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The Great Tours

France through the Ages

Course Guidebook

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University of Louisville

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John Greene is a Professor of French at the University of Louisville, where he also serves as director of the Introductory French Program. He earned a PhD in French from the University of Wisconsin–Madison after completing his undergraduate studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. At the University of Louisville, in addition to teaching language, literature, civilization, and culture courses, Professor Greene teaches business French, French cinema, and a theater practicum that emphasizes language acquisition through performance. He has developed and taught graduate seminars that focus on Paris, French society and class structure, and Enlightenment material culture.

Professor Greene is the recipient of numerous teaching awards, including the President's Distinguished Teaching Professor Award from the University of Louisville and the Dorothy S. Ludwig Excellence in Teaching Award from the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF). In addition, he won the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies' Innovative Course Design Competition, and the French government named him a chevalier in the *Ordre des Palmes académiques* for services to education and culture.

Professor Greene's research focuses mainly on the representation of material culture in Enlightenment and 19th-century French fiction and maritime narratives. His published work has appeared in books and journals on both sides of the Atlantic. He has received external funding to present and publish his research at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, UCLA's William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, the Museum of London, and Paris's Musée national de la Marine and Collège de France. He is an assistant editor for the *French Review*, the official journal of the AATF.

NAVIGATION TIP

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The Great Tours
France through the Ages

No other country embodies the idea of the good life in our imaginations quite like France. From food to fashion, from public spaces to private homes, the French are famous for seeking out and enjoying the very best. But while the French love of life is legendary, the French character is hardly uniform—or simple. As Charles de Gaulle said, "How can you govern a country which has 246 varieties of cheese?"

This course takes you on a virtual tour through this fascinating country, its history, and its culture. Our journey begins in Paris, at the foot of the iconic cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris. The surrounding city reveals a rich history, from Celtic Parisii of the Iron Age to the Roman settlement of Lutecia, from winding medieval streets to the open plazas of revolutionary France, from the cafés of Montmartre to the modern architecture of the Centre Pompidou. We visit the splendid Palace of Versailles, where we marvel at the way the architecture and design of the grounds project an overwhelming sense of power and invincibility.

Then, we head east into Champagne, known for its bubbly, but also home to some of the bloodiest battles of World War I. We visit the magnificent cathedral of Notre-Dame de Reims before we travel north to Dunkirk, the site of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force in World War II. Our route along the northern coast of the country takes us to the beaches of Normandy, site of the historic landings on D-Day. While Normandy has seen bitter fighting over the centuries, its landscapes have also inspired countless artists and pilgrims. We visit the studio of Claude Monet and trek across the sand to Mont-Saint-Michel, pausing to enjoy the rich cheeses and crisp ciders of the area before continuing along the coast to the wild and beautiful region of Brittany.

After exploring the unique Celtic culture of the Bretons, we travel inland along the Loire River, famous for its world-class wines and stunning châteaux and home to yet another famous cathedral of Notre-Dame, at Chartres. We visit Nantes, an important center of maritime trade and shipbuilding, where we sample some Muscadet before moving on to Bordeaux and south along the coast of Aquitaine. We consider the pivotal role of the area in French history, from the Battle of Poitiers to the influence of the formidable Eleanor of Aquitaine. And, of course, we stroll through the grand vineyards surrounding Bordeaux as we learn about winemaking and classification in this important region.

As we near the Pyrenees and France's border with Spain, we enter the French Basque region, yet another area with a distinct culture, language, and sense of identity. We sample chocolate in Bayonne and dip our toes in the water in Biarritz before moving on east into the wild landscape of the Camargue. Once a stronghold of the Cathars, the Camargue is the largest delta in Europe and a favorite destination of nature lovers, who come to see its wild horses and flamingos. We visit Carcassonne and tuck into a cassoulet at Castelnaudary while enjoying the local Languedoc wines. As we leave the Camargue, we stop at Arles, the fragrant center of the lavender industry and onetime home of Vincent van Gogh, before continuing on to explore two very different cities along France's southern coast: Cannes and Marseille.

Before we leave southern France, we take the ferry to Corsica, the birthplace of Napoléon Bonaparte and an island of beauty and blended culture. Returning to the mainland, we move north to Avignon, once a controversial papacy and now the center of theater culture in France. After ascending the tallest peak in Provence, Mont Ventoux, we proceed to the much greater heights of Mont Blanc in the French Alps, where we enjoy some après-ski in Chamonix before indulging in the gastronomic delights of Lyon. We turn our attention once again to wine, exploring the great offerings of the Burgundy region, including the popular Beaujolais.

We continue through Burgundy to Dijon, at the center of France's delicious heartland. Famous for its mustard, Dijon is also home to the world-famous Les Halles Centrales covered market, where you can find local produce and delicious artisan specialties. After raising a glass of Kir in Beaune, we head into Alsace and Lorraine, the easternmost part of the country and another region that has seen centuries of conflict. We visit the birthplace of Joan of Arc before moving on to Strasbourg, site of the European Parliament and home to a renowned Christmas market. There, we feast on food that reflects the proximity of Germany: sausages and sauerkraut washed down with the wonderful regional beer.

Finally, we return to Paris to witness its postrevolution emergence as a modern city. We discover the ways in which the city was transformed in the 19th century by the renovations of Baron Haussmann. We move into the Paris of the Belle Epoque, a vibrant mecca for artists and expats that established the city as the creative capital of the West, and we see how this legacy continues today, from cinema to fashion to architectural design. Finally, we look forward in time to the future of France as it celebrates its heritage and its diverse identity with its characteristic joie de vivre.

1

Point Zéro: Charting Our Course

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With its land borders with Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Luxembourg, and Belgium, France—which the French affectionately refer to as the *l'Hexagone*—is located in the heart of Europe. This course will take you on a journey to all the sides of the hexagon, beginning and ending in Paris and including all the major regions of France.

Why Take a Great Tour of France?

- The French concept of *l'art de vivre* is an abstract concept that roughly translates as "the art of living," and it refers to how to live well and seek out the best in food, art and culture, décor, fashion, music, etc.—anything to do with taste and refinement. It means that these values are appreciated in France and form a key aspect in explaining the county's great appeal.

- This notion of *l'art de vivre* even extends into professional lives. Unhurried business meals and notoriously lengthy lunch breaks clearly show how quality of life is a key issue for the French. The maintenance of a healthy work-life balance is essential. All salaried workers in France are legally entitled to five weeks of annual paid vacation time, and retirement can be taken at 62, or even earlier, depending on the occupation and years of service. Following a celebrated court case that became law, many French workers add the request that their business emails are only to be dealt with during work hours—a far cry from the constantly connected requirements of the English-speaking business world.

- But all this does not mean that French workers are unproductive. In fact, productivity rates in France are among the highest in Europe. On top of this, social and healthcare benefits in France are perceived to be of an extremely high standard. These benefits and advantages to life in France underscore how important quality of life and time for oneself and one's interests are in France.

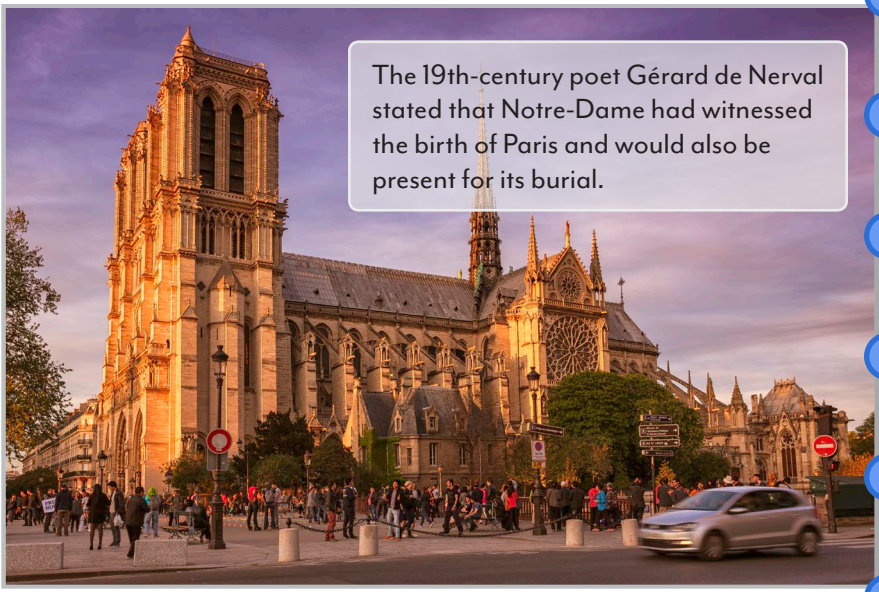
- Many foreigners are drawn to France and its *art de vivre*. This emphasis on pleasure and leisure in everyday French life means that many components are in place to cater to these needs and requirements. If the French are encouraged to partake in many and varied cultural activities—such as exhibitions, concerts, films, theater, and dance—the visitor can also take advantage of all that France has to offer. As the world's most visited tourist destination, a large government budget is set aside to make sure that as many sites as possible show France off to the very best degree.

CLICK TO NAVIGATE

Notre-Dame de Paris

- The great gothic cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris is built on a small island, the Île de la Cité,[1A] in the middle of the Seine in the heart of Paris. And in the square outside the entrance to Notre-Dame, set into the flagstones, is a small octagonal brass plaque. This is *point zéro* ("point zero"),[1B] and it marks the spot from which all distances between Paris and everywhere else are measured. Together, the cathedral and *point zéro* serve as a starting point for thinking about Paris in relation to the rest of France—and France in relation to the rest of the world.

- Near *point zéro* outside Notre-Dame, you can't help but be struck by the presence of a medieval cathedral at the center of one of the world's great modern cities. In this respect, Paris is typical of France, with the old and the new sitting side by side and ensuring that there's something of interest for everyone, wherever you visit and whomever you travel with.



The 19th-century poet Gérard de Nerval stated that Notre-Dame had witnessed the birth of Paris and would also be present for its burial.

- How appropriate that *point zéro* is located on the Île de la Cité, an island that is thought to be one of the first places settled by those the Romans called Parisii, a Celtic Iron Age people who were present as early as the 3rd century BCE. It's believed that even the great medieval cathedral of Notre-Dame is not the first place of worship to be built in this most ancient, foundational part of the city.

- The area around the cathedral has always been a very public place, and when Notre-Dame was finally completed in 1345, it would have dominated the humble buildings around it even more than it does today. Everything about it was designed to overawe the ordinary person and to emphasize the power of the church and France's ruling hierarchies. For most of French history, successive popes and French kings were the most powerful individuals around whom everything turned.

How is it that a 14th-century building still features as one of the tallest in central Paris?

Until 2010, regulations limited the height of the Paris skyline, meaning that nothing was allowed to dwarf its iconic monuments.

TRAVEL TIP

Climb the north tower of Notre-Dame for a stunning view over the city.

- But the kings of France did not worship in Notre-Dame, nor did they live in a city that stank of the open sewers that ran through its medieval streets. In France, great public buildings like Notre-Dame contrast with exclusive private spaces like the palace complex of Versailles.

- The history of France is a history of class differences and the gradual simmering of class tensions that would explode in the French Revolution of 1789, doing away with the French monarchy and significantly reducing the power of the church once and for all. From the opulence of Versailles that was home to more than 10,000 courtiers to the brutality of the guillotine, French history is one of enormous contrasts and reversals of fortune. It's also a history that helps explain why, even today, the French cherish their right to march and protest, knowing that ordinary citizens really can be engines of social change.

Charles de Gaulle Airport

- Of course, in order to tour France, one has to get to France, and for the overwhelming majority of visitors, that means arriving at Paris's Charles de Gaulle Airport.[1C] If you're not too jaded after an international flight, it's worth taking some time to look at the avant-garde design of Aérogare, or Terminal, 1 that first opened in 1974 or the more recent Aérogare, or Terminal, 2. Great examples of the value French society places on the design of big public building projects, these terminals were designed to be aesthetically interesting as well as functional.

- Like any international airport, the terminals of Charles de Gaulle are filled with passengers. Unlike many airports, the passengers at Charles de Gaulle represent an extraordinarily diverse section of the global population.

- Across its history, France has been both a conquering and a conquered nation, and its 19th-century colonization of parts of Africa and Asia has made French a world language. If you can tune out the airport announcements and tune in to the linguistic diversity around you as travelers hurry to their flights and connections, then the global reach of France's former empire will start to become apparent.

- You could easily leave Charles de Gaulle Airport without giving much thought to the man for whom the airport is named, but he was a force in the creation of modern France and in many ways embodies the complexities of the French character.

- At six feet five inches tall, de Gaulle was a man who stood out in a crowd, and in historical and political terms, he bestrode the France of the 20th century as a giant. Also frequently known as Général de Gaulle and on occasion as Le Général, it was for his military feats that he first gained attention and notoriety.

- A decorated World War I veteran, he served with distinction in the defeat of France by the Nazis in 1940 and refused to accept the armistice with the Germans. His radio call to resist the Nazis was transmitted by the BBC from his exile in London and propelled him from relative obscurity to become leader of the Free French. The success of his use of radio meant that, as he strolled down the Champs-Élysées in post-Liberation Paris in the summer of 1944, he was better known by many French for his voice rather than his face. He had saved France and became head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic in 1944.

- Disillusioned by the political gridlock of the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle withdrew from frontline politics but remained in the background. After the constitutional crisis of 1958, the French National Assembly brought him back to power, and the Fifth Republic was established with de Gaulle in mind for its presidency—giving him immense personal authority and thereby saving France once again.

- De Gaulle oversaw the immense challenge of the independence of Algeria, along with many French colonies, and exerted a politics of grandeur, meaning putting France first in an effort to regain French influence on the world stage. During the Cold War, he wanted to situate France between the Anglo-Saxon powers of the West and the Soviets and withdrew the French from NATO.

- Considered as a rather prickly and authoritarian character, de Gaulle appeared out of touch with the younger generation, who took to the streets in May 1968 demanding major social reforms. An appeal to France's silent majority by asking the French to choose between him and the chaos of social revolution cemented his power in the short term in 1968, but he left office in 1969 and died soon after. Such is his stature that a center-right ideology of Gaullism, although coined by his enemies, is still influential today.

Although he is far from a universally beloved figure in France, especially on the political left, it is perhaps clear, then, why the French would name their showpiece airport, their aviation bridge to the modern world, after this man. De Gaulle was an extremely keen scholar of both history and geography, especially regarding his beloved home country. At the start of his lengthy memoirs, he declares a passion for "*une certaine idée de la France*"—"a certain idea of France"—and, in many ways, that is what you will examine over the course of this lecture series.

Charles de Gaulle's successor as president, Georges Pompidou, declared, "General de Gaulle is dead. France is a widow."

Resources

Print

Drake, *Contemporary France*.

Jackson, *De Gaulle*.

Jones, *Paris*.

Norwich, *A History of France*.

Web

https://about-france.com (general guide to France)

https://en.parisinfo.com (Paris tourist office website)

http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/fr (UNESCO World Heritage sites in France)

https://us.france.fr/en (official French government tourism site)

https://us.france.fr/en/theme-cuisine (official French government website for gastronomy)

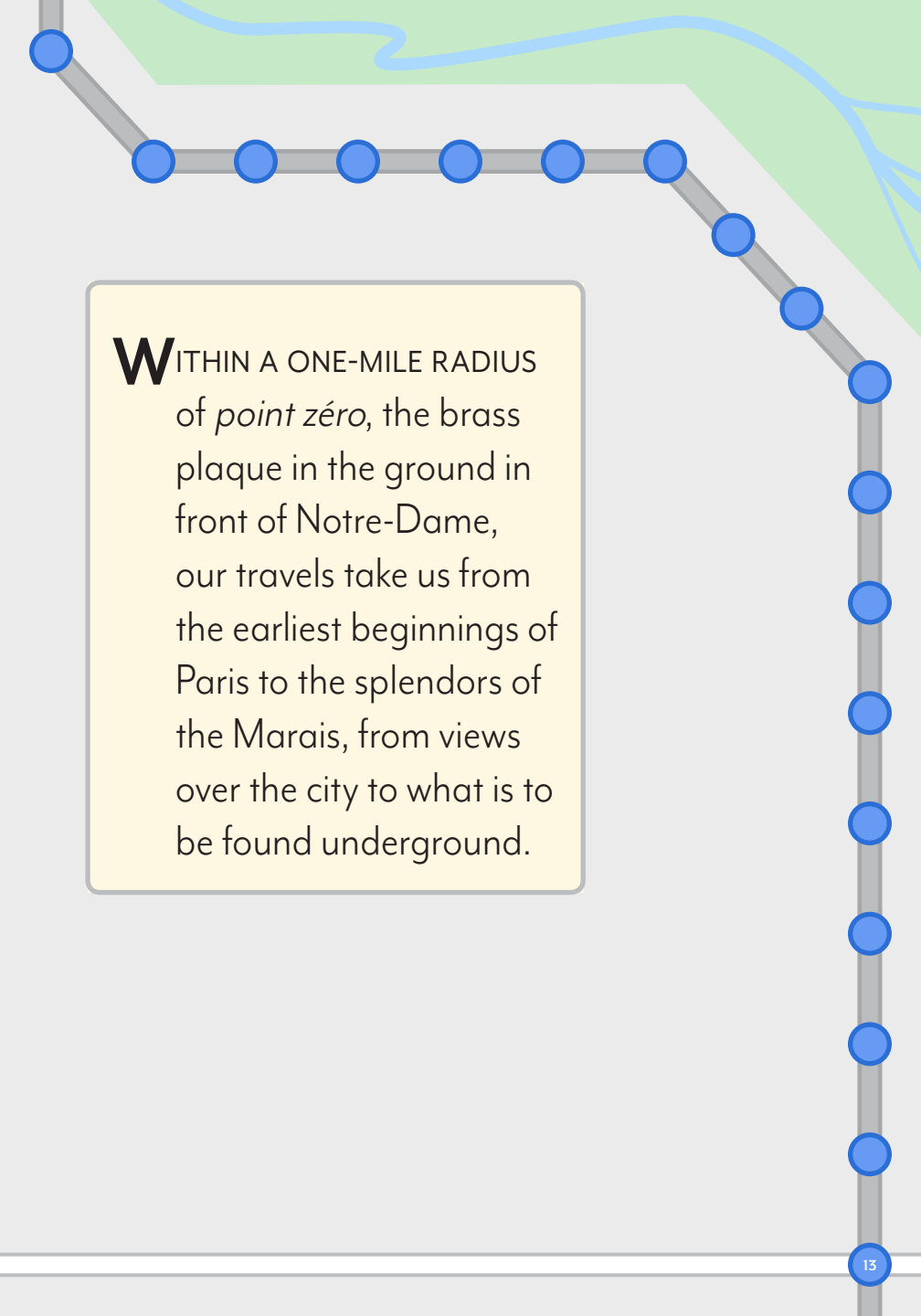
https://www.visitfrenchwine.com/en (official French government website for wine tourism)

https://www.notredamedeparis.fr/en/ (official Notre-Dame website)

https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en (official Centre Pompidou website)

2

The Birth and Rise of Paris



WITHIN A ONE-MILE RADIUS of *point zéro*, the brass plaque in the ground in front of Notre-Dame, our travels take us from the earliest beginnings of Paris to the splendors of the Marais, from views over the city to what is to be found underground.

The Crypte Archéologique and the Île de la Cité

- Like all of the world's cities that have been sites of human settlement across many centuries, the Paris that we see today is built on layers of remains—and some impressive archaeological finds—representing thousands of years of previous occupation.

- The Crypte Archéologique[2A] offers an underground glimpse of the subterranean layers of history beneath tourists' feet at *point zéro*. From 1965 to 1972, renovations taking place to Notre-Dame exposed evidence of human activity on this site from the ancient Romans through the medieval period, with everything in between. You can see remains of a Roman bathhouse, a temple dedicated to Jupiter, fortifications from the 3rd century, and some 4th-century paving that had collected all the coins falling into its gaps across the years.

- The site of the Crypte Archéologique even shows evidence of the vast sewerage system laid out as part of Baron Haussmann's renovations of the city in the mid-19th century. Realizing that this small area offered visitors a time capsule on at least a couple thousand years of Parisian history, the city of Paris opened the Crypte Archéologique to the public in 1980, and it now uses the latest multimedia technology to present the story of Paris's continuous habitation across at least two millennia.

- This particular area outside Notre-Dame has a head start on other areas of the city in terms of its history. Notre-Dame was built on the Île de la Cité, an island in the Seine that, together with the Île Saint-Louis, was seen as a good strategic choice for settlement by early peoples. An ancient Celtic tribe called the Parisii appear to have settled on the Île de la Cité around 300 BCE.

- The Parisii made their wealth from trade, and their trading network extended as far as modern-day Spain. The sophistication implied by successfully managing trade across the lands of many other early tribes made the Parisii sought-after partners of the Roman Empire. In 53 BCE, Julius Caesar chose the main settlement of the Parisii—which the Romans called

Lutetia Parisiorum*—as the site for a conference of all the Gallic tribes. But when the Parisii backed a rebellion led against Rome by the Celtic chief Vercingétorix, the Romans resorted to conquest to bring Lutetia fully under Roman control.

A stone's throw away from the Île de la Cité, on a hillside on the Rive Gauche, you can still find the remains of a Roman amphitheater called the Arènes de Lutèce, or Lutetia Arena.[2B] It is estimated to have had a capacity for some 17,000 spectators, and it is a potent reminder of the fact that the Romans made death and fights to the death a spectacle across their empire. Today, the arena is now a park.†


Arènes de Lutèce

* The name Lutetia Parisiorum comes from the Latin *lutetia*, meaning "place near a swamp," and the name of the swamp dwellers.

† The Lutetia Arena would have fallen into disrepair and would certainly have been lost to redevelopment if it hadn't been for the efforts of the novelist Victor Hugo, who joined with other preservationists in the 19th century to save this potent reminder of Roman Paris.

The Cluny Museum

- The history of the Roman occupation of Gaul that can be seen in the Crypte Archéologique might be thought of as the foundation of modern Paris. The next story built on that foundation relates to medieval Paris, and by visiting the Thermes de Cluny,[2C] also known as the Cluny Museum, it's easy to begin to take in the development of medieval France.

- The name Thermes de Cluny refers to the fact that this wonderfully preserved 15th-century building housing the city's greatest collection of all things medieval is actually built on the site of a Roman bath complex—built here to take advantage of local thermal springs.

- The Cluny Museum contains examples of some of the finest craftsmanship to survive from medieval Europe. Visitors can marvel at the intense color of examples of medieval stained glass or look at intricate ivory and wood-carving devotional items, as well as altarpieces underscoring the centrality of the Catholic church to French history.

- But all of the exquisite medieval artifacts housed at Cluny—and readily available to any for the price of a ticket—were high-status objects in their day, owned by and accessible only to members of the church and nobility.

Thermes de Cluny

TRAVEL TIP

Once inside the Cluny Museum—and if you like your museum visits to follow an orderly chronological progression—then you can check out the remains of the Roman baths and a host of Roman antiquities before moving on to the museum's celebrated medieval contents.

