Laurel and I went to the "Grand Bal de L'Europe" Festival, France which went from Friday July 18th to the weekend of July 25th. We met up with Martin and Pam and John Whaite, who also went to the festival. This festival has a long tradition and is attended each year by many hundreds of people.

The festival is held in a VERY large field, where there are many enclosed dance areas, halls and covered (or sometimes not) stage areas. Participants either camp in tents or use campervans. Some may find accommodation nearby. Dance workshops are held throughout each day with "bals" held in the evenings. Participants select which they want to go to.

Workshops run for two hours each (on average) and approximately 6 to 8 workshops run concurrently in various stage areas or halls. At night various bands/musicians play live dance music which large crowds of people dance to. This is a very full festival and there are many and varied teachers. In the day dances taught included dances from different regions of France, and other dances such as Hungarian, Israeli, Greek, English and Irish set dances. These vary from year to year. Music is played live with instruments including guitar, hurdy-gurdy, piano accordion, violin and mandolin.

Meals can be included and we all lined up for each meal in a hall where self serve food was on tables for you to select what you wanted. There were many tables outside where we sat in a communal atmosphere and met people. Not all were French. Many people come from England, Germany, Spain and other countries. Despite language differences, communication was good and a relaxed friendly atmosphere was enjoyed.

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