- Cluny offers an unrivalled representation of the medieval world, but what survives of that world is not representative of the lives of the majority of French people at the time. Even the skilled artists and craftsmen who created Cluny's treasures and who learned their skills in rigidly hierarchical trade guilds do not represent the majority of French workers in the medieval period, for the creators of all the contents of the Cluny Museum have at least left something for posterity. The majority of people in medieval France labored in the fields from morning to night, and few records document their hard lives.

The Sorbonne and the Collège de France

- Across the street from Cluny is another great landmark with its roots in medieval France: the Sorbonne.[2D] Originally founded as a college of theology, this venerable institution of higher learning recently celebrated its 800th anniversary, making it one of the oldest universities in Europe. What is referred to as the Sorbonne is actually just one campus of the University of Paris system. Located at the very heart of the Latin Quarter,[2E] the Sorbonne's faculty no longer confine themselves to theological questions, and the Sorbonne is regularly the site of students exercising their right to protest a range of issues.

- Just next door to the Sorbonne is the Collège de France,‡[2F] the most prestigious academic institution in France, featuring more than 20 Nobel Prize winners among its past and present faculty. The initial aim was for the college, which was established in the 16th century, to teach subjects such as Hebrew and ancient Greek, free of the religious influence of the Sorbonne—secular and religious inquiry existing side by side. Today, the classes taught here by some of the world's finest scholars are free and open to the public, neatly illustrating the fact that intellectual excellence and independent thinking are prized in France.

Notre-Dame and the Sainte-Chapelle

- About 100 yards down the boulevard Saint-Michel and back onto the Île de la Cité, the cathedral of Notre-Dame[2G] dominates the island. Building began in 1163, and as with many fine Gothic cathedrals, construction continued for more than a century. Of special note are the stained-glass rose windows, the flying buttresses that support the immense weight of the walls and roof, and the famous gargoyles.

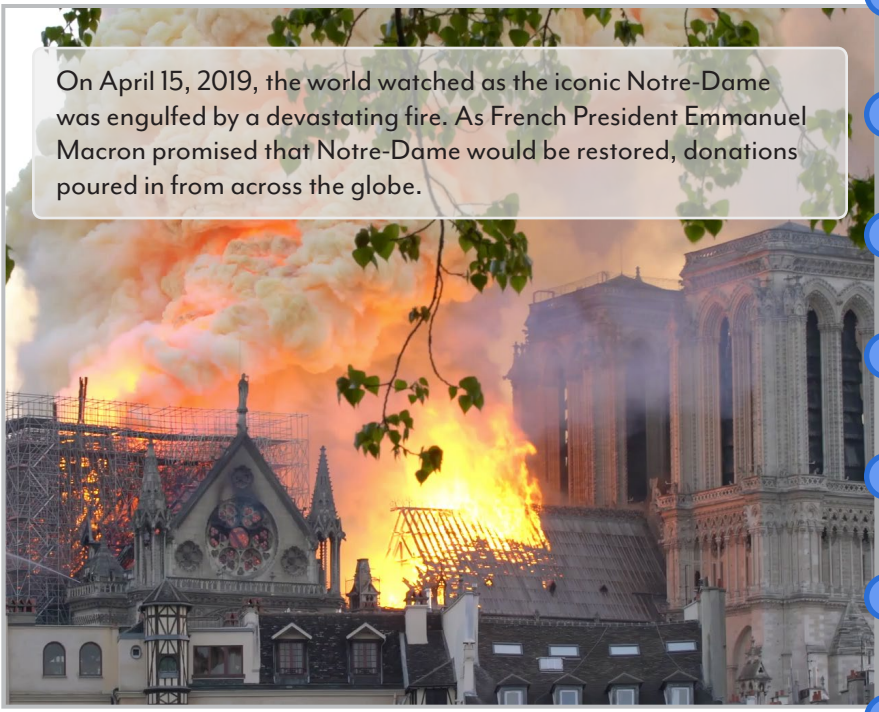
- Notre-Dame suffered during the anticlericalism of the French Revolution, and during the late 18th century, it became a grain store. Much of what was seen before the 2019 fire was thanks to a 19th-century restoration effort that followed the success of Victor Hugo's 1831 novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, or *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. The leading architect for the 19th-century restoration of the cathedral was Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who also worked on the much smaller, much more exclusive Sainte-Chapelle.[2H]

Astonishingly, given the grandeur of this building at the heart of the city, Notre-Dame has witnessed only two coronations: that of the English King Henry VI in 1431 and that of Napoléon Bonaparte in 1804.

‡ Classes at the Collège de France are open to all interested participants, and there are no exams or tests, but degrees and diplomas are not awarded.

- The Sainte-Chapelle is part of a medieval royal palace complex a stone's throw from Notre-Dame. But the contrast between the open and very public Notre-Dame and the private, very intimate royal interior of Sainte-Chapelle could not be more marked. Built under the direction of the celebrated mason Pierre de Montreuil in the 13th century on the orders of King Louis IX, the Sainte-Chapelle was intended to house important sacred relics, including what is claimed to be Christ's Crown of Thorns.

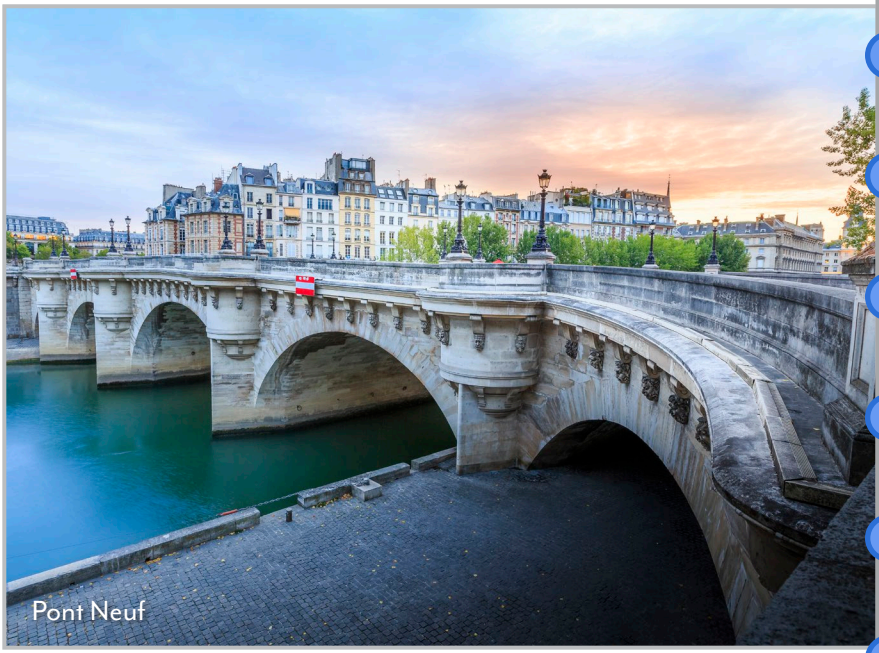
- Like Notre-Dame, the Sainte-Chapelle was badly damaged during the revolution and also served as a grain store. Once again, it took the skills of Viollet-le-Duc to restore this architectural treasure to its former glory, along with other components of the Palais de la Cité: the Palais de Justice and the Conciergerie.



On April 15, 2019, the world watched as the iconic Notre-Dame was engulfed by a devastating fire. As French President Emmanuel Macron promised that Notre-Dame would be restored, donations poured in from across the globe.

The Pont Neuf and the Louvre

- As Paris grew in the Middle Ages, the north bank of the Seine offered a safe mooring for boats, so it developed as a center for trade. With increased commerce, there grew a demand for easy travel between the two banks of the Seine. The oldest surviving bridge in Paris today is the first bridge to fully span the Seine: the Pont Neuf,[21] or New Bridge. Given that it was last "new" on its completion in 1607, ideas of old and new are clearly relative in a city with such ancient beginnings.
- The Pont Neuf is built of sandstone and was one of the first bridges within a European city to be constructed without buildings on it. To walk across it today is not only to walk from one side of the Seine to the other but to walk into history. Visually, the bridge is striking. Alcoves with built-in seats are a favorite spot for couples; the view of the Seine and the sight of the river, especially toward the west at sunset, is one of the most romantic and appealing in Paris.



Pont Neuf

- It's no surprise, then, that the Pont Neuf has been featured in many films and books set in Paris, including the movie *Les amants du Pont-Neuf*, in which the bridge is arguably the star. Walking across it, you can see why 18th-century chronicler Louis-Sébastien Mercier described the Pont Neuf as playing the same role in relation to Paris as the heart in the human body: the center of all movement and circulation.

- Glancing to the west from the Pont Neuf, it's impossible to miss what is today one of the world's great museums and home of the *Mona Lisa*: the Louvre.[2J] But it wasn't always a museum. Just as the growing commerce of medieval Paris led to a lot of bridge building, it also led an early 13th-century king, Philippe Auguste,[§] to decide that some military protection was in order for this growing business center. The Louvre therefore began as a fortress. There's nothing of this original 13th-century structure above ground, though some vestiges can be seen in the museum under the Cour Carrée.

- The Pont Neuf was completed under Henry IV, crowned king of France in 1589. Henry's reign also saw the completion of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre—in its day, one of the longest buildings in the world—and two great urban squares: the Place Dauphine[2K] on the Île de la Cité and the project for which he is best remembered, the Place Royale, or the Place des Vosges.[2L]

TRAVEL TIP

You can take a fairly nondescript downward flight of stairs in the gardens near the Carrousel du Louvre and go underground to see the freely accessible remains of some of the 14th-century walls and foundations of the Louvre.

§ It was during Philippe Auguste's reign that Paris became the capital of France and started on a trajectory that, by the early 14th century, made it the most populous city in Europe, with more than 200,00 residents.

The Place des Vosges and the Marais

- The Place des Vosges we see today is all red brick and stone façades, but its earlier history was as a medieval jousting ground next to the Hôtel des Tournelles. With only a few narrow entrances, the square has always been relatively quiet and peaceful but also light and airy. Even today, the gardens remain a popular spot to relax from the frenetic pace of the rue Saint-Antoine a few yards away.

- When the Place des Vosges acquired its current name in 1799, it was at the end of a boom in the construction of private mansions¶ in the neighborhood, known as the Marais.[2M] The streets of the Marais and the nearby Saint-Paul neighborhood, most of which are narrow and therefore one-way, give a real sense of how Paris grew from a medieval city of small streets and dark alleyways to an early modern city of gracious townhouses and elegant living for a wealthy few.

¶ Many of these mansions are now museums, archives, or administrative and corporate headquarters, and nearly all have been tastefully restored to reflect their former glory.

The Marais

Resources

Print

Chevalier, *The Lady and the Unicorn*.

Goscinny and Uderzo, *Asterix the Gaul*.

Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

Web

http://www.crypte.paris.fr/en/crypt (crypt of the Île de la Cité website)

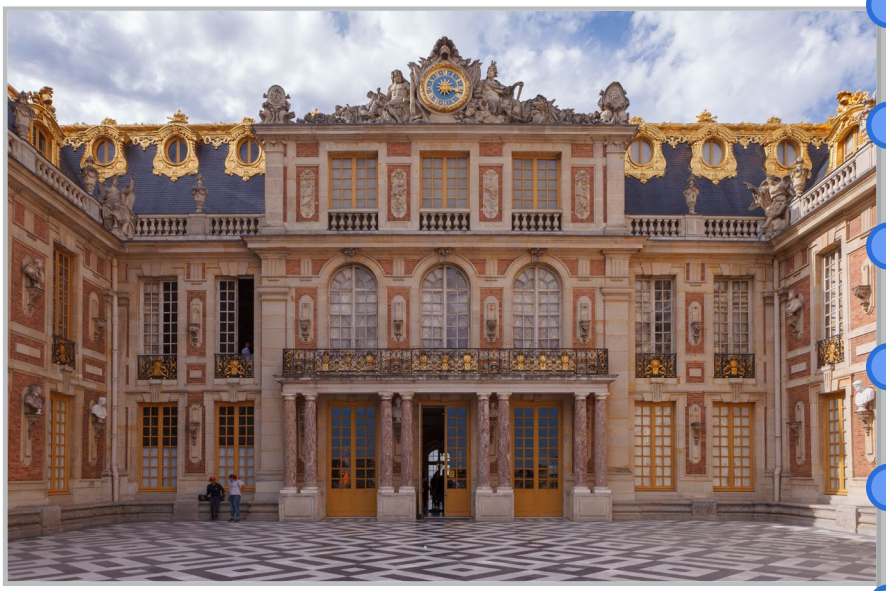
https://www.musee-moyenage.fr/en/home.html (Cluny Museum in Paris)

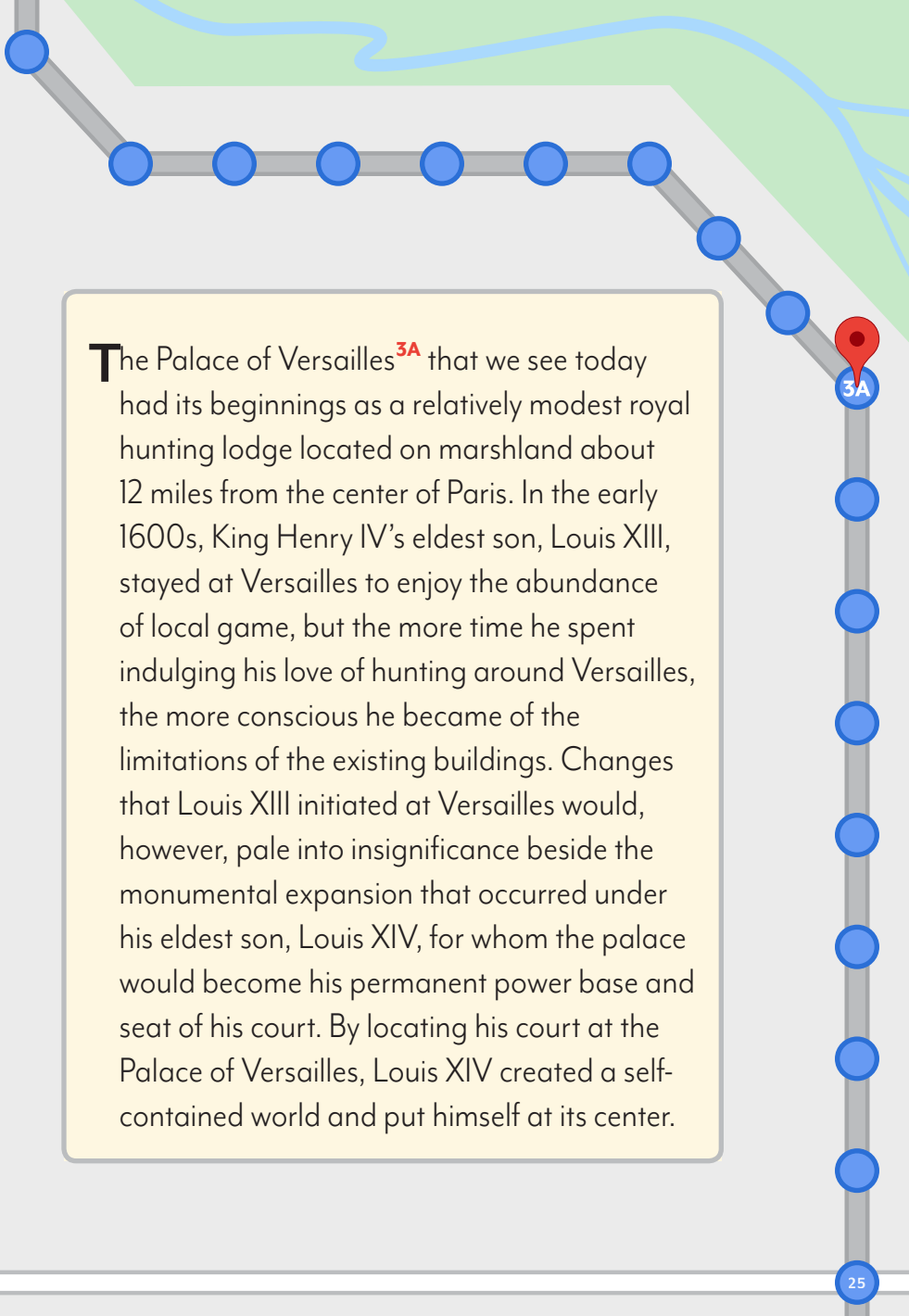
http://www.sainte-chapelle.fr/en (Sainte-Chapelle website)

https://www.louvre.fr/en (official Louvre Museum website)

3

The Splendor of Versailles





The Palace of Versailles[3A] that we see today had its beginnings as a relatively modest royal hunting lodge located on marshland about 12 miles from the center of Paris. In the early 1600s, King Henry IV's eldest son, Louis XIII, stayed at Versailles to enjoy the abundance of local game, but the more time he spent indulging his love of hunting around Versailles, the more conscious he became of the limitations of the existing buildings. Changes that Louis XIII initiated at Versailles would, however, pale into insignificance beside the monumental expansion that occurred under his eldest son, Louis XIV, for whom the palace would become his permanent power base and seat of his court. By locating his court at the Palace of Versailles, Louis XIV created a self-contained world and put himself at its center.

3B

The Gardens

- The gardens of Versailles[3B] represent the essence of French landscaping style of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, and the sheer scale of the landscaping is the whole point. The gardens—Grand Canal and water features—proclaim that man can subdue nature and make it conform to his boundaries and desires. The features you see here were all installed to meet the exacting taste of French monarch Louis XIV, who viewed monarchs as divinely appointed and the center of their world.

TRAVEL TIP

One of the most elaborate fountains in the garden is the Latona Fountain. If you examine its detail, you will notice that it depicts a number of people metamorphosing into frogs.

The Latona Fountain

- Louis styled himself the Sun King, and by this he intended his identification with the Greek god Apollo, who was associated with the sun's life-giving properties and was also a patron of the arts. Louis XIV reinforced this idea of an all-powerful king in the elaborate fountains in the garden, whose details paint mythic stories.

- The jets of fountains typically spring from a number of animals' mouths. During Louis XIV's reign, there were in fact more animal-based fountains than we see today. Just west of the Orangery, in the south part of the gardens, there was a labyrinth made out of yew hedges that enclosed 39 fountains comprising 330 animal sculptures.

- One of the architects of this project was Charles Perrault, best known as the author of the 1697 book of fairy tales that brought us *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Puss in Boots*. Twenty years before his fairy tales were published, Perrault wrote a book about the labyrinth of Versailles, which is how we know so much about its layout and fountains, even though it was destroyed in 1774 because it was not to Marie-Antoinette's taste.

- Incidentally, all the animal sculptures from which Perrault's fountains sprang, and all the animal sculptures that still survive in Versailles' water features today, were not the only exotic animals in the gardens during Louis XIV's reign. The grounds of Versailles housed a royal menagerie—the forerunner of a modern zoo. From a central octagonal tower, a viewer looked out over multiple separate enclosures radiating outward like the spokes of a wheel.

- The menagerie's residents included, at various times, a zebra, tiger, hyena, monkeys, and a host of exotic birds. The menagerie was open to the public at set times and for a fee, and given that Versailles was a carriage ride from Paris, only middle- and upper-class Parisians could afford to visit it. But for those who were able to marvel at the menagerie's occupants, the sight underscored the power of their king, who had commanded the palace to be created, and the power of France itself, whose imperial reach had brought such animals to reside there.

The Court of Louis XIV

- Louis XIV moved his court fully to Versailles in 1682. Apart from feeding his immense ego, this forced relocation of the seat of power from Paris to Versailles also served an important political purpose. Court etiquette dictated who could speak to whom and when as well as who enjoyed highly coveted access to the king. Noble families vied for royal attention and favor far from their own estates and power bases, with the consequence that royal intendants often had carte blanche to carry out the king's orders throughout all the corners of his kingdom.

- Louis XIV operated a policy of favor and disgrace: Only those who pleased him were admitted to court, and only those who really appealed to him were granted access to his entourage. Honors and titles were dispensed to placate where necessary or sold as a means for the wealthy bourgeoisie to attain highly sought-after noble status. An essentially two-tiered nobility was created: The *noblesse d'épée*, generally older established families, had gained their titles through military service to the French royalty; whereas the new generation of *noblesse de robe* had purchased their titles for money. Since, like all big spenders, Louis was in a constant search for sources of revenue, he tended to favor the *noblesse de robe*.

- Given Louis's love of spectacle and extravagance and his determination to make Versailles a palace unlike any other, it is perhaps fitting that the most famous room here is the Galerie des Glaces, or the Hall of Mirrors,[3C] which is 75 yards long. From the beautifully painted ceilings to the hundreds of immense mirrors, the gilded paneling, and the gorgeous chandeliers, everything about the hall is designed to emphasize light and amplify space.

- Royal spectacle is often described as a sort of theater, a continuous public performance in which the monarch must never be seen to be out of character or the illusion is gone. Given Louis XIV's love of spectacle, it will come as no surprise that Louis also saw himself as a great patron of the arts. And given that Louis ruled as an absolute monarch, it will also come as no surprise that the majority of artists took care not to displease him. Books had to be approved by the royal censor before

publication and distribution in France, leading to the growth of a huge trade in banned material being smuggled across its borders. Plays had to be approved by a censor, too. And what pleased the various royal censors was art that reinforced the status quo.

For the royal court at Versailles, a large part of keeping order in the country was the maintenance of clear distinctions between the classes. Shakespeare's famous assertion that "[a]ll the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players" was, then, especially true of the royal court of Louis XIV at Versailles, where everyone from the king downward knew their part and played it for maximum effect. But it was an extremely conservative stage, one that valued the stability of the established order and one in which those trying to play a part different to the one allotted to them were typically subject to ridicule.

Galerie des Glaces

The statesmen who put their names to the document ending the First World War chose the Hall of Mirrors for their formal signing of the Treaty of Versailles. From the 17th to the 20th centuries, this space has been seen as the embodiment of national power.

Changes to the Palace

- As Louis XIV grew older, he felt the need for privacy more. His solution—rather than reduce the size of the court or relax its highly formal etiquette—was to build a second palace within the grounds: the relatively small Grand Trianon.[3D] This is to the northwest of the main château but within easy reach, and its construction allowed Louis to spend time with his mistress, Madame de Maintenon, whom he would marry in secret in 1683 after the death of his first wife.

- Under Madame de Maintenon's influence, Louis became more obviously religious, and in 1685, he revoked the Edict of Nantes that his grandfather, Henry IV, had passed in 1598 to grant religious tolerance to French protestants, or Huguenots.

- As a result of the revocation, a mass exodus of Huguenot families from France occurred. With higher rates of literacy than their French Catholic counterparts and involvement in a number of skilled professions, including printing and weaving, the departure of so many Huguenots from France dented an already ailing economy and helped France's rivals.

- Louis had helped himself to state coffers to build Versailles and to install the massive hydraulic system that brought water to the gardens. He had helped himself at the treasury again to build the Grand Trianon and had generally seen the public purse as a bottomless pit that would fund not only his private building projects but also his frequent foreign wars. Taxation of the bourgeoisie and peasantry became such a burden that even those far from court life felt relieved when he died at age 76 in 1715.*

- Unsurprisingly in an age in which life expectancy was limited and disease knew no distinctions of rank, Louis had outlived his immediate heirs, and his crown was conferred upon his five-year-old great-grandson, Louis XV†.

* An infant when he had succeeded to the throne, Louis XIV ended up reigning from 1643 to 1715—a total of 72 years.

† Like Louis XIV, Louis XV enjoyed a long reign, 59 years. When he died in 1774, he was succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI, whose queen was Marie-Antoinette.

Given the vulnerability of a child who was king in name only, the young Louis XV was immediately whisked off to the Château de Vincennes in the east of Paris for his own safety. Philippe d'Orléans was appointed regent, and until Louis XV came of age, the regency saw the royal court move back to Paris and generally acquire a reputation for decadence and debauchery.

- When Louis XV fully assumed the reins of power, he moved the court back to Versailles. But—unable to find privacy in either the palace or the Grand Trianon—he had a third residence built on the sprawling site: the Petit Trianon. Upon its completion in 1762, all the main structures of Versailles that we can see today were in place.

- It's an astonishing testament to the extravagance of Louis XIV and his successor, Louis XV, that neither was satisfied with the main palace of Versailles itself, but each had built a whole new residence built within its grounds solely to get away from the court that they had each forced to move from their capital.

Resources

Print

Molière, *Tartuffe* (In *"The Misanthrope," "Tartuffe," and Other Plays*).

Perrault, *The Tales of Mother Goose*.

Picon, *Versailles*.

Spawforth, *Versailles*.

Web

http://en.chateauversailles.fr (official Versailles website)

4

Paris in Revolution

THE EVENTS OF THE FRENCH Revolution of 1789 and the reign of Napoléon Bonaparte (and the turmoil he left in his wake) were momentous for shaping modern France—and Europe more widely.

TRAVEL TIP

Le Procope[4A] is a café located on the Rive Gauche that has been continuously functioning since it first opened its doors in 1686. If you like coffee, it's worth having a cup here and taking the time to reflect that you are sitting in a place where some of the most celebrated 18th-century French thinkers puzzled over the biggest questions, including who ruled them and by what right.

4A

The Bastille Prison

- In 18th-century France, the aristocracy lived as well as could be imagined, but conditions were very different for the overwhelming majority of France's laboring poor. When a series of bad harvests in the 1780s led to a severe grain shortage, bread became in short supply.*

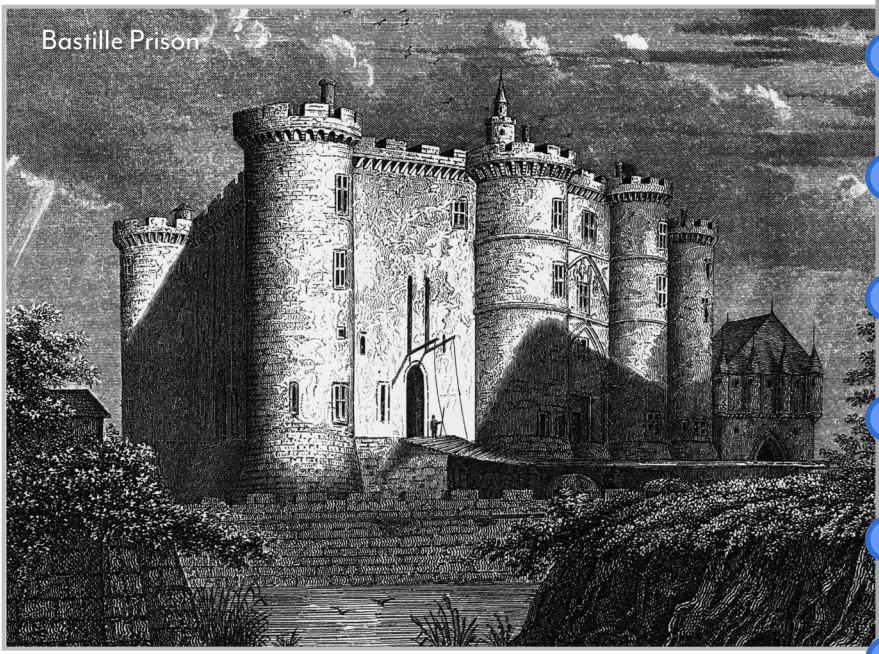
- Jacques Necker, the king's finance minister, had the impossible job of balancing the state budget. When the nobility refused his attempts to spread the tax burden to include them, France faced bankruptcy—overstretched by 17th- and 18th-century wars, colonial expansion, and its support for the fledgling United States in its war against Great Britain.

- This unusual state of affairs forced Louis XVI to call a meeting of his Estates-General, or parliament, in May 1789 at Versailles. This body, established in the 13th century, was made up of members of three so-called estates: the nobles, the clergy, and the Third Estate (the rest). It was supposed to be an advisory body and was very rarely summoned by the French kings, who believed they ruled by divine right.

* There's no evidence that Marie-Antoinette ever suggested that hungry peasants should eat cake instead, but the fact that such a sentiment could be attributed to her should indicate how out of touch she appeared. Nicknamed Madame Déficit, tales of her excess and decadence were spread in newspapers and pamphlets that typically saw the king as under the spell of his foreign wife, L'Autrichienne.

- In June 1789, members of the Third Estate, together with some of the nobility and clergy, decided that they wanted more change than Louis XVI was prepared to deliver and formed a breakaway body that would change France forever: the first National Assembly. Meeting at an indoor Versailles tennis court to which one member had a key, they swore an oath not to dissolve until the ratification of a new French constitution.

- Among those inspired by that fateful day were men who would prove to be skillful orators, able to speak directly to the ordinary people and fill them with a belief in their own raw power. When Louis XVI tried to dissolve the National Assembly on July 12, 1789, one speaker who would become a leading French revolutionary found his voice: Camille Desmoulins climbed on top of a table and urged his fellow Parisians to take matters into their own hands. Two days later, on July 14, 1789, a Paris mob stormed one of the city's most feared and hated symbols of royal power: the infamous Bastille prison.

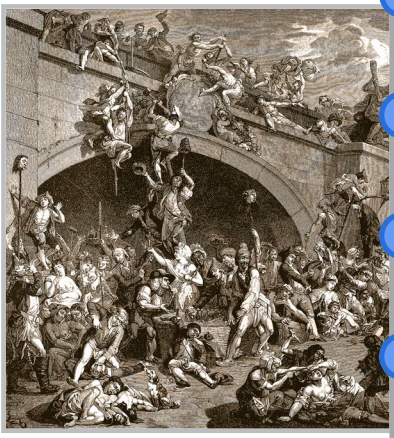

Bastille Prison

TRAVEL TIP

The outline of the walls and towers of the original Bastille can be traced in the roads if you brave the traffic and know what you're looking for. A safer alternative is the Bastille metro station, where you can look for some of the original foundations on the platforms of line 5.

- Today, nothing survives of the original Bastille above ground. But in 1789, the Bastille was impossible to miss: a stone-built, medieval fortress with eight towers nearly 100 feet high. Despite its feared reputation, the mob that stormed it on July 14th and that overwhelmed its guard found only seven prisoners inside. But the mob was not there to liberate the incarcerated. The mob had come for the vast stores of ammunition housed at the Bastille, and in overcoming its defenses and looting its contents, those who took part began to think that royal power was not invincible.

- It was a bloody day: Officers of the Bastille garrison were killed by the mob, and the governor's head was one of those subsequently paraded through the streets on a pike. But the symbolism of the overthrow of the Bastille prison by the people has made July 14th a unique French holiday,† when the French settle down with family and may watch a huge military parade televised from Paris that takes place in front of the president of the French Republic.



† It's English speakers who call July 14th Bastille Day; the French refer to it as *le quatorze juillet* (July 14th) or *la fête nationale* (national holiday).

- Following the storming of the Bastille, the French Revolution can be said to have begun. On August 26th, a National Assembly that had earlier abolished aristocratic privilege voted to approve a Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

- In an effort to accelerate the pace of change, a mob led by the working-class women of Paris marched the 12 miles to Versailles to confront the king on October 5th. The Anglo-Irish writer and politician Edmund Burke—a great sympathizer to the plight of Marie-Antoinette—would later popularize the image of her fleeing through servants' passages within the walls of the palace to escape the mob and join the king in his bedchamber.

- But Marie-Antoinette's fear of the mob would prove well-founded. The idealism of the French Revolution quickly descended into an ideological purge, and Louis XVI followed many of his nobles in being condemned as an enemy of the people. He was guillotined in January 1793, and Marie-Antoinette was guillotined that October.

- Today, the Place de la Concorde[4B] is the largest public square in Paris, but it was once the Place de la Révolution—the location of the guillotine that executed Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, and, later, some of the very revolutionaries who had condemned them, such as Camille Desmoulins, Georges Danton, and Maximilien Robespierre.

4B

TRAVEL TIP

At the Musée de la Préfecture de Police,[4C] you can still see an original guillotine from revolutionary France. As hard as it is to imagine, this symbol of the revolution was designed to provide a humane—and, at the time, modern—form of public execution, one that was ruthlessly efficient and not dependent on the strength and skill of a sword-wielding executioner.

4C

Buildings Associated with Napoléon's Policies

- With the deaths of the leading revolutionaries by the mid-1790s, France faced political chaos and a power vacuum. In November 1799, a young army general from the French island of Corsica—Napoléon Bonaparte—saw his chance and seized power in a coup d'état.

- In Paris, the legacy of Napoléon is in the way he transformed the look of the city, as well as France's legal system and government. It was Napoléon who began the construction of the Arc de Triomphe[4D] at the top of the Champs-Élysées in 1806. While this building project would not be completed until 1836, 15 years after his death, it reflects Napoléon's vision of a Roman-style triumphal archway under which his armies would pass, returning from victories across Europe. And Napoléon's armies had a lot of battles to fight, since the usually-warring European powers were united in their opposition to his reign and to his policy of aggressive French military expansion.

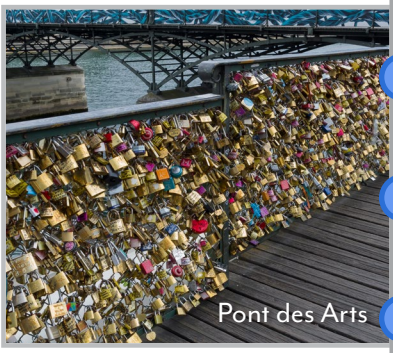
- One of the buildings associated with Napoléon's policies is Madeleine Church,[4E] which is important because Napoléon reconciled France with the Catholic church via a concordat in 1801 and was crowned emperor by the pope in Notre-Dame in 1804. For many believers, the hostility of the revolutionaries to the Catholic church had been a source of great unhappiness. Having the church back on side and in apparent approval of Napoléon's régime was an astute political move on his part.


Arc de Triomphe

- Napoléon oversaw the creation of the Banque de France, the French central bank,[4F] with the aim of stimulating and stabilizing the economy during what he envisioned as a period of industrial growth and development, in which he wanted France to be able to compete with its great rival, England.

- Linked to the creation of a French central bank was the launch of La Bourse, the French stock exchange. If you wander down a street from this period, such as the rue de Rivoli, with its sandstone façades and arcades of shops, it's impossible not to see the buildings as a tangible representation of the optimism some felt at the time for the economic growth and prosperity that Napoléon promised would be dividends of his rule.

- The Pont des Arts[4G] is too small to be a major crossing point of the Seine between the Louvre and the Rive Gauche, but it is one of the prettiest and best-loved bridges in Paris. With a beautiful view of the Pont Neuf and the Île de la Cité and no vehicular traffic, it is a pedestrian and couples' favorite—hence the trend for attaching padlocks‡ to the bridge to represent eternal love.


Pont des Arts

- In addition to having a lasting impact on the built environment of Paris, Napoléon also brought change to many things that are not visible but that nevertheless still have a profound impact on France today. He changed the education system and introduced the lycée, or high school system. He established a system of specialist universities, the *grandes écoles*, to train the most gifted students in the country for particular fields.

‡ The authorities have tried to discourage this and in 2017 held an auction of love locks from Paris bridges, worried that the huge number of padlocks on the Pont des Arts was causing the supports of the bridge to sink into the Seine.

Napoléon had a lasting impact not only on the look of Paris but on the shape of French society.

- Under Napoléon, France was divided into administrative districts called départements, which are still in existence today, along with their *préfets*, or prefects, who are appointed by the head of state and to whom they answer directly.

- The Code Civil was established in 1804 and became known as the Napoleonic Code of civil law. While it established a uniform legal system throughout France and enshrined many of the rights claimed by the people during the revolution, such as equality before the law and the right to property, the Napoleonic Code was still a creation of its time, so it gave all legal powers in the family to the senior male or husband, with wives reduced to the status of minors.

- For many French, and indeed for many Europeans, there are two Napoléons: The first was the obscure Corsican general who rose in the wake of the revolution and who initially seemed to believe in its ideals; the second was the dictator who crowned himself emperor of France in 1804, taking a crown of laurel leaves from the hands of the pope and placing it on his own head. This Napoléon brought war and poverty to millions across Europe and Russia through his constant military campaigns and rapacious armies.

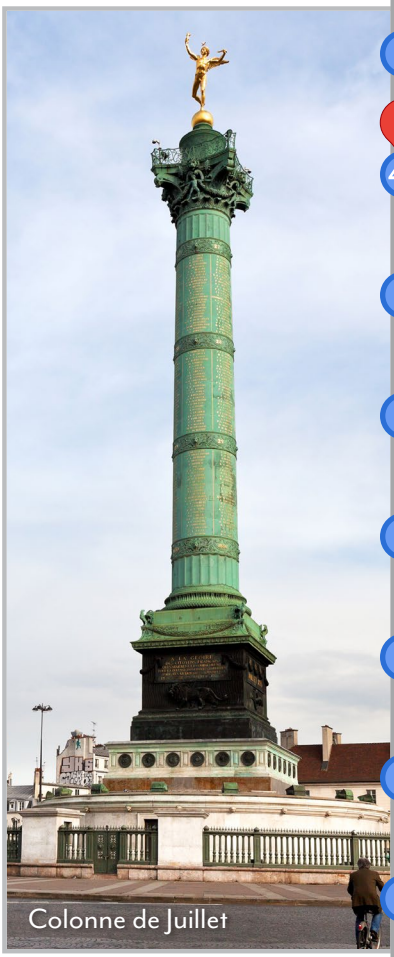
- When an alliance of powers forced the abdication of Napoléon in 1814, France saw the temporary restoration of a monarchy with the brother of the guillotined Louis XVI assuming the throne as Louis XVIII. When Napoléon escaped his prison island of Elba in 1815, a renewed alliance of his old enemies finally forced his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.

- As this closed one chapter for France, it opened another, with another batch of Bourbon monarchs moving incrementally toward a reassertion of royal prerogative. This culminated in Charles X attempting to annul the results of an election in 1830 and to silence the press. This led to three days of riots in Paris, called the Three Glorious Days, or Trois Glorieuses.

- The revolution of July 1830 is commemorated in a present-day Parisian landmark, the 150-foot-tall Colonne de Juillet.[4H] Completed in 1840, the July Column features the engraved names of all the victims of the July Revolution. It's located at the very heart of the Place de la Bastille—on the site of the prison where the great Revolution of 1789 began.

- Paris was a difficult place for the authorities to control, and thus the July Revolution of 1830 would be echoed two years later during a June rebellion in 1832.[§]

- It would take one final revolution—this time in 1848—for France to reject any return to a monarchy.



Colonne de Juillet

Resources

Print

Bell, *Napoleon*.

Hugo, *Les Misérables*.

Schama, *Citizens*.

Voltaire, *Candide*.

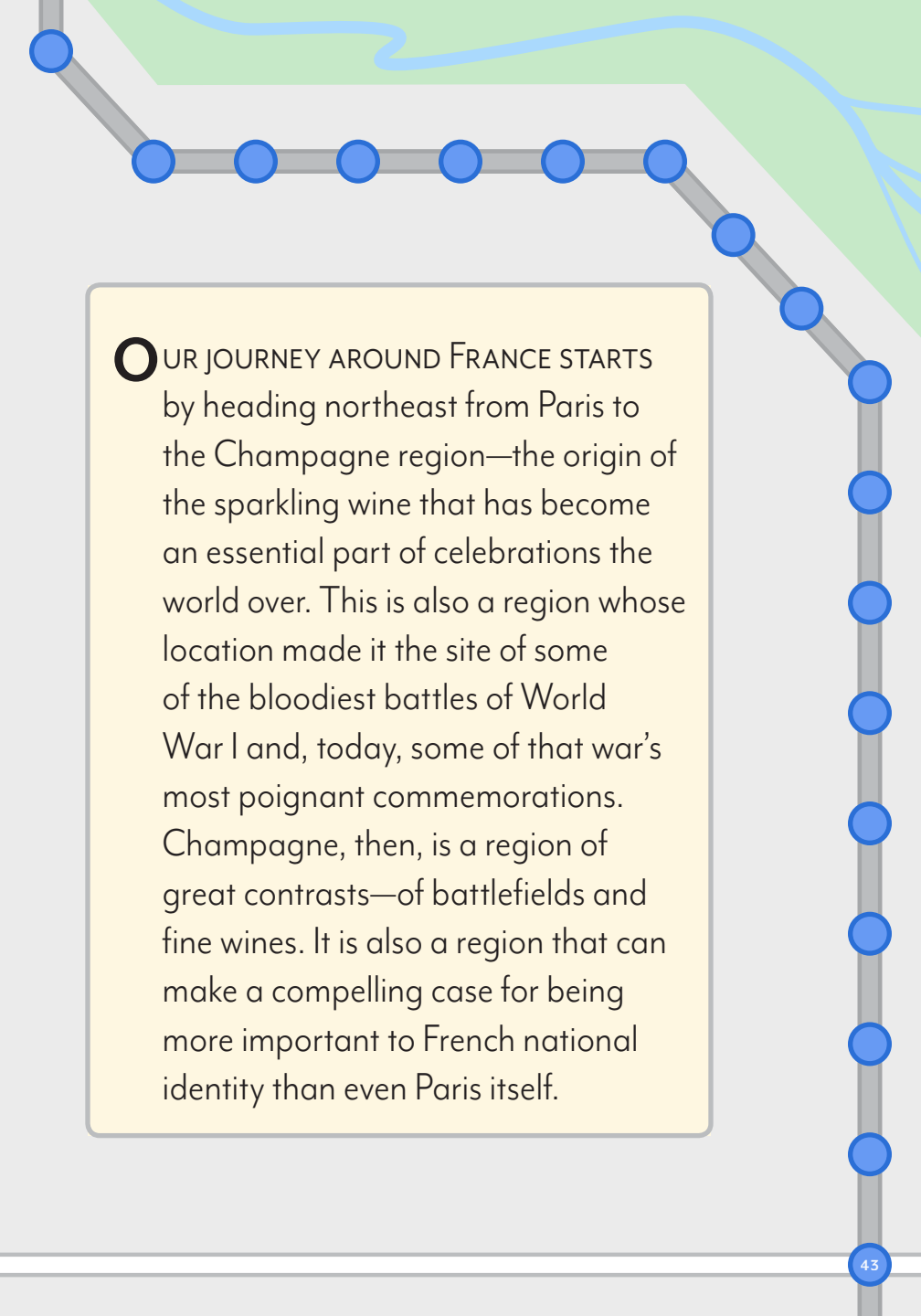
Film

Les enfants du paradis

[§] Such events form the backdrop to Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

5

Northeast to Champagne



Our journey around France starts by heading northeast from Paris to the Champagne region—the origin of the sparkling wine that has become an essential part of celebrations the world over. This is also a region whose location made it the site of some of the bloodiest battles of World War I and, today, some of that war's most poignant commemorations. Champagne, then, is a region of great contrasts—of battlefields and fine wines. It is also a region that can make a compelling case for being more important to French national identity than even Paris itself.

The Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Reims

- The Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Reims[5A] is one of three extraordinary French cathedrals that were built during the 13th century—the others are Notre-Dame de Paris and Notre-Dame de Chartres—in an effort to be the biggest and best expression of faith at the time.

- The monarch presiding over France during all this cathedral building was Louis IX, who was apparently so impressed with the Reims Cathedral that he decreed all future French monarchs would be anointed there. So, for the best part of 500 years, all the way up until the French Revolution, they were—for a total of 25 coronations on this site.

- But even before Reims acquired the distinction of being the city where French kings were crowned, it had a major claim to being central to the story of France. In the 5th century, a single ruler called Clovis had succeeded in uniting all the Frankish tribes, and in doing so, he had brought together most of the regional building blocks of what we recognize as France.

- When Clovis visited Reims, which had been a center of trade and commerce since Roman times, he had already converted from pagan to Christian. He was apparently so impressed with the church that preceded Notre-Dame de Reims on this site that, on Christmas Day of 496, he was baptized on this spot.

- And when Clovis had 3000 of his followers baptized in their turn, he laid the foundations for France becoming a Christian country—which is to say, at the time, a Catholic country—and a country whose boundaries were largely determined by the lands claimed by the Frankish tribes united under Clovis's rule.

- The church where Clovis made Christianity the official religion of France grew into a cathedral that burned down in 1210, which is when work immediately began on the Gothic masterpiece you see today. Like Notre-Dame de Paris, then, this is a site with a long history, where countless generations have come to worship and celebrate significant moments in French history.

Notre-Dame de Reims

- But it is also a site where the people of this region can remember the devastation of 20th-century war. Our guide to this part of Reims's history is known fondly as the Smiling Angel, which has welcomed visitors to one of the cathedral's front doors for more than 600 years.

- On September 4th, 1914, one month into the four-year conflict that we now know as the First World War, Reims was taken by German forces. The cathedral was turned into a hospital for German troops, and straw pallets covered the floor. But German forces quickly abandoned the city, pulling back their forces to leave Reims in the firing line of their biggest guns.

- The first shell hit the cathedral on September 19th, setting fire to pine scaffolding temporarily in place around the building. The fire spread to the medieval oak beams in the roof and caused the lead there to melt onto everything below, setting fire to the straw pallets still on the cathedral floor. The combination of intense heat and dripping molten lead caused even some of the stone statues to crack, and, while you wouldn't know it by looking at him, the Smiling Angel's head fell off.

The Smiling Angel

- When the war concluded in 1918, more than 90 percent of the city had been destroyed, and its population had shrunk from an estimated 50,000 at the war's beginning to just 1,500, many of whom had taken shelter in the champagne cellars honeycombing the ground under the city's streets.

- Even though some wanted to leave the bombed-out city as a testament to the destruction of war, those who wanted to rebuild prevailed, and, with some funds from the Rockefeller family, reconstruction began. One of the first restoration projects was the Smiling Angel. And even though the cathedral itself did not open to the public until 1935, people did not have to wait that long to see the Smiling Angel, restored on the outside of the building, still with his benevolent smile.

- Given this history, it seems only fitting that Reims was chosen by the Allies in the Second World War as the place where they received Germany's unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945.

Champagne Houses

- The First World War population of Reims used its champagne cellars as shelter, and since Reims is the unofficial capital of the Champagne region, no visit to Reims would be complete without a tour of one or more of its great champagne houses. With lots of wineries to choose from, it can be difficult to decide what to visit, especially if you have traveling partners who don't like champagne or don't drink alcohol.

- Within Reims, Ruinart[5B] has two claims to fame: Established in 1729, it claims to be the oldest producer of champagne in the region, and it still uses 100 percent Chardonnay grapes. But it's really worth visiting for the surprising location of its cellars, used to age the bottled bubbly.

TRAVEL TIP

You can enjoy hearing lots about the history of champagne and see demonstrations of its modern production by booking a tour at one of the region's many producers.

5B

The Benedictine monk Dom Perignon is often believed to be the creator of champagne, but all we really know for certain about his winemaking skills is that by 1670, he had found a way of making wine retain more of the grape's natural sugars.

TRAVEL TIP

Ruinart is fairly typical in holding four scheduled champagne tastings a day and requiring visitors to book online at least three weeks in advance. But because it is within three miles of other famous champagne houses—Taittinger and Bruno Paillard—a number of companies arrange tours and tastings at more than one champagne producer.

- To visit Ruinart's cellars, you will go into huge underground rooms excavated out of the surrounding chalk. More than a hundred stone steps take visitors 125 feet below ground into a five-mile network of tunnels carved out of the chalk. On the walls, you can see marks made by the tools used to hollow out these impressive vaults, with the earliest marks dating to when the Romans first quarried chalk here.

- But what locals probably remember most fondly about this champagne house is that, during World War I, when Reims was being razed to the ground by explosions and fire, sixth-generation owner André Ruinart opened the chalk caves to the local population to shelter and also moved his entire business operation down there. In July 2015, the chalk caves around and under Reims were named a UNESCO World Heritage site because of their long and storied history.

- If you want to visit one of the larger, more famous champagne houses, then a taxi ride from Reims will get you to the home of the world-famous Veuve Clicquot,[5C] which traces its founding to 1772, prerevolutionary France. At that time, the company's founder, Philippe Clicquot-Muiron, had diverse business interests in banking, the wool trade, and champagne. He left his businesses to his son, François, but François died in 1805, leaving behind a 27-year-old widow, the former Barbe-Nicole Ponsardin.

- The French for "widow" is *veuve*, so the widow Clicquot became the first woman to head a champagne house. Quickly divesting herself of the family's banking and wool trade interests, the widow Clicquot focused her attention on transforming the quality and quantity of champagne produced. Her legacy is one of the world's most recognizable luxury brands and one of its most expensive drinks.*

* In 2011, a bidder paid 30,000 euros for a bottle of Veuve Clicquot made between 1825 and 1830 and recovered from among cargo at the bottom of the Baltic Sea.

Cemeteries and War Museums

- The contrasts to be found in the city of Reims—which contains reminders of war and champagne houses—are in some ways symbolic of contrasts in the wider Champagne region. Indeed, many visitors still come to this part of northeast France with the primary aim of honoring the dead of World War I by visiting the grave of an ancestor known to have died in battle.

- Even for those visiting the region without a family member's grave to locate, the cemeteries of Champagne are a poignant testament to the fact that the region has for centuries been a battleground for armies seeking to invade France. Champagne was the site of much of the bloodiest fighting of the First World War, and immense war cemeteries commemorate the fallen of the Somme for British, Commonwealth, French, and German troops, while the lesser-known Argonne Forest is a site of remembrance for US forces.

- Hundreds of thousands of war casualties are buried in this part of France, and a visit to just one or two of the region's larger war cemeteries will show the scale of the conflict. At the French National Cemetery at Douaumont,[5D] it's hard to comprehend the graves of at least 16,000 French soldiers, including nearly 2,000 Muslim soldiers whose presence is a reminder that the men of France's colonies fought and died for the country in its wars.

5D

TRAVEL TIP

Douaumont is the cemetery that's most associated with the various battles of Verdun, but its pristine grounds and memorials are replicated across the region, and various tour companies can be found offering dedicated itineraries that highlight the experience of particular nationalities who fought and died there.

- In addition to its rows upon rows of grave markers, Douaumont has the dubious distinction of being the national ossuary, or bone repository, for the war dead. It was officially inaugurated in 1932, and while estimates vary as to the number of skeletal remains it contains, the ossuary may house the bones of up to 130,000 individual combatants—those who were both allies and enemies in life and who now rest side by side in death.

- If you want to see the various battles and cemeteries in a wider context and get an overview of the First World War, then the Museum of the Great War at Château Peronne[5F] is located in the heart of what were once the battlefields of the Somme. Château Peronne is a medieval castle, a reminder that the river Somme was seen as strategically important across hundreds of years of European history, and the town of Peronne has been at the center of war and sieges for several centuries.

TRAVEL TIP

Audiovisual displays in the Museum of the Great War help put the various battles and offensives in context.

- The museum takes care to remind visitors that soldiers of many nations lost their lives here at the start of the 20th century and tells the story of the many different military campaigns that were all part of World War I. Beyond the museum, visitors are pointed to cemeteries of the Somme that typically commemorate the fallen of particular nations. The sheer numbers are overwhelming and give some sense of the scale of loss in this conflict; the museum recognizes 13 German cemeteries of the Somme, 20 French cemeteries, and 410 British and Commonwealth cemeteries.

- The Museum of the Great War is close to the Somme American Cemetery at Bony,[5G] which has graves for 1,844 US military dead, and the cemetery chapel commemorates a further 333 of the missing. Walking among the grave markers at Bony, visitors will find Star of David headstones commemorating Jewish soldiers and will also be reminded of war casualties who did not fight but who tried to save those who did, such as nurses.

- Visiting any one of these cemeteries is a truly sobering experience, and it is hard to reconcile the lush green fields around many of these sites with the horror of trench warfare and surviving images from World War I battlefields.

- At the conclusion of the 1914 to 1918 war, 11 percent of the French population had been killed or wounded as a result of the conflict. To visit this part of France and not visit at least one war cemetery is to miss a big part of the story of France and the forces that shaped the country in the 20th century—and that continue to shape it to this day.

Villers-Cotterêts,[5H] in the north of the Champagne region, gives its name to the 1539 Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, which officially declared French, not Latin, the language of France.

Resources

Print

Kendall, ed., *Poetry of the First World War*.

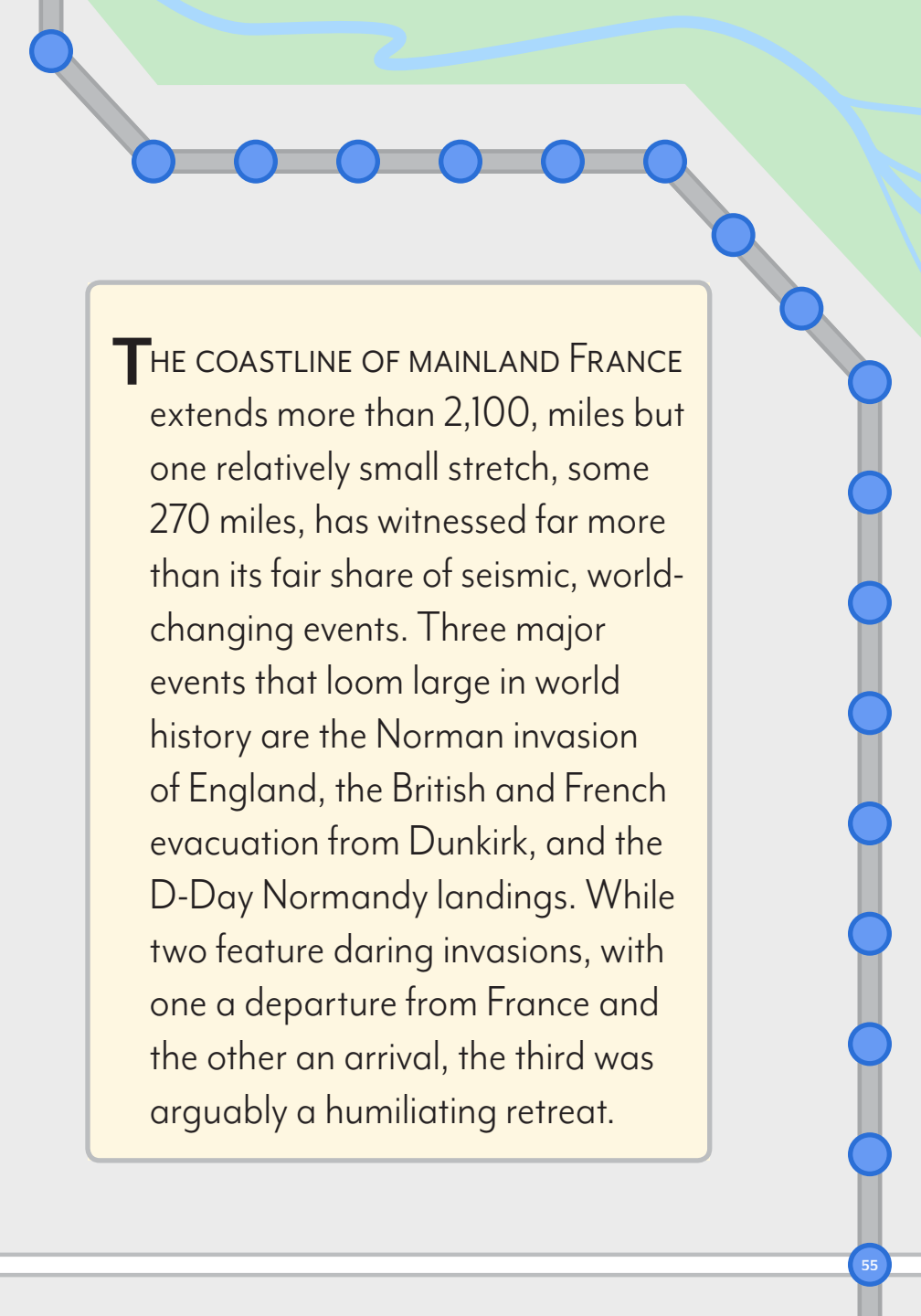
Web

https://www.ruinart.com/en-us (Ruinart Champagne)

https://www.visit-somme.com/great-war (Somme tourism site)

6

Normandy at War: Beaches and Bunkers



THE COASTLINE OF MAINLAND FRANCE extends more than 2,100, miles but one relatively small stretch, some 270 miles, has witnessed far more than its fair share of seismic, world-changing events. Three major events that loom large in world history are the Norman invasion of England, the British and French evacuation from Dunkirk, and the D-Day Normandy landings. While two feature daring invasions, with one a departure from France and the other an arrival, the third was arguably a humiliating retreat.

The Norman Invasion

- The small coastal town of Saint-Valery-sur-Somme[6A] was the final point of departure for the fleet of ships assembled by William Duke of Normandy,* also known as William the Conqueror, to invade England in 1066. William's plans to invade England appeared to have been thwarted by storms and bad weather. His fleet, assembled at Dives-sur-Mer[6B] in Normandy, had been blown northeast along the French coast to Saint-Valery, outside his own lands and power base. But eventually, the weather cooperated, and William invaded England.

- William claimed that he had been promised the throne of England by King Edward the Confessor. When Harold Godwinson was declared king by the English nobles, William felt betrayed and assembled an army to conquer England and claim the throne. On October 14, 1066, William defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings and was crowned king on Christmas Day of the same year. England and the English-speaking world would be transformed forever.

- But William was perceived as a foreign claimant who brought with him a foreign army of occupation. Beyond his military might, he needed something to prove that his actions were legitimate. What better way could there be to justify his claim than the best-known and most celebrated piece of medieval embroidery ever created: the Bayeux Tapestry? This amazing piece of medieval propaganda comprises several long pieces of linen embroidered with colored wool and stitched together to make up a single visual document that's 230 feet in total length.

* Descended from the Vikings, the Normans established themselves in the French region that bears their name in the 9th century.

- Although the tapestry does contain some text, the story of the invasion itself is actually told more through images rather than words. Both Norman and Anglo-Saxon nobles share valiant qualities, but they can be visually differentiated by the English preference for a bushy moustache, as opposed to the clean-shaven French. It is a testament to the skill of the embroiderers that contemporary historians consider the tapestry an accurate historical depiction of 11th-century dress, shipbuilding, and military tactics.

- The French also know the work as the Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde in honor of the Norman queen. Because records can only surely locate the tapestry in Bayeux in the 15th century, its function on creation in the 11th century can only be speculated upon. It was almost certainly created and used for display, in either a religious or secular context, but it appears to have been shown sparingly, as it is in excellent condition for its age, with very little fading to the dyes in the woolen thread.

- The Bayeux Tapestry is housed in a seminary in Bayeux, in a large room all to itself in the Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant.†6C

6C

The Bayeux Tapestry tells the history of England, but it is a French treasure.

† Guillaume-le-Conquérant is the French name for William the Conqueror.

The Evacuation from Dunkirk

- For nine days during the early summer of 1940, Dunkerque, or Dunkirk[6D]—an industrial port very near the Belgian border in an area that the French call the Nord, or North—was the site of the most remarkable forced evacuation in military history. Some 340,000 British and French soldiers were transported to safety from the beaches and port of Dunkirk, an achievement that has been commemorated in many books, movies,‡ documentaries, photographs, and even paintings.
- Through the fall, winter, and spring of 1939 and 1940, the French and British faced off with their German adversaries in a standoff known as the Phony War. Everyone seemed dug in and ready for any attack. As the Allies had expected, it came through Holland and Belgium, and the French and British armies moved north to counter. What came as a surprise was another, main attack to the south through the poorly defended Ardennes Forest.

‡ The 2017 blockbuster movie *Dunkirk* was a hit in France.

Troops evacuated from Dunkirk

- The Germans were using what became known as blitzkrieg, the coordination of tanks, infantry, and aircraft to speedily overrun the enemy by breaching weak spots in their defenses. The Germans outmaneuvered the French and British.

- Lord Gort, the commander of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), ordered his forces to withdraw to the best-possible place for the contingency of an evacuation—which proved to be Dunkirk, chosen because of its port and the surrounding network of canals that could hold up the marauding Germans. British plans for a modest evacuation of around 40,000 troops over a two-day window were hastily established. It was to be called Operation Dynamo.

- To make matters worse, tensions grew between the French and the British. It looked to the French like the BEF were abandoning their allies in an effort to save their own skins. On top of that, much of the industrial port of Dunkirk had been destroyed by bombing, and the beaches were too shallow to allow large ships to get close to shore. It all looked very grim for the Allies.

- But then, what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the miracle of Dunkirk happened—a sequence of events that turned an inevitable, devastating defeat into almost a victory of sorts.

- With the port of Dunkirk pretty much out of action, the British were using small boats from larger naval vessels moored out to sea to pick up soldiers lined up on the beaches. But this was a slow process. More small vessels were needed, and thus began the assembly of an armada of small civilian boats that were able to pick up more men from the beaches. These 850 or so "little ships" have earned a place in the British psyche as a watchword for the Dunkirk spirit—an idea of courage, pluck, and improvisation in the face of extreme adversity.

At the turn of the millennium, a museum was opened in France to commemorate the evacuation from Dunkirk.

- All of these elements were shown in the actions credited to Captain Bill Tennant of the Royal Navy, who ordered evacuations to be attempted from a breakwater called the east mole, a rather flimsy wood and narrow concrete construction that extended into the sea. Although highly risky, these evacuations from the mole and the damaged port reportedly account for 70 percent of the total numbers rescued.

- The Germans decided to halt their advance on the Dunkirk pocket for three days, allowing more Allied soldiers to escape. In the final days, the security of the Dunkirk perimeter was ensured by French soldiers, which allowed the BEF the extra time to escape. With the vast majority of the BEF repatriated, the Royal Navy spent the last two days of the evacuation returning, at considerable cost, to rescue as many French soldiers as possible. Numbers bear this out, with nearly 200,000 British forces repatriated and roughly 140,000 French and Belgians carried across the English Channel, or La Manche.§

TRAVEL TIP

The concrete section of the east mole is still standing today and can be visited by tourists.[6E] In another echo of these times, the wrecks of some of the lost ships can still be seen at low tide in the sand at nearby Zuydcoote Beach.[6F]

- On June 4, Dunkirk fell. Paris was occupied on June 14, and an armistice between Germany and France was signed on June 22. France was divided into two zones: a Nazi-occupied zone mainly in the north and a French-controlled puppet government in the south, known by the town where it was headquartered, Vichy. So began four long years of Nazi occupation—a period the French call *les années noires*, "the black years."

§ The British rather possessively call the body of water along the northern French coast the English Channel, while the French call it La Manche—the French word for a "sleeve," which is how it looks on a map.

- On the other side of the English Channel, in his "fight them on the beaches" speech that followed the Dunkirk evacuation, Churchill recognized that this was no victory, but his oratory and the realization that this could have been so much worse instilled a sense of defiance that helped Britain stand, almost alone, against the Nazis during the rest of 1940 and 1941.

The D-Day Landings

- While if you mention the word *révolution* in France, thoughts immediately turn to 1789, the word *libération* conjures up images of the Allied sweep through France in 1944 and the relief of the end of four long years of Nazi occupation and the collaborationist Vichy régime. In spite of the periods of disagreement and misunderstandings over the ensuing years, the French recognize the efforts and sacrifices of the Allies that returned them the freedom they treasure so dearly.

- Like all major world events, hindsight allows us to look back on the D-Day Normandy landings with a sense of the inevitability of victory, but in early June 1944, success was far from assured. On the eve of the invasion, General Eisenhower, the Allied Supreme Commander, had two speeches prepared: one an announcement indicating success and the other his resignation.

- The Germans had long understood that the size of their conquest in western Europe in 1940 left them vulnerable to attack. From the northern tip of Norway to the Spanish-French border in the south, thousands of miles of coastline needed to be defended.

- And the Atlantic Wall, a network of defenses—including concrete bunkers, pillboxes, minefields, beach obstacles, and gun emplacements—was built with the protection of "Fortress Europe" in mind. Obviously, parts of this wall were viewed as more likely to be targeted than others and thus were better defended, but all along the coast of France, traces of the Nazi defenses can still be seen.

- In the overnight hours of June 5th and 6th, US airborne troops were dropped near Sainte-Mère-Eglise,[6G] and British paratroops and gliders landed at Pegasus Bridge[6H] in an effort to surprise the Germans, cut off reinforcements, and knock out defensive bunkers that were built to have their guns trained on the beaches. The landings from the sea—of 150,000 Allied soldiers—began early on June 6 along a set of five beaches whose code names are etched in history: Utah and Omaha for the Americans, Gold and Sword for the British, and Juno for the Canadians.[6I]

- The fighting to break out of Normandy was some of the most brutal and bloody of World War II. It took a bitter 77-day campaign to defeat the Germans, who used the terrain to slow down and harass the Allies for every inch of territory.

Casualties varied according to the beach, but the heaviest US losses occurred at Omaha, making it the best known and featured in most movies on the landings.

- Though fewer in number with each passing year, all Allied veterans who fought in France in World War II are eligible to be awarded the Légion d'honneur, France's highest military and civilian honor, established by Napoléon in 1802.

- An annual mass parachute jump at Sainte-Mère-Eglise on the weekend before June 6, coupled with ceremonies at the Iron Mike statue to US airborne troops at the bridge at La Fière,[6J] ensure that the D-Day landings remain an important event to remember and commemorate.

- The French have an expression for visits to important historical sites: *tourisme de mémoire*, a tourism to promote a recognition that pays homage to those who sacrificed so much and ensures their survival in a collective memory. Rather than falling into neglect over the passage of time, museums and visitor centers at these and other key sites are often enjoying expensive enhancements and renovations.

Resources

Print

Jackson, *The Dark Years*.

Web

http://www.dynamo-dunkerque.com (Dunkirk war museum website; use Translate tab in lower right to read site in English)

Film

Au revoir les enfants

Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis (*Welcome to the Sticks*)

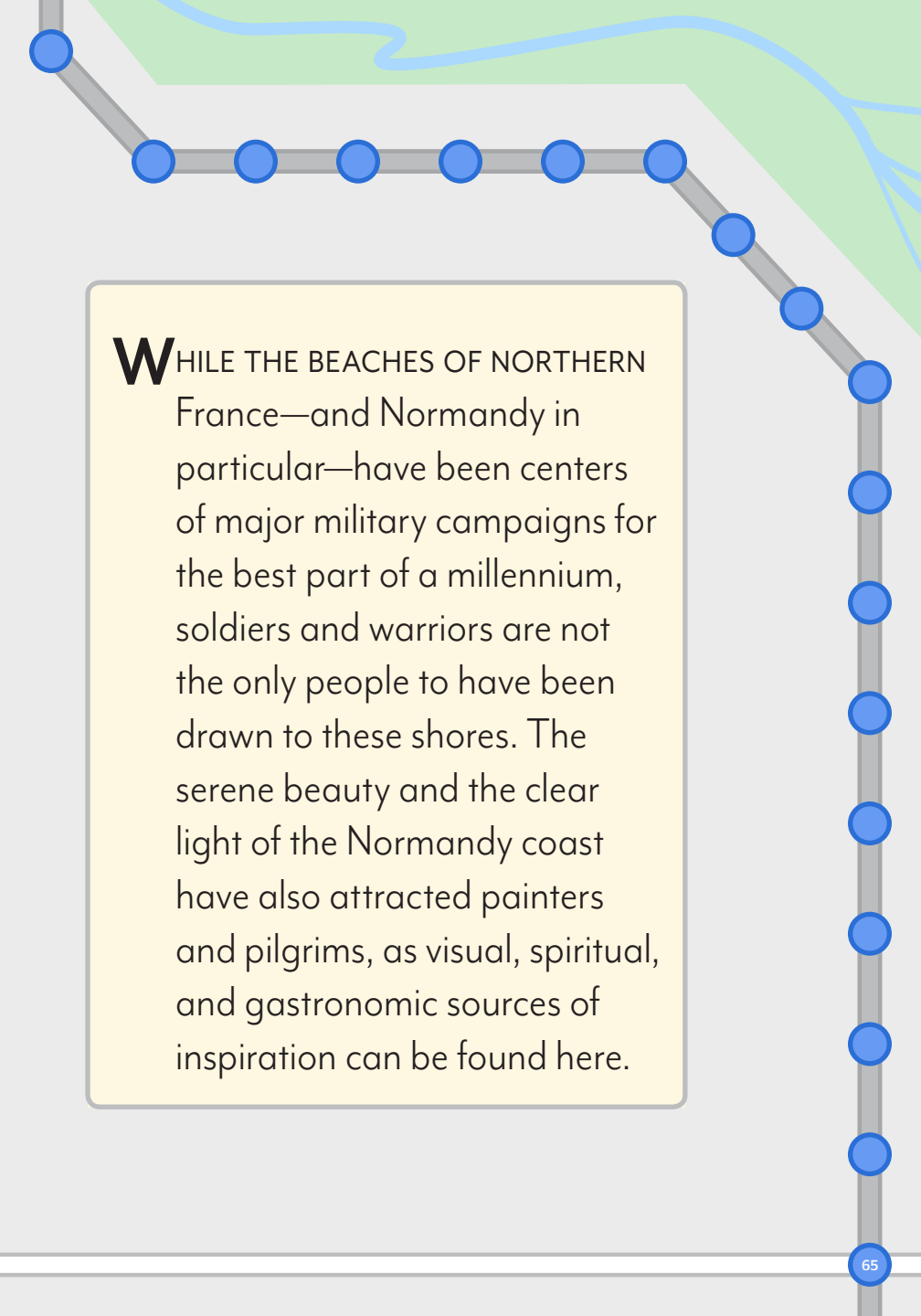
Dunkirk

Saving Private Ryan

7

Normandy at Ease: Painters and Pilgrims

Stormy Sea in Étretat, Claude Monet



WHILE THE BEACHES OF NORTHERN France—and Normandy in particular—have been centers of major military campaigns for the best part of a millennium, soldiers and warriors are not the only people to have been drawn to these shores. The serene beauty and the clear light of the Normandy coast have also attracted painters and pilgrims, as visual, spiritual, and gastronomic sources of inspiration can be found here.

From Normandy to Giverny with Monet

- Seascapes have long been a subject of choice for painters since they can show a range of situations, from the drama of a storm to the serenity of a calm sea at low tide. No group of painters took advantage of these scenes more than the impressionists, and the coast of Normandy was their studio. The painter most associated with impressionism in Normandy is the man who's also considered to be the leading light of the movement: Claude Monet.

- Monet grew up in Le Havre,[7A] the industrial port on the Normandy coast at the mouth of the Seine River. A key figure in Monet's early life and work was a local painter named Eugène Boudin,*

nicknamed the "king of the skies," who loved to paint nature, and especially seascapes, outside the confines of a studio. The young Monet accompanied Boudin on painting excursions to the white cliffs along the Côte d'Albâtre[7B] near Étretat, and Boudin was especially influential for impressing the importance of how to view both the sea and sky.

- Inspired by Boudin, Monet left for Paris, where he met other young painters, such as Renoir, Bazille, Sisley, Cézanne, and Pissarro. But he was frequently drawn back to Normandy—and especially to the coast. The work that gave a name to the new artistic movement we now know as impressionism was in fact a seascape of the port of Le Havre. Painted in 1872, *Impression, soleil levant* (*Impression, Sunrise*) serves as a perfect example of Monet's desire to try to capture two elements that were considered elusive to artists: light and air.

7A

7B

* Boudin has a museum named in his honor in his hometown of Honfleur, a small and very attractive port on the other side of the Seine estuary from Le Havre.

Impression, Sunrise, Claude Monet

"When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house, a field or whatever. Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact color and shape, until it gives your own naïve impression of the scene before you."

– Claude Monet

- Monet was fascinated by changes in light and weather conditions, which in turn altered the viewer's interpretation—or impression—of what he or she saw. According to Monet, light, color, and shape take precedence over the faithful representation of things, and in following this principle, he and his cohort revolutionized the way we view the world around us.

- Back in Paris, Monet and friends were having trouble gaining acceptance and sales in the art world. They were growing tired of the continual refusal to accept their works as part of the official Salon—the major exhibition of contemporary art—and thus decided to arrange their own exhibition to show off their talents.

- To many cognoscenti, *Impression, soleil levant* looked like a rough outline or a very poorly executed painting. One critic even played on the title of the painting to disparagingly term these young artists as "impressionist." Rather than taking the term as an insult, Monet and friends delightedly embraced the name, and thus a whole new artistic school was born.

- But far from abandoning his roots in Normandy, Monet and others flocked to the coastline. Monet himself spent two years at Étretat. He was fascinated by water and its visual quality in various states, from the calm, reflective limpidity of ponds and rivers to the gray-and-white violence of the waves of a raging sea.

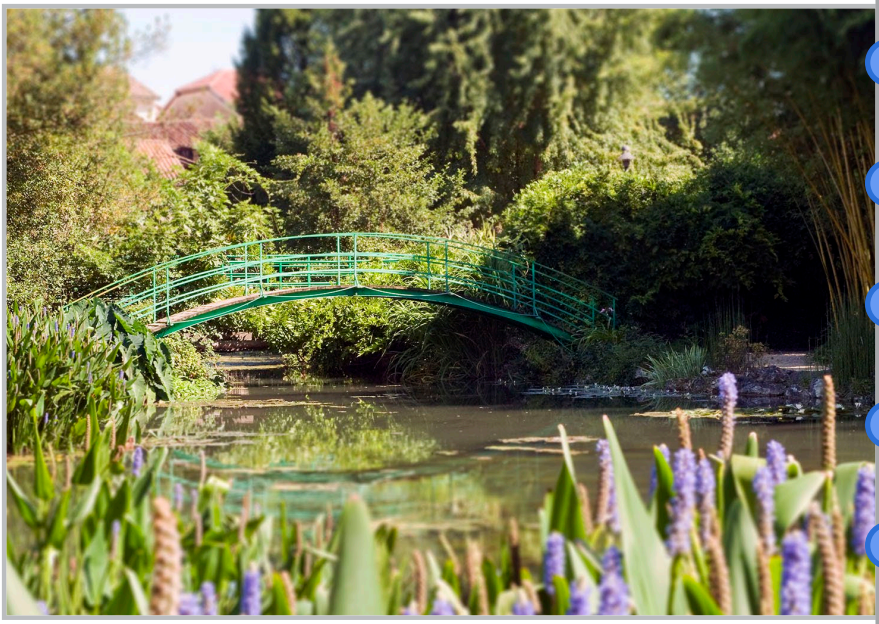
- During his painting expeditions on the coast, Monet would set up numerous easels with canvasses and move from one to the other to catch the light at different times of the day—a technique he also used in the 30 or so paintings of Rouen Cathedral and the haystacks near his home at Giverny.

- Arguably Monet's most celebrated works were produced at the place he called home, Giverny in rural Normandy.[7C] The village of Giverny is 50 miles northwest of Paris and is the second most popular site of pilgrimage in Normandy—the most popular being Mont-Saint-Michel, with its religious pilgrims. Giverny has drawn those more interested in a secular pilgrimage ever since Monet bought a house here in 1883 and started extending his garden 10 years later.

- One of the most dazzling features of Monet's garden that visitors come to see is the famous water lily pond, spanned by a Japanese† -inspired bridge that invites visitors to gaze at all manner of reflections in the water below. Standing on the Japanese bridge, taking in the colors of the garden and the play of light and shade, is probably the closest anyone could ever get to walking through a painting by Claude Monet.

TRAVEL TIP

Because of the number of visitors who now flock to Monet's home at Giverny, parts of the gardens have been closed to foot traffic and thus have to be admired from a distance.



† Monet was fascinated by Japanese representations of the natural world, including the sea, and by their images of landscapes.

Culinary Traditions of the Region

- Although Normandy is not a wine region, its gentle temperate climate and excellent farmland make it one of the key dairy centers in France. Dairy makes its way into many of the local specialties, even closer to the coast, where cream sauces find their way onto fish and seafood dishes.

- If you like soft cheese, then Normandy is your Mecca, and the heart of cheese country is an area called the Pays d'Auge, inland from the Côte Fleurie,[7D] the flatter coastline near Deauville. The most famous of all, the camembert, hails from the region and, more specifically, from the tiny village of Camembert.[7E]

- Official camembert has Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) status, reserved to protect the finest wines (including champagne), cheeses, and butters from imitations not made or produced at their home source, or *terroir*.

- Official camembert comes in a small wooden box stamped with "Camembert de Normandie" and is made by following a time-honored process where curds are added in five stages. It will have been produced in Normandy, using the raw milk from Normande cows.

- If camembert is the king of Norman cheeses, there is a distinguished royal family in close attendance, including Livarot (which is especially pungent), Pont l'Évêque (which is especially creamy), and from the nearby Pays de Bray, the venerable Neufchâtel.

- Normandy is also famous for its orchards, which produce the apples that make their way, directly and indirectly, into many local dishes. *Tarte de pommes à la Normande* is a favorite local dessert and a staple of most Norman pâtisseries. Cider, produced locally, can be drunk in two

TRAVEL TIP

The Musée du Camembert de Vimoutiers,[7F] three miles from the eponymous village, has an exhibit of camembert labels from around the globe and as far away as Japan, New Zealand, and Chile.

varieties: doux (sweet) and brut (dry). It also finds its way into the preparation of meat dishes such as *tripes à la mode de Caen*, where meat and vegetables are cooked slowly in cider to impart a sweet flavor.

- The other great apple-related beverage is Calvados, a strong apple brandy and another AOC-protected item. Like the celebrated cheeses, the finest Calvados is produced inland in the rural Pays d'Auge. It can be used in savory sauces and sweet desserts, and a *tarte de pommes flambée* with Calvados should both look and taste spectacular. It can also be found as a filling in chocolates.

- Calvados can be drunk straight as an aperitif, during a meal between courses, with a coffee as the celebrated café-calva combination, or as a digestif after a good meal. Like Camembert, Calvados is produced in official and less official forms. Commercially produced Calvados marked AOC should be consistently good.

Mont-Saint-Michel

- Located on the border between Normandy and Brittany, Mont-Saint-Michel[7G] is arguably the most recognizable location in France outside of Paris. At the southern base of the Cotentin Peninsula, it looks like a castle topped by a church perched on top of an enormous granite rock in the middle of a sandy bay. Depending on the time of day, it can be completely surrounded by water or standing out from the exposed tidal sand of the bay. Many French call it the eighth Wonder of the World, and it is a premier UNESCO World Heritage site.

- In the early 8th century, Aubert, bishop of nearby Avranches, had a vision where the archangel Saint Michael (Saint Michel) commanded him to build a shrine in his name on the island of Mont-Tombe (Mount Tomb)‡ in the estuary of the river Couesnon. Aubert, later to become a saint, obeyed the order and built a small chapel on the rock.

7G

‡ The earlier Celts had given the island this name because it was believed that the souls of the dead were transported there.

- In the 10th century, the duke of Normandy ordered the construction of a Benedictine abbey, a building so splendid that it was featured in a scene of the Bayeux Tapestry. The abbey of Saint-Michel was becoming a prominent center of ecclesiastical learning, and thanks to the dynamism of abbots such as Hildebert in the 11th century, it became a major attraction for pilgrims.

- In the 13th century, construction on the most recognizable features of the abbey began, at considerable cost. The engineering involved in transforming the Romanesque abbey into a superb Gothic one is truly astonishing. Between 1203 and 1228, the Merveille (or Marvel), a three-story monastic complex, was built.

- The abbey was in its heyday, but France was not a peaceful place in the Middle Ages. During the Hundred Years' War between France and England, it was felt that defenses were needed to keep the English at bay, despite the fact that Mont-Saint-Michel was an island. Thus, ramparts and fortified towers were built, giving the island more of the fortress look it has today.

- The following centuries saw a decline of the abbey, and during the revolution, its purpose was changed again as it became a prison for refractory clergy and other political prisoners. Extensive changes were made to accommodate the new residents in appalling conditions, and under the revolution, it was one of the most notorious places to be incarcerated. The decline


Mont-Saint-Michel

ended after Napoléon III closed it as a prison for common criminals in 1863, leaving just a shell as a reminder of its former glories.

- The abbey was declared a national monument in 1874. Under the direction of the architect Victor Petitgrand, the abbey was restored, and the spire and statue of Saint Michel were added at the end of the 19th century. Mont-Saint-Michel was again a site of pilgrimage—but these visitors included tourists who came to wonder at the spectacular architecture as well as those who came for spiritual edification.

- A solid causeway was built over the sands to allow the approximately 2.5 million annual visitors access to the island. Built in the late 19th century, the causeway provided easy access to the island, but it also threatened its very existence. Sediment carried by the immense tides, along with a dam on the river Couesnon, was silting up the bay and threatening to landlock the island. To avert this crisis, Austrian architect Dietmar Feichtinger was commissioned to build a bridge to the mount that would allow water to flow freely all around it and help to make it an island again. Completed in 2014, this major project[§] included a new smart dam on the Couesnon with fish ladders for the salmon and barriers to stop the silt from draining back into the bay.

Resources

Print

Brettell, *Monet in Normandy*.

Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*.

Museyon Guides, *Art + Paris Impressionists & Post-Impressionists*.

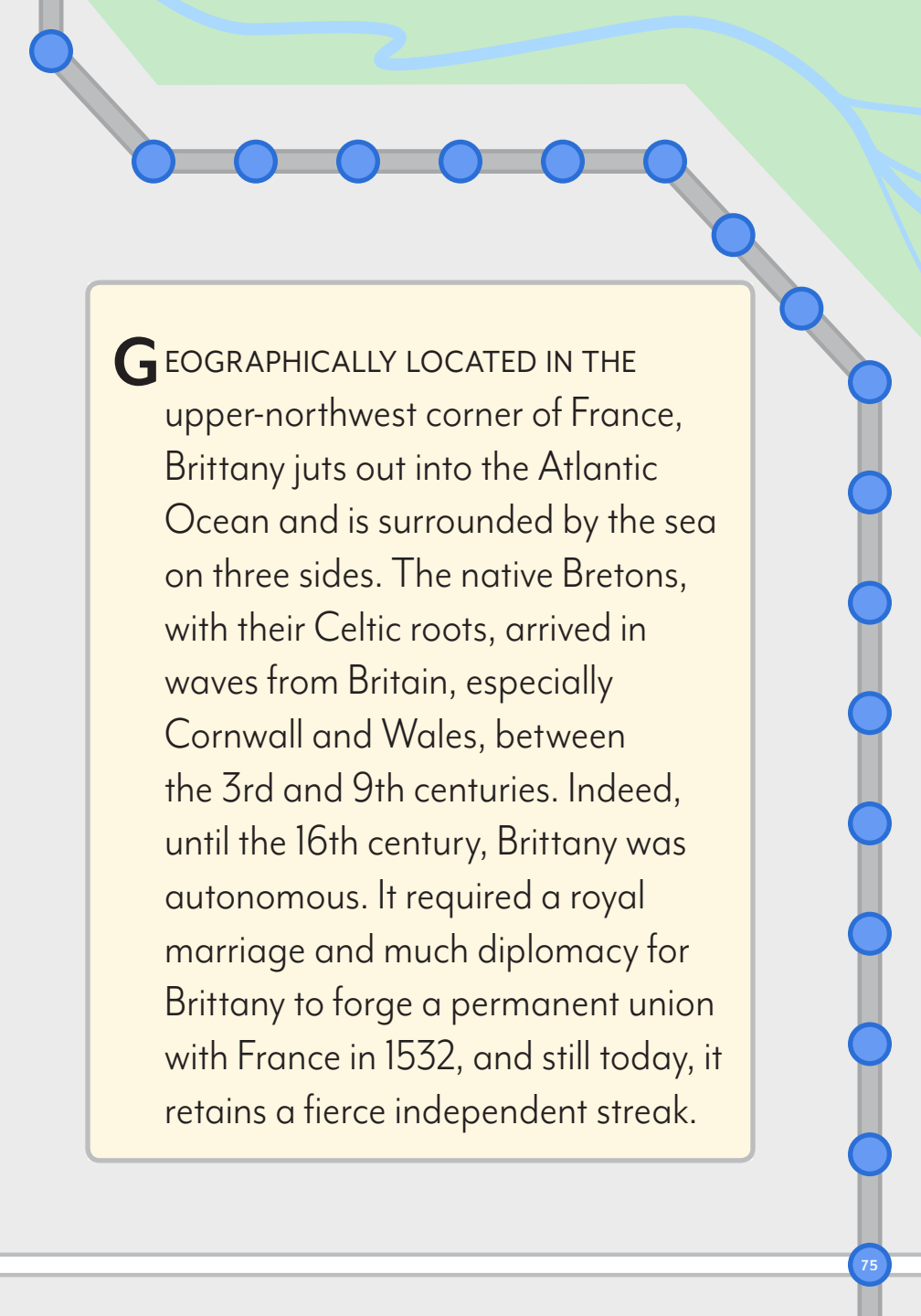
Web

http://www.abbaye-mont-saint-michel.fr/en/ (Mont-Saint-Michel tourist website)

§ The project cost nearly 300 million dollars.

8

Brittany: The Wild West



GEOGRAPHICALLY LOCATED IN THE upper-northwest corner of France, Brittany juts out into the Atlantic Ocean and is surrounded by the sea on three sides. The native Bretons, with their Celtic roots, arrived in waves from Britain, especially Cornwall and Wales, between the 3rd and 9th centuries. Indeed, until the 16th century, Brittany was autonomous. It required a royal marriage and much diplomacy for Brittany to forge a permanent union with France in 1532, and still today, it retains a fierce independent streak.

Saint-Malo

- Just a few miles from Mont-Saint-Michel, the city of Saint-Malo[8A] represents many aspects of Breton life: a willful independence and an attachment to the sea. Founded in the 6th century and named after a Welsh cleric, the city grew wealthy via sea trade and piracy. Saint-Malo was the home port of many of the infamous corsairs, essentially pirates licensed by the French crown to harass and extort foreign vessels in the nearby English Channel and beyond.

- The original city walls and the forbidding Grand Donjon date from the 12th century. Although they had been refurbished and updated in the 14th century, the Sun King Louis XIV felt that war with the British and Dutch at the end of the 17th century meant that the defenses required a major beef-up, and a military architect named Sébastien Vauban was his man. Warfare had changed, and the development of artillery required much stronger and more strategically placed fortifications to protect major ports and cities.

- The results are the fine ramparts that we can stroll down today, along with a series of forts, some of which are accessible at low tide: the Fort National,[8B] the Fort du Grand Bé[8C] (begun earlier but completed by Vauban), the Fort du Petit Bé,[8D] and the Fort de la Varde,[8E] with the Fort de la Conchée,[8F] now a nature reserve, farther out to sea.

- That the Germans would have used these defenses as part of their Atlantic Wall during World War II is a testament to their quality and strength. And although they were heavily bombarded in 1944, their restoration—and indeed that of much of the Ville Intra-Muros, as the interior of the walled city is known—has been excellent.

Saint-Brieuc and Douarnenez

- Let's leave the walls of Saint-Malo behind and head out into the wilds of Brittany, to the northern coast of the département called the Côtes-d'Armor near Saint-Brieuc.[8G] Like the bays around Mont-Saint-Michel and Saint-Malo, the bay of Saint-Brieuc is deeply impacted by the strong tides, which drains the sea a long way from the shoreline. There are many pretty seaside resorts and small fishing ports in the area. One is Binic,[8H] a very small town that's attractive and has a great deal of charm.

- In the 19th century, Binic thrived as a fishing port. As tourism developed in the 20th century, two main beaches were developed in the town: The Plage de la Banche[8I] is the largest and has the best facilities for families, while the hidden Plage de l'avant-Port[8J] is accessed through a narrow causeway or a rock tunnel. You get a magnificent view of some rugged coastline to the north and the outer harbor wall and lighthouse to the south.

- Outside peak vacation times, the Plage de l'avant-Port can be completely deserted and can feel like a private beach. But this often happens in smaller coastal communities in Brittany, which draws fewer sun worshippers and beachgoers than the Mediterranean because the weather is less predictable.

TRAVEL TIP

If you're looking to relax away from the hustle and bustle of big-city tourism, Binic and the other coastal resorts in the vicinity are just perfect.

- The population of towns like Binic grows over the summer as tourists visit and the owners of vacation properties migrate from the cities. Owning a second home is still very popular for the wealthy French. Since the 18th century, younger generations have moved to the big cities to find opportunities and work, leaving the older generations back in the provinces. Often, these properties once belonged to a senior family member and are now kept in the family and used as holiday homes for the offspring.

- If the bay of Saint-Brieuc has some impressive scenery, the bay of Douarnenez[8K] in Finistère boasts the most spectacular and rugged coastline in the area. The French equivalent of Cornwall's Land's End, the nearby Pointe du Raz[8L] is the westernmost tip of France. You're almost guaranteed to see giant waves pounding against the rocks as the Pointe du Raz rises up 250 feet out of the sea and is a contrast to the generally more sheltered southern coast of Brittany.


Pointe du Raz

Although Brittany is very much a part of France today—in its history, its culture, its architecture, its cuisine, and its own flag and Breton language—it is not necessarily French. A recent survey found that roughly half of Bretons view themselves as primarily French, as opposed to roughly a third who consider themselves primarily Breton.

Quimper and Lorient

- As we travel east along the southern coast, we can contrast two cities that have experienced very different histories: Quimper and Lorient.*

- Quimper[8M] is slightly inland and is very close to the Pays Bigouden, a peninsula famous for the traditional Breton headgear generally worn by elderly ladies. *Coiffes* are headdresses, traditionally white in color, that are to be worn on special occasions but can also be seen on a daily basis. These female headdresses are a key part of Breton identity.

- Quimper has a proportionately higher percentage of Breton speakers, and other elements of Breton culture are treasured here, too, especially in the culinary domain. Specifically, Quimper has many fine crêperies to choose from.

8M

* *Lorient* means "the Orient" or "the East" in French.

TRAVEL TIP

Breton crêperies are plentiful, and nearly all are independent or family-run. This means that there can be a variation in quality, so when arriving in a new location, find out where the local crêpe aficionados hang out. It may be worth a short wait to get a table at a busier place.

- French people agree that crêpes (made with wheat flour) are a Breton specialty and are generally sweet and light, served with sweet toppings or fillings, whereas galettes (made with buckwheat) are darker and accompanied by savory meats and/or cheeses. But the Bretons themselves are bitterly divided over what to call their local delicacy. In the north and east of Brittany, crêpes are differentiated from galettes, but in the west and south, they're all called crêpes, whether savory or sweet. The one thing that all Bretons agree on is that crêpes are best enjoyed accompanied by a bowl of local cider.

- Quimper is a very pretty town to visit, with much of historical interest, including a whole neighborhood, Vieux Quimper, which is full of quaint narrow streets, half-timbered houses, shops, and restaurants. It has also been a center for hand-painted pottery since the 17th century, and much of the town's income appears to come from tourism.

- Contrast this with Lorient,[8N] some 40 miles farther east and on the coast. Unlike Quimper, with its medieval vestiges still proudly visible, Lorient's history has been much more difficult. It was completely flattened in World War II, but its story and dynamism make it a compelling place to visit.

- In the 17th century, Lorient developed as a new town, a place to build ships and provide warehouses for the French East India Company. It soon grew into a major French port city, with its city laid out on a grid and many beautiful buildings—some designed by famed architect Jacques Gabriel—built from the wealth generated by trade. The French navy also saw the value

8N

of Lorient as a base,† both for its ships and their repair, so the city continued to grow.

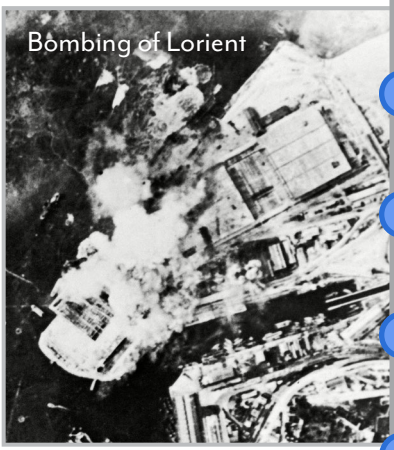
- But World War II happened and Lorient was changed forever. In the summer of 1940, the Germans took only six weeks to conquer France, and five new bases were built, with Lorient being the largest and most important. By the fall of 1940, facilities at the port of Lorient were converted to accommodate submarines. The base in the Keroman neighborhood of Lorient—made up of more than a million cubic meters of concrete—is considered to be the most important construction in any Nazi-occupied country during World War II.

- In early 1943, many civilians left Lorient when the Allies bombed the town, leaving very little of the town standing. Remarkably, because of the strategic importance of the port, the encircled "Lorient pocket" only surrendered on May 10, 1945, months after the surrounding area had been liberated. A plaque to mark this event is located near the train station.

- The city of Lorient was awarded both the Légion d'honneur and the Croix de Guerre for what it went through in World War II. It also had to cope with the radical urban planning that was required to rebuild the city in perhaps too much haste after the war.

TRAVEL TIP

After World War II and until 1997, the Lorient base was taken over and used by the French navy. It is now open to the public and is quite the tourist attraction.



Bombing of Lorient

† The Lorient base was capable of housing, repairing, and reequipping up to 30 submarines at a time and hosted 15,000 to 20,000 sailors and workers from throughout Nazi-occupied Europe.

- Each August, over 10 days, Lorient hosts one of the major events in the Celtic calendar: the Festival Interceltique, which draws up to 800,000 visitors from all over the globe and features music, exhibitions, sporting competitions, and performances from a wide variety of artists.

- An entertaining and slightly offbeat thing to do in Lorient is to take the bus, especially when it also involves taking a boat trip. Lorient's transit system includes water-buses, which regularly transport travelers across the bay from Lorient to near Port Louis, a 16th-century citadel where the French East India Company was founded.[80] It's practical for the locals because it's much quicker and more economical than a long drive around the bay, and tourists get an excellent sea view of the submarine base, the *port de pêche* (commercial fishing port), the sailing marinas, and the lovely beaches.

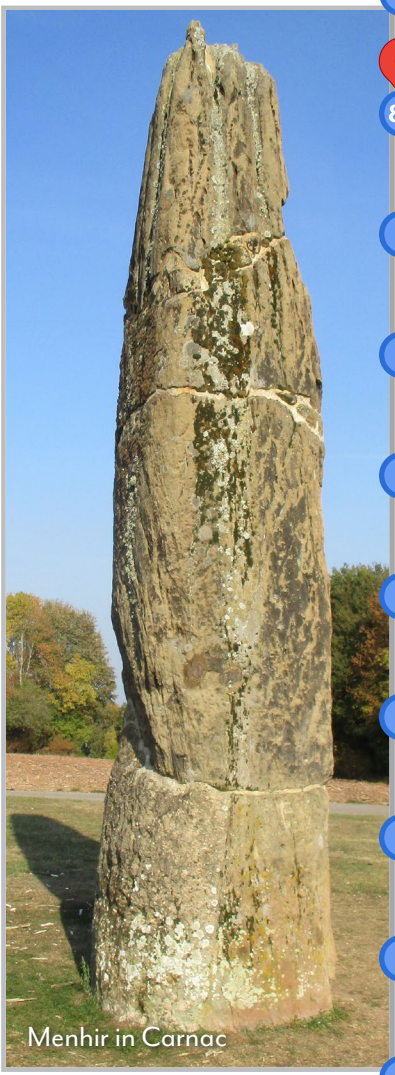
- Fishing is also a very big deal in Lorient, home to a large commercial fishing fleet, and it's an excellent place to find good seafood. Fish markets are numerous in the area, and many restaurants take advantage of the local catch to offer some excellent seafood options.

Festival Interceltique

Carnac

- Our last port of call on our Breton excursion takes us farther along the southern coast of Brittany and into the mists of time. The megaliths of Carnac[8P] are large granite stones that are thought to date back to around 4,000 BCE. And there are thousands of them in the area, organized in mysterious patterns—so while they may at first look less spectacular than the prehistoric arrangement at Stonehenge, they are especially impressive in their quantity.

- Menhirs are the most common standing stones, whereas dolmens are a formation of at least three stones, with one forming a covering or roof for a burial chamber. Both *menhir* and *dolmen* are Breton words and show the affinity of the Celts for the pre-Christian and prehistoric peoples who preceded them here.



Menhir in Carnac

Resources

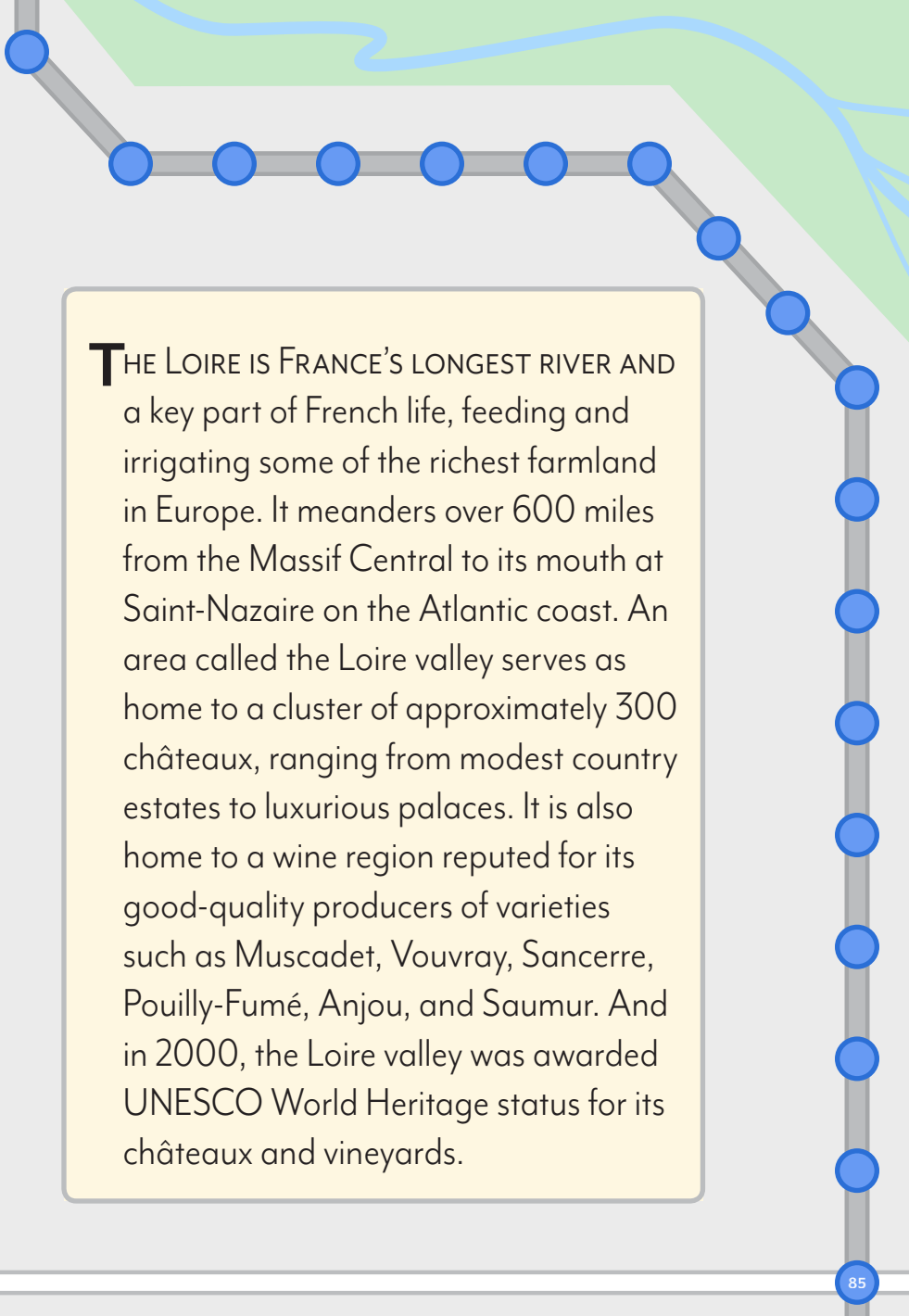
Print

Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*.

Piette, *Brittany*.

9

The Loire Valley: Among the Châteaux



The Loire is France's longest river and a key part of French life, feeding and irrigating some of the richest farmland in Europe. It meanders over 600 miles from the Massif Central to its mouth at Saint-Nazaire on the Atlantic coast. An area called the Loire valley serves as home to a cluster of approximately 300 châteaux, ranging from modest country estates to luxurious palaces. It is also home to a wine region reputed for its good-quality producers of varieties such as Muscadet, Vouvray, Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, Anjou, and Saumur. And in 2000, the Loire valley was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status for its châteaux and vineyards.

Notre-Dame de Chartres

- The third of the great cathedrals from the same medieval building boom—the other two being the Notre-Dame de Paris and the Notre-Dame de Reims—is the Notre-Dame de Chartres.[9A] If you only visit one cathedral in France, it has to be the UNESCO World Heritage site of Chartres.

- Most of the windows—and there are nearly 200—date from the 13th century. These windows are not only beautiful, bathing the interior in gorgeous light, especially the cobalt blue color known as bleu de Chartres, or Chartres blue. They also all tell stories, mainly from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

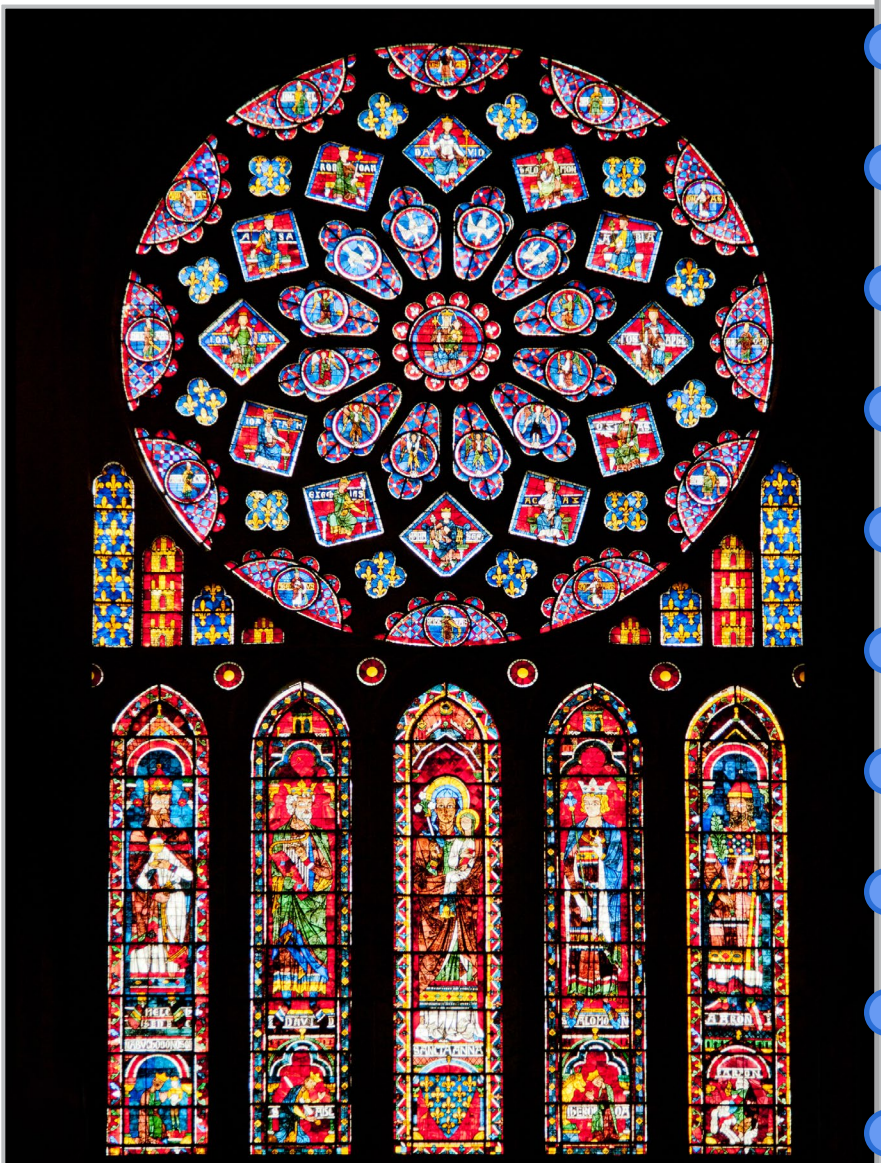
- As in many cathedrals of the period, the large rose windows are the most prominent, and Chartres has three spectacular examples: the west rose window, which features the Last Judgement with Christ in the center; the north rose window, where the Virgin Mary is encircled by kings and prophets; and the south rose window, which features the Apocalypse, with Christ again as the focal point.

- The celebrated masterpiece of stained glass called *Notre-Dame de la Belle Verrière*, or the *Blue Virgin* window, is found on the south side of the choir. The three central panels date from the 12th century and depict the Virgin Mary with Jesus on her lap. The panels at the base of the window illustrate the wedding feast at Cana and the first miracle performed by Jesus, who transforms water into wine at the request of his mother.

9A

TRAVEL TIP

Reading the windows can make your visit to Notre-Dame de Chartres even more rewarding, and the basic rule of thumb is to read each panel from left to right and from the bottom (the earthly experience) to the top (Heaven). You might benefit from a guide to familiarize yourself with the biblical stories.



North Rose Window

Architectural Masterpieces of the Renaissance

- If the windows of Chartres can give a deep sense of calm and serenity, the medieval world outside the cathedral was far from peaceful. As a result of the Hundred Years' War between France and England, great swathes of the country were under English control during the late Middle Ages, and Paris, as the capital and a center of wealth and power, was viewed as a major prize.

- French King Charles VII was forced to flee Paris, so the French court was established at a safe distance in the Loire valley,[9B] where many fortress strongholds had already been built centuries before to keep those land-grabbing Normans in check, among other marauders. So, if there are so many prominent châteaux in the Loire valley, you could say that the English are partially responsible, as the royal French court moved around the best estates in the area.

- In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Charles VIII, and later François I, led campaigns to Italy and were widely impressed by what they saw there. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire is widely regarded as a key event that kick-started the Renaissance in western Europe as documents and treasures from Constantinople made their way to Italy. Items that had been lost over the centuries in the West were now rediscovered and pored over in depth by a new generation of scholars and intellectuals.

- Many of these thinkers thirsted for the wisdom found in original Roman, Greek, and Hebrew documents, rather than their bowdlerized, or adapted, versions. French nobles saw and appreciated this great cultural revolution firsthand and brought many of those individuals behind it back to France with them, including Leonardo da Vinci, who is reputed to have brought along the *Mona Lisa*.

- The beautiful, modern palaces of Italy were a far cry from the dour, thick-walled defenses found in many châteaux forts of the medieval era. They were pleasure palaces, designed for luxury, comfort, and an appealing appearance rather than any strategic military function, and they inspired a wave of new building in France. Today, no place has a greater concentration

of these architectural masterpieces of the Renaissance than the Loire valley.

- Two of the most celebrated are Azay-le-Rideau and Chenonceaux, both of which were built at around the same time near the start of the 16th century. Gunpowder had transformed warfare as artillery (and especially canons) became more accurate, reliable, and devastating, so châteaux forts were no longer viable as an effective means of defense. Thus, comfort and esthetics were now the key factors in their design.

- Azay-le-Rideau[9C] looks more like something from a fairy tale than an imposing monolith designed to inspire fear. The roof is steep and lends a Gothic aspect to the building, but it is clearly a Renaissance château—with large, ornately carved windows intended to let light in rather than keep arrows out. The water surrounding the château, although it harks back to a fortress's protective moat, is clearly intended to function as a mirror, offering a gorgeous reflection when viewed from the outside and actually making the château appear larger than it really is.


Château d'Azay-le-Rideau

- Philippa Lesbahy, wife of a royal finance minister, was the driving force in Azay-le-Rideau's design and construction. The interior was original, too, with one of the first staircases built into the building rather than as a separate stair tower. Beauty does come at a cost, though, and when Philippa's husband fled France to avoid a financial scandal in 1527, François I took possession of Azay-le-Rideau for the French crown.

- Chenonceaux[9D] is arguably even more beautiful than Azay-le-Rideau. Instead of having a moat around it, it's actually built across the river Cher, a tributary of the Loire. Like Azay-le-Rideau, women played a key role in its design and construction, and it was passed into royal hands as the result of a scandal involving a finance minister. Also like Azay-le-Rideau, it's a far cry from an austere, medieval castle keep.

- Begun by Thomas Bohier and overseen by his wife Catherine, the first stage involved the construction of a gorgeous pavilion in the river on the site of an old water mill. After Thomas's death, he was posthumously found guilty of financial impropriety, and their son was forced to hand the keys over to the crown. After several years of service as a royal hunting lodge, François's successor, Henri II, gave Chenonceaux to his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, who left her mark by building an arched 60-yard long bridge over the river to the far bank. This gift did not go down particularly well with Henri's wife, Catherine de' Medici.*

9D

* Catherine de' Medici has been called the most influential woman in 16th-century Europe.

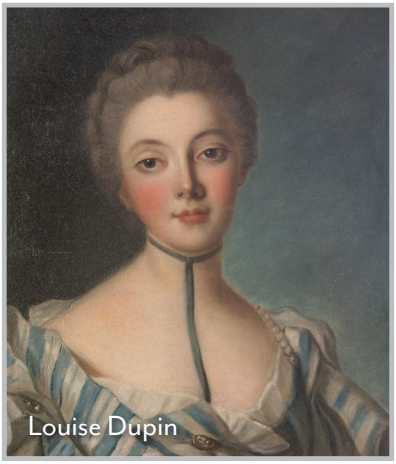
Château de Chenonceaux

Upon Henri's accidental death in a joust in 1559, Catherine forced Diane to take another château and give up Chenonceaux. Queen Catherine, now serving as regent, set to work to leave her mark on the building, and she is responsible for what is arguably the great signature feature of Chenonceaux: the Grande Galerie, an Italian-inspired feature built on top of Diane's bridge. With its large windows and black-and-white tiled floor, the gallery appears almost endless as it extends into the distance. And from the outside, this gallery, attributed to the architect Jean Bullant, almost looks like it is floating above the river.

The Grande Galerie

TRAVEL TIP

Azay-le-Rideau and Chenonceaux are just two prime examples of the hundreds of châteaux of the Loire. As one of the largest and most spectacular châteaux, Chambord, begun by François I and completed by Louis XIV, is also worth a visit.


Louise Dupin

- Another groundbreaking woman, Louise Dupin, saved Chenonceaux from possible destruction during the revolution. As a noted *salonnière*, Madame Dupin had hosted many events at Chenonceaux and had even welcomed the revolutionary hero Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Since Rousseau had attained cult status, this particular château, although a symbol of the decadence of the ancien régime, was spared.

Industrial Revolution in Nantes

- It may seem strange to say that a town 50 kilometers from the coast was once France's largest port and a major center for French shipbuilding, but such is the case of the city of Nantes.[9E] Perched on the banks of the Loire, it had long been an important city in strategic terms and was the capital city for the dukes of Brittany before Anne de Bretagne married into the French royalty in the 16th century and France and Brittany merged. The subsequent centuries saw major expansions in maritime trade, and Nantes grew wealthy on the proceeds.

- Not all of this trade is viewed positively today, and Nantes is important as a city that has recognized its past role in the slave trade. A major modern monument to the abolition of slavery is located along the north bank of the Loire,[9F] near the same location where the slave ships docked from the 17th through 19th centuries as part of a triangular journey from Nantes, to Africa, to the Caribbean, and then back to France.

- The nearby neighborhood of Feydeau[9G] is evidence today of the immense wealth generated by maritime trade. Once an island but now joined to the north bank of the river, the quartier Feydeau features rows of beautiful 18th-century townhouses† celebrated for their *mascarons*, stone door and window ornaments portraying mythological maritime figures and trade items.

- The Feydeau neighborhood was also the birthplace of one of Nantes's most famous sons: the father of science fiction, Jules Verne. A museum named in his honor[9H] sits atop a hill overlooking the site of the former shipyards. A nearby statue shows a young Jules Verne casting an admiring glance at the intrepid Captain Nemo, armed with his sextant, about to embark on an intrepid adventure. Verne's skill in conjuring up fantasy worlds and strange animals makes him the most translated French author.

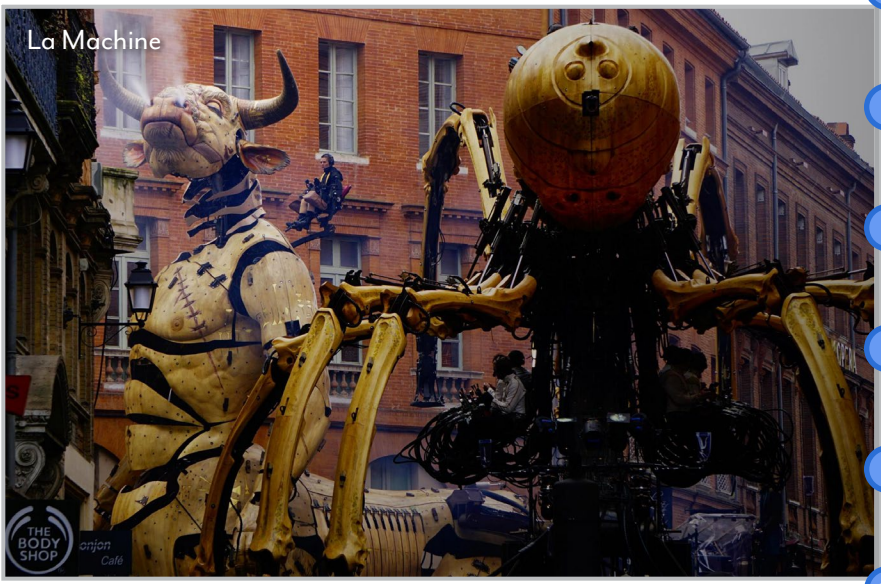
Jules Verne

† Built on extremely soft, sandy soil, many of the buildings have sunk over the years, and several now look rather precariously perched on their foundations.

- The influence of Jules Verne and his creations also looms large in the work of La Machine, where larger-than-life mechanical creatures roam free and fly through the air next to the branches of a mechanical tree made up of an ingenious hybrid of metal and living vegetation. What was once an industrial wasteland, called the Île de Nantes, is now part of a 19th-century science fiction theme park.[91]

- A few decades ago, Nantes, with its shipbuilding gone, was in danger of sinking into a postindustrial morass, but it has been successfully regenerated. The reappropriation of derelict land in Nantes as a location for the display and appreciation of public art shows how the French greatly value both their heritage and their culture and are prepared to generously fund both.

- Nantes and the Loire valley are not simply a region that appeals to the visual senses; there is also much to attract both the gourmand and the wine connoisseur. With its fertile soil and moderate climate, the Loire region is perfect for the production of fine fruit, cereals, and vegetables.



La Machine

- Although perhaps less prestigious and expensive than some of the other established wine regions of France, many of the Loire wines offer a great deal to the curious locavore, and tours of vineyards, markets, and culinary events featuring top chefs are a feature of the region.
- If you like your white wine dry, crisp, light, fruity, and refreshing and prefer to consume it young, the Loire is the ideal place for you. And you don't even have to stray far from Nantes: The Pays Nantais is home to the Muscadet vineyards, the largest single-grape-variety area for white wine in the world.‡

Resources

Print

Duby, *The Age of Cathedrals*.

Frieda, *Catherine de Medici*.

Verne, *From the Earth to the Moon*.

Web

http://www.azay-le-rideau.fr/en/ (Château Azay-le-Rideau website)

https://www.chenonceau.com/en/ (Château de Chenonceaux website)

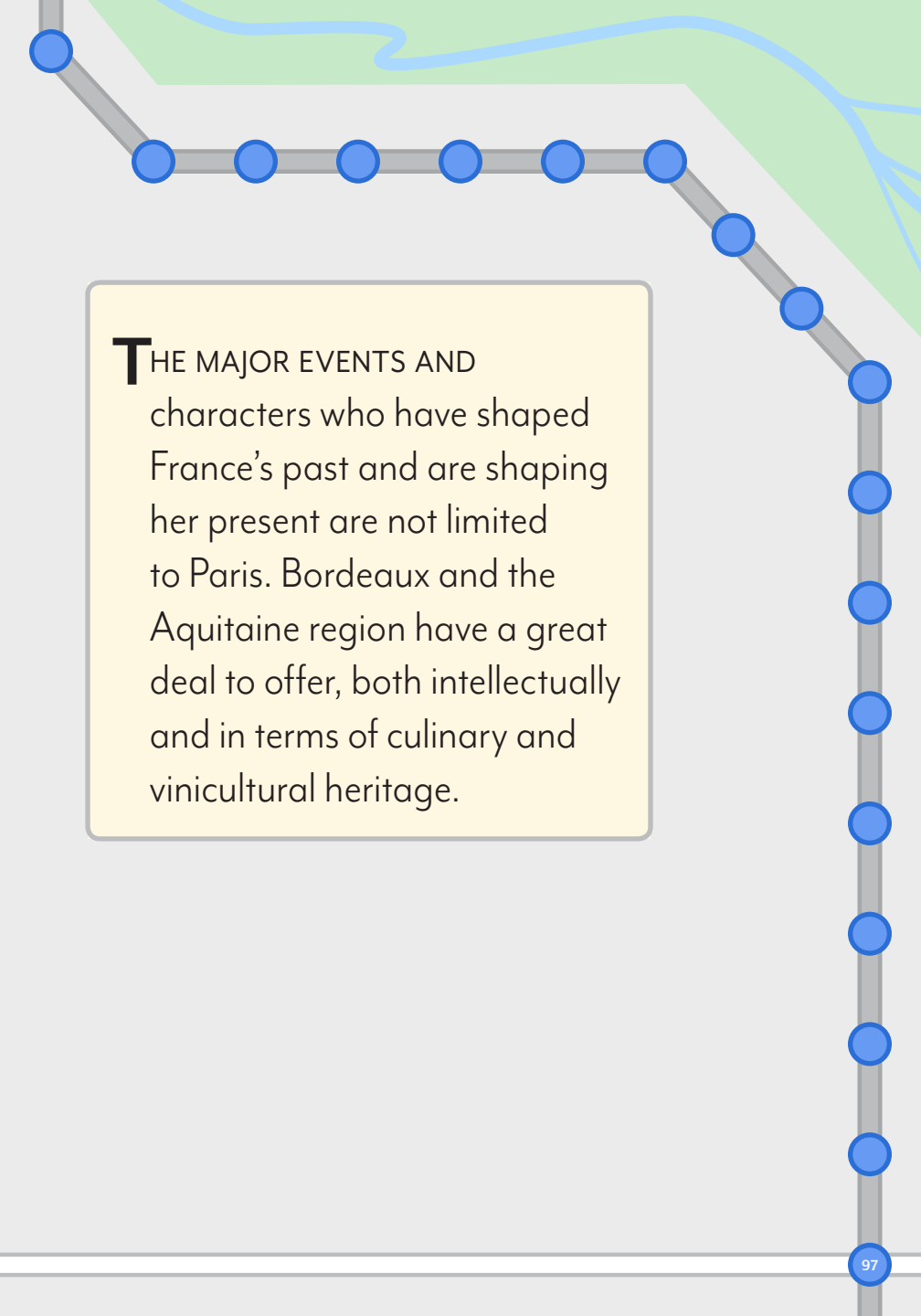
Film

Coco avant Chanel (Coco before Chanel)

‡ Muscadet is the perfect match for many of the fine seafood and local culinary specialties from the region of lower Brittany.

10

Bordeaux and the Coast of Aquitaine



THE MAJOR EVENTS AND characters who have shaped France's past and are shaping her present are not limited to Paris. Bordeaux and the Aquitaine region have a great deal to offer, both intellectually and in terms of culinary and vinicultural heritage.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

- In the Battle of Poitiers, Charles Martel defeated an invading 8th-century Saracen army, forcing them back toward Spain. He is viewed by many to have saved France and western Europe for Christianity. When you consider how far north Poitiers is in France today and add that this battle actually took place closer to Tours, even farther north, you get an idea of how fluid French territory was at the time.

- But the famous battle of 732 is not the only significant large-scale skirmish to have taken place near Poitiers. It was also the site of the major English victory of 1356 during the Hundred Years' War. What were English armies doing swanning around in central France at the time? They were trying to protect their power base in the southwestern region of Aquitaine. But why would they have a power base so far from England? Enter an extremely important woman: Eleanor of Aquitaine.*

- At the bottom of the east window of the 12th-century Cathédrale Saint-Pierre in Poitiers,[10A] a central panel depicts a man and a woman holding what looks like the model of a window. The couple in question are King Henry II of England and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had funded much of the cathedral.

Eleanor is frequently described as one of the most influential people in 12th-century Europe.

* Movie buffs will recall that an especially feisty Katherine Hepburn won an Oscar for Best Actress playing Eleanor in the 1968 film *The Lion in Winter.*

- Barely into her teens, Eleanor became duchess of Aquitaine on the death of her father and was married off to the Dauphin, or heir to the French throne. The Dauphin soon became King Louis VII, so his teenage wife was, as a consequence, queen of France. An essential function of any queen was to provide a male heir to the throne, and trouble brewed when no son was born during their marriage. Eleanor and Louis also failed to get along for other reasons, and both parties had at some stage sought divorce, which was granted in 1152.

- But Eleanor was not single for long; her title as duchess of Aquitaine made her very eligible. This was an extremely large and wealthy region, comprising most of the Atlantic coast south of Brittany as well as stretching far inland. It also included the wine-rich region of Bordeaux and the port of the same name.

- Eleanor was aware that she needed an heir to whom she could pass on her duchy and made advances to Henry Plantagenet, the young duke of Normandy and count of Anjou. They were married in the Cathédrale Saint-Pierre in Poitiers a few months later. Henry became King Henry II two years later, with Eleanor as his queen.

- Whereas Louis and Eleanor had produced two daughters over the 15-year span of their marriage, Henry and Eleanor went into offspring overdrive, with a further eight children, five of whom were boys. It seemed like they got along, but both Henry and Eleanor knew their minds and thus spent time apart, with Eleanor often in charge of their territories back in France.

- Henry placed her under house arrest for 15 years following her support of a rebellion to his rule led by their sons. Her son Richard the Lionheart released her when he became king of England on Henry's death, and she served as regent during his deployment as a crusader, securing the ransom for his release when he was held hostage in central Europe. Her final years were spent in her duchy in Aquitaine. She was a queen of England who spent a great deal of her life in France.

- King Henry II of England is buried not in Westminster Abbey in London, but in an abbey in Anjou, very near Poitiers. Lying next to him is his wife and queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine—proof that even the most turbulent of alliances can find peace together in the end.

- But the peace was not to last, and a little more than a hundred years later, the Hundred Years' War began. France was once again a battleground, as the royal houses of France and England laid claim to French territory and the French crown. Aquitaine was a region of France tied to the crown of England because of Eleanor and remained English until the 15th century. Her sons became dukes of Aquitaine, and the English court developed a taste for some of the finest produce of this region: the wines of Bordeaux.

The City and Region of Bordeaux

- The port city of Bordeaux[10B] is located some ways away from the sea situated near the Gironde estuary, on the most feasible crossing point of the river. The Romans brought winemaking to the region, but it was thanks to Eleanor and her alliance with Henry that Bordeaux wine production really took off—to quench the thirst of the nobility in England! Exports by sea only increased as the English possessions in the north of France were lost, and the port of Bordeaux grew rich, as we can see today from the many elegant buildings near the center of the city.
- The architecture of the 18th century found near the quayside in Bordeaux is impressive, especially the riverside Grande Façade,[10C] the majestic Place de la Bourse,[10D] and (a little farther into town, along the Cours du Chapeau Rouge) the elegant Grand Théâtre,[10E] designed by Victor Louis. The theater is considered a masterpiece of 18th-century classical architecture, with a great staircase that later inspired Charles Garnier's design for the Opéra de Paris. And with one of the largest wood-framed auditoriums in Europe, the Grand Théâtre has impeccable acoustics.

TRAVEL TIP

Outside France, wine drinkers tend to express a preference—and make a purchase—via the grape variety, but you can't do that in Bordeaux. Since the wines are lovingly and carefully blended, you need to know which château you prefer. And there are many different types of wine produced in the region.


Grand Théâtre

- These examples of Enlightenment architecture also show how the wealth generated by commerce and the arts, through the construction of the theater, can go hand in hand. The source of much of this wealth is the vineyards of the Bordeaux region. If the Romans started things off and the English nobility found the wine to their taste—even coining the word *claret* to describe the red wine of Bordeaux—the Dutch also played a part in making Bordeaux what it is today: the largest fine-wine region in France, and arguably the world.

- This region is generally very low lying and near the sea. Major efforts were made to drain the swampland of the Landes in the 17th century, and the Dutch, who were also eager consumers of the local wine, stepped in to reclaim large areas on what is called the left bank, opening it up for more vineyards.

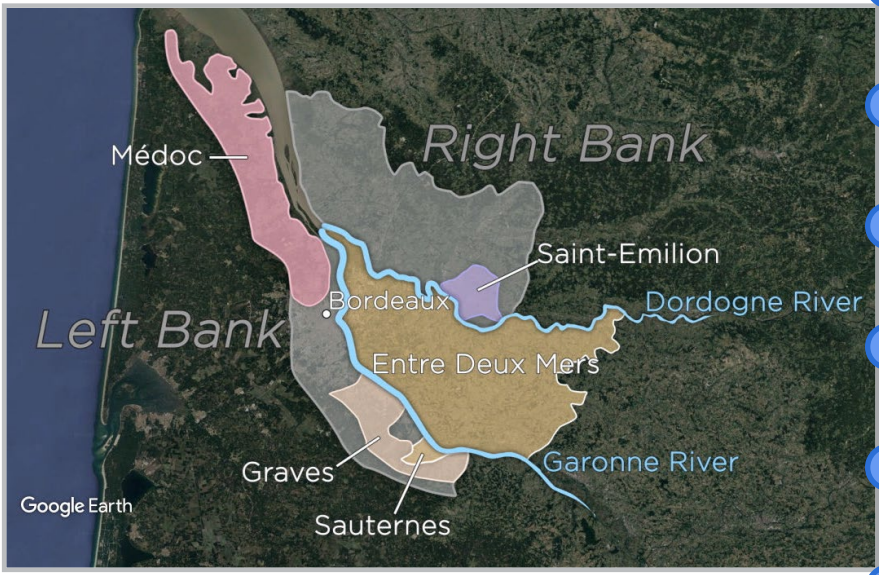
- After French vines were decimated by *Phylloxera*† in the 19th century, French vines were grafted onto hardier Missouri rootstock that offered resistance to the pests, and the wines of Bordeaux were

† A type of aphid that destroys vineyards.

saved. Thus, Bordeaux's standing as a premier fine-wine region is also thanks to international intervention.

- There are essentially three areas in the Bordeaux region: the left bank, which includes Médoc, Graves, and Sauternes; Entre-deux-Mers, which is the name given to the area between the Dordogne and Garonne Rivers; and the right bank, which includes Saint-Émilion.

- All Bordeaux wines are blends, with whites produced mainly from Sémillon and Sauvignon grapes and reds produced mainly from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc grapes, often with varying amounts of Malbec and Petit Verdot grapes included. Red wines are the dominant variety in the region, with the exception of Entre-deux-Mers.



Terroir: Identity and Quality of Wine

- The notion of *terroir* is extremely important to the French. The very name implies the earth, and that is a key factor in determining the identity of a wine. But *terroir* also refers to weather patterns; how the sun, winds, and rain impacted growth; drainage; and how the land has been worked and tended. These more intangible factors add up to make the differences between types of land and grape varieties essential elements of identity and quality.

- To the French, you can't just take a grape variety, put it in a similar soil type in a similar climate, and call the wine produced a Bordeaux. And this precious identity has to be protected, hence the development of Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC), managed today by the Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité (INAO).

- Initially brought in at the turn of the 20th century but developed in the 1930s, the institute limits the geographical area where a product is made, including rules for how it is processed and aged. To get the precious AOC label is quite the process. To give you an idea of the complexity, there are 57 different appellations for wines in the Bordeaux region, ranging from the general Bordeaux AOC to Bordeaux Supérieur AOC, with a slightly higher alcohol content and longer fermentation, and on to highly prestigious AOC, such as Château Margaux.‡

‡ A Château Margaux AOC can only be a red wine harvested from grapes in that specific *terroir* and then produced at that particular vineyard, or château. A white wine harvested in the same *terroir* and produced at Château Margaux would only be allowed a Bordeaux AOC label.

Vineyard in the Bordeaux region

- AOC is not the sole indication of quality and prestige in the region. The Bordeaux Wine Official Classification of 1855 ranked the finest wines of the area into five levels of *grand cru*, or "great growth." To be a *cru classé*, or "classified growth," estate on the 1855 list brought with it immense prestige, and to be a *premier cru*, or "first growth," estate, such as Château Margaux or Château Latour, was to ensure extremely high prices for your wines.

- But with more than 13,000 winegrowers in the region, it's fairly easy to find a good Bordeaux for even a modest budget. *Cru bourgeois* and wines from the Côtes de Bordeaux (on the right bank) are extremely good but often less expensive options among the finest that Bordeaux has to offer.

- Beyond the standard red and white wines produced in Bordeaux, you can also find quirkier wines, such as Sauternes, a very sweet wine that's generally drunk in small quantities with desserts, as an aperitif, or with foie gras or Roquefort. It is made with white-wine grapes that have been attacked by *Botrytis*, also known as noble rot. That this malady is reputedly brought on by seasonal mists only adds to the mysterious and magical aspect of Sauternes. The so-called rotten grapes concentrate the sugar during fermentation, imparting a very sweet taste to Sauternes, which comes to us from the Graves area and is often sold in half-size bottles.

- Just north of the Bordeaux region is the area called Cognac, where low-alcohol white wine is distilled and aged in oak barrels. Armagnac, another French brandy that's very similar to Cognac, can be found south of the Bordeaux region in Gascony. Both Cognac and Armagnac are especially appreciated as digestifs, or a way to help a good meal go down. Both are also protected by AOC status from counterfeiters, copiers, and imitators.

Resources

Print

Joseph, *French Wines*.

Phillips, *French Wine*.

Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*.

Web

http://archeologie.culture.fr/lascaux/en (Lascaux cave website; includes guided virtual tour)

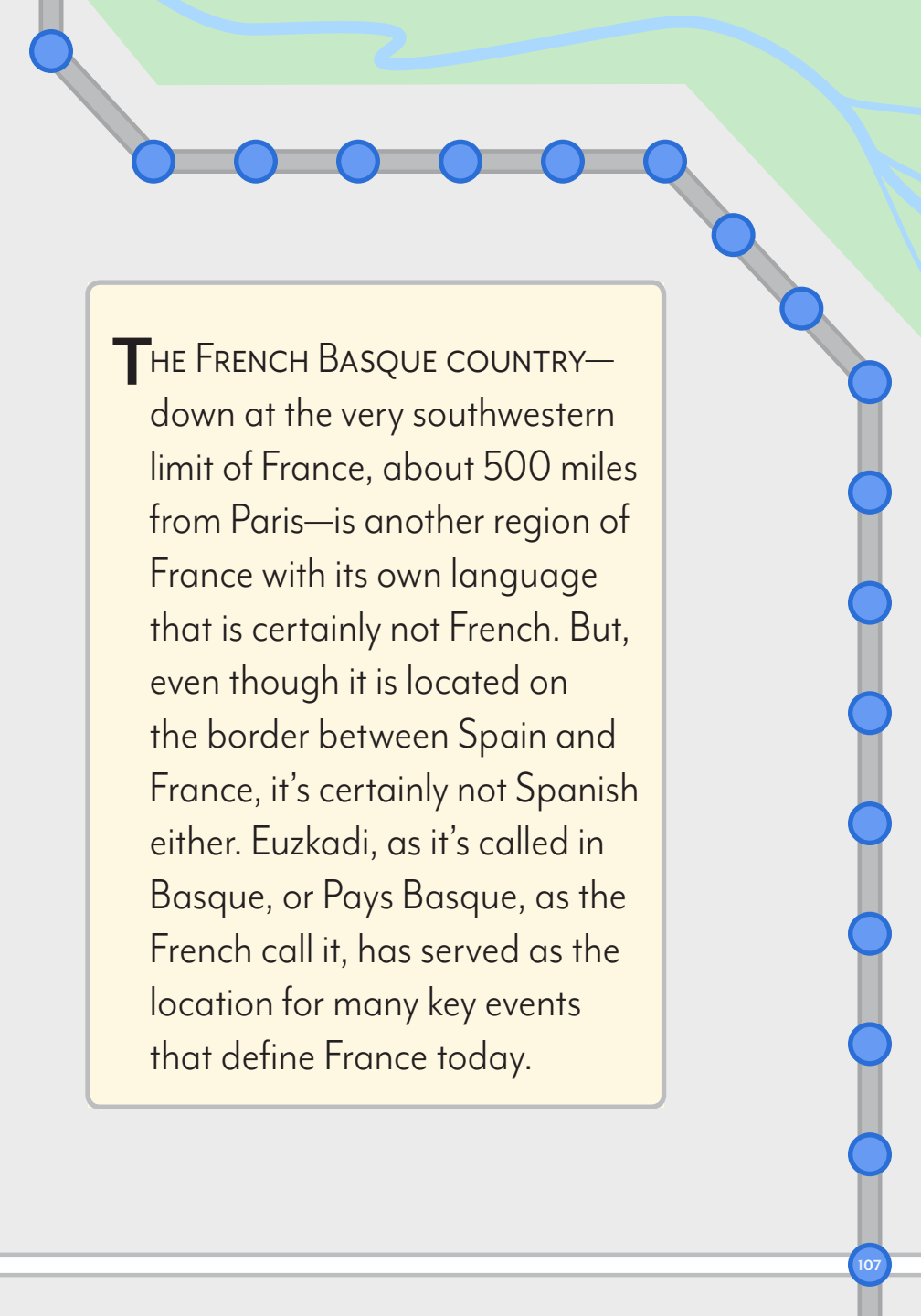
http://archeologie.culture.fr/chauvet/en (Chauvet-Pont d'Arc cave website; includes virtual tour)

Film

The Cave of Forgotten Dreams

11

The French Basque Region and the Pyrenees



THE FRENCH BASQUE COUNTRY—down at the very southwestern limit of France, about 500 miles from Paris—is another region of France with its own language that is certainly not French. But, even though it is located on the border between Spain and France, it's certainly not Spanish either. Euzkadi, as it's called in Basque, or Pays Basque, as the French call it, has served as the location for many key events that define France today.

The Basque Region

- The Basque region is split between Spain and France, with the much larger area on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees. There's a difference, too, in population, with around 300,000 on the French side, compared to almost 3 million in the more autonomous Basque region of Spain.

- But although they are separated by a mountain range, the connection between the two Basque regions runs deep. And while the Basque separatist group ETA carried out attacks in Spain in the late 20th century, their operatives were often able to lay low on the French side of the border, where calls for independence from France were less vociferous.

- DNA research has found that the Basques have their origin in migrating farmers from eastern Europe who arrived around 7,000 BCE and settled with the local Neolithic peoples. The Basques retain distinct genetic patterns that differentiate them from their French and Spanish neighbors. This group remained fairly isolated for millennia.

- Even the Basque language, Euskara, is described in linguistic terms as a language isolate, meaning that Basque is unrelated to any other language spoken in Europe—or anywhere else. Furthermore, Basque is the only pre-Indo-European language still in use in western Europe.

- The first written record of this group comes from the Romans, who describe a tribe they called the Vascones resident in the area. The Basques successfully fought off the Franks and Moors but became part of the duchy of Aquitaine and thus were ruled by the English for 300 years before becoming a part of France, without ever completely being French.

Bayonne

- Bayonne[11A] is described as the cultural and economic capital of the French Basque country. The stone-and-timbered whitewashed houses that line many of the streets inside the city walls are packed closely together to keep the frequently blazing sun off the streets. And with their red roof tiles and painted wooden shutters, these buildings are architecturally very different from houses found to the north.
- You may also see strings of brightly colored red peppers attached across walls and windows drying in the sun, adding further color to the scene. These are the famous *piment d'Espelette*, named after a nearby village, that add a unique spicy flavor to many of the local dishes. *Piment d'Espelette* finds its way into the two signature Basque specialties: the *piperade** and the *jambon de Bayonne*.†

* *Piperade* is a spicy vegetarian dish made with onion, green peppers, and tomatoes, sautéed with the *piment d'Espelette*.

† *Jambon de Bayonne*—ham prepared according to specific traditional methods—has its own European Union Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status.


Bayonne

The infamous bayonet is reputed to have been invented in Bayonne.

- But Bayonne is also a place to visit for those with a sweet tooth. It is a well-known center for fine chocolates and marzipan, with many excellent independent chocolatiers still thriving in the city—most especially, Daranatz[11B] and Cazenave,[11C] who have been in business for more than a century.

- Bayonne's location on one of the few passable roads near the Spanish border goes a long way to explain its economic and strategic importance. Like the cities of Nantes and Bordeaux, Bayonne was an inland port that was near the sea but protected from the dangers of being directly on the coast. As a port city, Bayonne thrived, especially during English control from the mid-12th to the mid-15th centuries.

- As both a key port and an important point for a land crossing into Spain, Bayonne drew covetous glances from many a military strategist from as early as Roman times, when a fortified city called Lapurdum was established on the location.

- Bayonne is estimated to have been under siege on no less than 14 occasions during its history, explaining why Louis XIV would send his top military architect, Sébastien Vauban,‡ to shore up the southwestern corner of his kingdom.

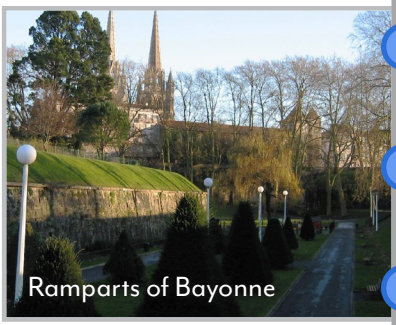
- In the early 1600s, floods had weakened or destroyed some of the fortifications of Bayonne that had been built during the English occupation, and Vauban stepped in, alongside engineer François Ferry, to leave his mark with the construction of the impressive citadel[11D] on the north side of the Adour River and the enhancement of the city ramparts[11E] around Grand and Petit Bayonne.

TRAVEL TIP

The citadel in Bayonne is part of the Basque Museum[11F] and can only be visited on special occations.

‡ The name Vauban has become synonymous with the best of 17th-century fortified architecture, as he was involved in designing the defenses of around 300 towns and cities.

- As you stroll along the ramparts, you will be amazed by the depth of the walls—they were designed to hold out against canon fire—as well as the glacis, or artificial slopes, intended to prevent undermining and make the walls more difficult to scale. The sharply angled ravelins, the signature element of the star fort, enabled defenders the chance to break up lines of attack and fire on adversaries from more favorable angles.


Ramparts of Bayonne

- The ramparts of Bayonne no longer have any current military or strategic function in protecting the city, but Bayonne is especially proud of having incorporated them as a key feature of the city, including parks, sports facilities, businesses, and even a university library. Their appropriation for use in the present and future of Bayonne is in many ways typically French, in that heritage, as a key aspect of culture, needs to be preserved, used, and enjoyed today.

Biarritz

- A mere five miles from the working city of Bayonne lies the leisure resort of Biarritz,[11G] but the two might as well be worlds apart. Biarritz had been a small whaling port until it became the hot tourist destination of the mid-to late 19th century, primarily due to the empress Eugénie, wife of the emperor Napoléon III.

- Empress Eugénie took a fancy to Biarritz because of its excellent beaches, cooled by Atlantic sea breezes in the summer, where she had spent many vacations as a child from her home country, Spain. Finding that winters in Biarritz also held appeal since they were much milder than in Paris, she had a palace§ built overlooking the Grande Plage in 1854.

§ Eugénie's palace was destroyed by fire in 1903 and was rebuilt as a luxury hotel. The current Hôtel du Palais, which stands on the site, was built in 1905 and retains its Belle Epoque splendor.

- Eugénie's presence made Biarritz of interest to other European crowned heads and aristocrats, including not only the French imperial court but also Prussians and the British royal family.

- Biarritz today retains its very visible debt of gratitude to Empress Eugénie by naming many features of the city after her, such as the grand and impressive Avenue de l'Impératrice (Avenue of the Empress) which leads to the lighthouse.[11H]

- The glory years of Biarritz among the royal set went into decline after World War I, when the noble and wealthy moved across to the Riviera and the resorts of Cannes and Nice. But it remains a tourist mecca today, with an estimated fivefold increase in population during the summer months.

- Biarritz is blessed with three fine beaches and is extremely popular with surfers, who come for what are reputedly the best waves in Europe. But surfing is not the only sport that is popular in Biarritz; this is France's rugby country. The full name of the local rugby club is Biarritz Olympique Pays Basque, which gives an indication of how important this identification with the region is to the city's club. The club is more than 100 years old and has featured many famous players, both homegrown and stars who have come to play from abroad.

There's very much a north-south divide over the popularity of rugby in France, with rugby the kingpin in the south of France. But even within the south, there are special hotbeds of rugby, and Biarritz is one of them.

Saint-Jean-de-Luz

- Our last coastal stop in the Basque region is the small fishing port of Saint-Jean-de-Luz,[111] located about 13 miles from Bayonne and Biarritz and just six miles from the border with Spain. It is the last sizeable town before the border and the site of an important royal wedding—that of Louis XIV of France, the Sun King of Versailles, and the Spanish infanta, or princess, Marie-Thérèse.

- Their marriage in 1660 was intended to cement a peace treaty, the Treaty of the Pyrenees, that had been made between France and Spain one year earlier. Geographically, Saint-Jean-de-Luz seemed midway between French and Spanish centers of power, so the royal couple were married in a provincial church, the Eglise Saint-Jean-Baptiste,[11J] rather than in a magnificent cathedral. Provincial as it may be, Saint-Jean-Baptiste is a very lovely Basque church with many appealing features, such as three elevated galleries overlooking the nave and a beautiful and elaborate 17th-century gold-painted altar.

Eglise Saint-Jean-Baptiste

- As you travel inland from Saint-Jean-de-Luz, you can see just how impressive the Pyrenees are and how they form a natural barrier between France and Spain. The small number of mountain passes become important crossing points as the traffic is funneled into a small area. A battle at one such point, Roncevaux Pass,[11K] served as the inspiration for one of the first masterpieces of French literature: the 12th-century *Chanson de Roland*, or *Song of Roland*.

- The best-known surviving manuscript was written in a variety of Old French called Anglo-Norman and comprises some 4,000 lines of poetry. *La Chanson de Roland* attempts to engage the reader with graphic descriptions of battle scenes between the Franks and the Moors. The epic poem is based on an actual historical skirmish in 778, but with some crucial differences. In the actual engagement, it was a force of local Basques that attacked the Franks, not the Moors.

Lourdes

- Roncevaux is not the only site of a Pyrenean battle with religious overtones. The final stop on our journey of this region is also the location of many modern-day crusades, or more precisely, pilgrimages: the small mountain city of Lourdes,[11L] which transformed from a sleepy mountain town to a major world religious center in the 19th century.

- Prior to the French Revolution, the ancien régime was based on the twin pillars of the French monarchy and the Catholic church. The revolution ushered in a new era of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The monarchy was overthrown and guillotined, and many revolutionaries saw no place for the Catholic church in the new republic. Thus began a struggle for the hearts and minds of the French people that runs even today between the vehemently secular Republic and the Catholic church.

- In the 19th century, new ideologies on the left fought to undermine the continued influence of the church, especially on the less educated common people. For the Catholic hierarchy, who feared the loss of their flock and their influence, measures were needed

to show how important the church remained in an increasingly godless society.

- New churches were constructed, including famous and eye-popping edifices like the Sacré-Cœur in Paris and Notre-Dame de Fourvière in Lyon, which were built in prominent and highly visible locations in their respective cities to serve as a reminder to the common people of the importance of the Catholic faith. A system of Catholic schools operating outside the rigidly secular state school system was developed and expanded. And in 1858, events occurred in Lourdes that brought great joy and hope to both the Catholic faithful and the church hierarchy: the visions of the Virgin Mary by a humble local girl, Bernadette Soubirous.¶ As a result, Lourdes found itself firmly on the map of holy places to visit.

- By the end of the 19th century, the commercial side of Lourdes was very much a target for anticlerical activists. Lourdes can still be a very polarizing issue for the French. But love it or hate it, Lourdes remains a lightning rod for the issue of the role of Catholicism in France today.

Resources

Print

Burgess, trans., *The Song of Roland*.

Gallop, *A Book of the Basques*.

Web

https://www.bayonne-tourisme.com/en/ (Bayonne tourist office)

https://tourisme.biarritz.fr/en (Biarritz tourist office)

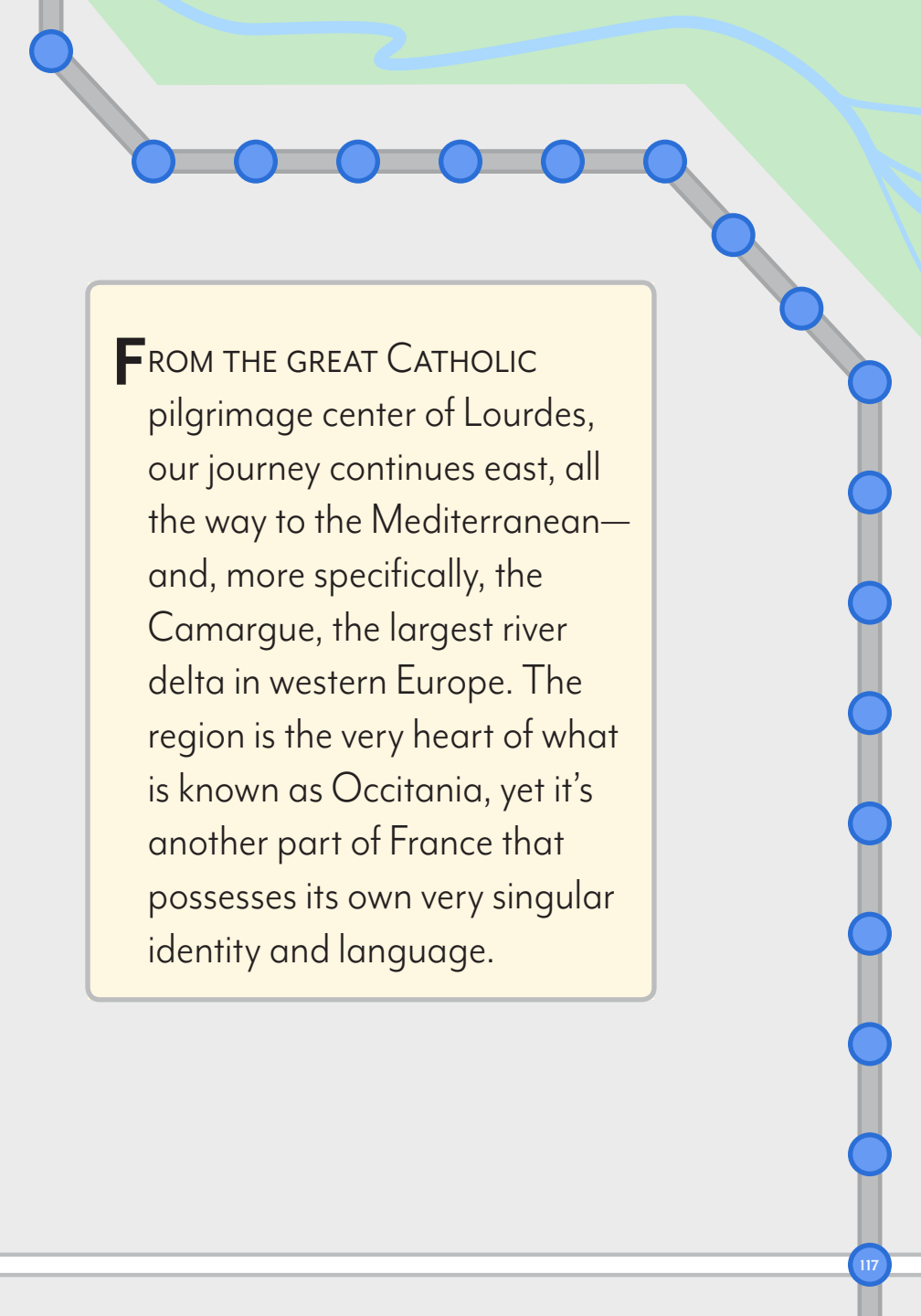
https://www.lourdes-france.org/en/ (Lourdes tourist office)

¶ Bernadette was told three secrets by the vision and was asked to dig in a cave, now known as the Grotte de Massabielle. Bernadette discovered a spring, and not long after, the Virgin reappeared several more times. The water generated by the spring appeared to have healing powers, and people came from far and wide to sample it.

12

The Camargue: Land of the Cathars

Château de Peyrepertuse



FROM THE GREAT CATHOLIC pilgrimage center of Lourdes, our journey continues east, all the way to the Mediterranean—and, more specifically, the Camargue, the largest river delta in western Europe. The region is the very heart of what is known as Occitania, yet it's another part of France that possesses its own very singular identity and language.

The Cathars

- The Cathars were a Christian sect that originated in the eastern Mediterranean but flourished in the then-autonomous Languedoc region in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Cathars rejected materialism, and insofar as the Catholic church was wealthy and fully integrated with the material world, the Cathars rejected the church's authority and doctrines, particularly the authority of its priesthood. This made them heretics and also social revolutionaries, threatening to upend both religious and secular structures.

- Because the monarchy relied for its power on the support of the church and the maintenance of the status quo, anything that threatened to change that was also dangerous to secular authority. Consequently, the nearby King Philip II,* also known as Philippe Auguste, was watching the Cathars with interest.

- A crusade against the Cathars—called the Albigensian Crusade, after the city of Albi—was instigated by Pope Innocent III and ran for 20 years in the early 13th century. Confiscated Cathar lands were promised to northern French nobles willing to participate, thus extending French authority into the region.

- The Cathars attempted to resist this crusade against them from fortresses like Peyrepertuse and Montségur. Both are strategically important but very isolated, in tune with the harder-core Cathar rejection of the material world.

- Built on the top of a rocky outcrop 2,000 feet above the ground, Peyrepertuse[12A] presents a challenge to today's visitors, just as it was impregnable to 13th-century attackers. The original castle was rebuilt and extended later in the 13th century by French king Louis IX,† who recognized the impregnability of the site as a strategic point near the edge of his kingdom. But this site, which is fairly undeveloped for tourism, offers a truly amazing example of nearly everything an imposing medieval castle should be.

12A

* King Philip II was the first "king of France," as opposed to "king of the Franks."

† Louis IX was later canonized by the church as Saint-Louis.

- The same can be said for Montségur,[12B] which was the final bastion of Cathar resistance to fall in 1244. Once again situated in an isolated location, the small community of Cathars held out for nearly a year against overwhelming odds. Upon their surrender, more than 200 Cathars preferred to be burned alive rather than admit heresy and convert to Catholicism.

Carcassonne

- Acts of cruelty were quite a feature of the Albigensian Crusade, and cities were also targeted, among them Béziers and the next stop on our tour, Carcassonne.[12C] Early on in the crusade, Raymond Trencavel, whose family ruled the city, allowed the Cathars sanctuary, so Carcassonne was besieged by the army of Simon de Montfort. Inside the old city walls lies the Basilique Saint-Nazaire, a hybrid of Romanesque and Gothic architecture that features the Siege Stone illustrating episodes from the Albigensian Crusade.

- The city's famous citadel, the Cité de Carcassonne,[12D] is made up of two curtain walls, the inner and outer ramparts, separated by an open space called the *lices*. This construction was intended to keep attackers at bay and could also be used for entertainments in medieval times. Some of the walls date from around the Roman occupation of the area and others from the 12th and 13th centuries.

Cité de Carcassonne

- The near-pristine condition of the walls is thanks to restoration work done in the 19th century by the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who is celebrated as one of the first architectural historians to truly understand medieval architecture and building techniques but also criticized for having adapted and modernized them to look almost contemporary. And here's yet another French controversy that polarizes public opinion: He's either the savior of France's medieval heritage or a philistine renovator.

The Camargue

- Farther to the east, the Camargue[12E] is the large delta region between the two main branches of the Rhône River as it drains into the Mediterranean. Like many extensive wetland areas, the Camargue is popular with wildfowl and, as a consequence, flocks of birdwatchers. But the Camargue is especially celebrated as a nesting ground for the greater flamingo, who find the shallow waters ideal for wading in order to find crustaceans and algae.

TRAVEL TIP 12E

Entomologists flock to the Camargue because the marshland and warm temperatures make it the perfect location for mosquitoes. The local varieties are renowned for being especially pesky, so remember to pack your repellant!

The gorgeous pink color found in many adult flamingos is a result of a diet that is rich in beta carotene.

- Other animals also draw visitors from around the globe, most especially the horses of the Camargue and the black longhorn cattle, both of whom love to graze on the salt marshes. True Camargue horses are classified in three categories and are registered in studbooks; similarly, the Camargue cattle have special registered status in herdbooks.

- The animals of the Camargue are valued as truly exceptional and are a real attraction for experts and tourists alike.

Montpellier

- Let's head back west along the coast and slightly inland to one of the fastest growing cities in France: Montpellier.[12F]

- The Place de la Comédie[12G] is the large square that functions as the city's focal point. Locally known as l'Oeuf ("the Egg") because of its oval shape, the Place de la Comédie is an open pedestrian area surrounded by cafés, a grand 19th-century opera house, and an ornate movie theater that opens up into a lovely tree-lined esplanade where many large events are held.

12F

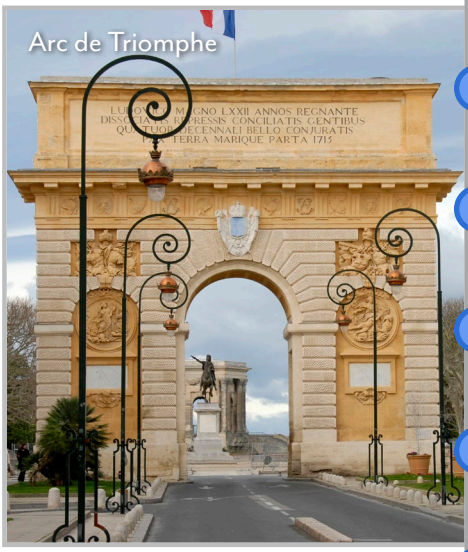
12G

- The Place de la Comédie was once one of the busiest main-road intersections in France before the gutsy call was made to redirect cars away from the square, although exceptions are made for prestigious events, such as stage departures of the Tour de France. Nowadays, rental bikes and slow-moving trams cross the square, and the city can breathe as a result.

- Much of the interior of the Écusson,‡ the neighborhood next to the Place de la Comédie, is also car-free. This is due to necessity, since it is an old neighborhood with many very narrow streets, but the result is that walking around and exploring is a real joy.

- Like many other cities in the region, Montpellier had its run-ins with French royal authority from the time it became part of France in 1349. With a large university and a strong trading class, it became a stronghold of Protestantism during the Reformation and subsequent Wars of Religion.

- The French king Louis XIII besieged the city in 1622, and his son, Louis XIV, the Sun King, left his mark in several prominent places. The Arc de Triomphe,[12H] built in his honor in the highest point of the city, has amazing views of the mountains, the Mediterranean, and the newer suburbs and serves as a reminder of exactly who was really in charge. And in a further demonstration of Bourbon power, an extremely large equestrian statue of the Sun King sits on the adjoining esplanade, called Le Peyrou.


Arc de Triomphe

‡ It's called the Écusson, meaning "Shield" or "Badge," because of the overall shape of the neighborhood.

- Georges Frêche served as mayor of Montpellier for 27 years and presided over a period of amazing growth for the city, when it surged from France's 25th to eighth largest city in less than 30 years. Frêche is responsible for many initiatives that have transformed Montpellier, but perhaps the most striking is the construction of a whole new neighborhood, the Antigone,[12I] under the direction of celebrated Catalan architect Ricardo Bofill. You can see the influences of many Mediterranean cultures in its elements of design, including large-scale neoclassical elements as well as features found in the architecture of the Muslim world.

- The Antigone has become a model for contemporary large-scale urban planning and has earned worldwide attention, further putting Montpellier on the map. In Montpellier, the old and the new coexist easily. Brave and expensive administrative decisions have been made there that have courted controversy, and in those decisions, we once again see the unifying thread of the French character: embracing the past and its rich heritage while ambitiously adapting for the future.

Albi

- Inland and farther to the west, on the banks of the Tarn River, is the town of Albi, which was home to many Cathars in the 13th century. The terracotta color of the bricks and roof tiles makes any view of the town attractive, but one building dominates the skyline, as it has since the mid-13th century: the Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile.[12J] The forbidding exterior, with its rounded towers and narrow windows, looks more like a fortress than a place of peaceful worship—because was intended to serve as one, as well as send a strong message of the power of the Catholic church.

- Building began not too long after the end of the Albigensian crusade, and the architectural style is described as southern French or meridional Gothic—far more austere than the Gothic cathedrals found in the north. It was more bulky, solid, and secure, offering both protection and also a means of countering the Cathar criticism of the luxuries and venality of the Catholic church.

- Funds for building this great cathedral came from the local population, many of whom supported the Cathars. The great bell tower was added in the 15th century; like many great cathedrals of the period, construction ran for an extremely long time.

Some have claimed that the Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile is the largest brick building in the world.

- But if it can feel intimidating to look at the austere exterior of Sainte-Cécile, elements of the interior are lovely. The vaults of the huge nave are filled with beautiful Italian Renaissance paintings, while the enormous fresco of the Last Judgement on the west wall is awe-inspiring.

- So even if Sainte-Cécile was not built as a place of worship by the Cathars, it was constructed by the Catholic powers with them in mind. Opposition to the Catholic church and the French crown were not issues to be taken lightly, and the resolve of the Cathars who resisted cannot be understated. The burning of the last Cathars occurred in the early 15th century—and with them, their own brand of Christianity disappeared from the region. But in the rugged castles, the walls of Carcassonne and the Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile, the Cathar legacy still lives on.

- Tourists circulate in the town with sketch pads and sometimes easels. This can be explained by an individual who pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable in the art world: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who was born in Albi in 1864 and was raised in the city. Toulouse-Lautrec is

perhaps best known for his posters of late 19th-century Parisian nightlife, which were influenced by Japanese ukiyo-e paintings and woodcuts.

- The Musée Toulouse-Lautrec,[12K] dedicated to the artist, takes pride of place in a building that was once the archbishop's palace. It houses the largest public collection of his works, including the juvenilia from his formative years in Albi and also major and rare works that remained in his family after his death. During his artistic career, he moved away from impressionism toward an original hybrid of art forms in the remarkable sketches and posters that depicted a side of life that had not been seen before.

TRAVEL TIP

A favorite dish from the Camargue region is cassoulet, a hearty bean and meat casserole. Although cassoulet is prepared and enjoyed all over France, pick one of the three prime locations to sample the very best: Toulouse, the largest city in the region; Carcassonne, for a spicier version; or Castelnaudary,[12L] the place where it was created.

Resources

Print

O'Shea, *The Perfect Heresy*.

Web

https://www.tourism-carcassonne.co.uk (Carcassonne tourist office)

https://www.montpellier-france.com/Prepare-Book/Discoveries/Must-sees-in-Montpellier (Montpellier tourist office)

Film

Le retour de Martin Guerre

13

Arles: A Jewel of Provence

Les Arènes, Vincent van Gogh

The southern city of Arles is famous for its Roman ruins as well as being the place where the artist Vincent van Gogh produced many of his most famous works. In the countryside around Arles, you can smell air rich with lavender and explore some wonderful Provençal food.

Two Bridges That Span History

- Between them, two bridges span about 2,000 years of the Arles region's rich history: the Pont du Gard, a world-famous aqueduct built by the Romans in the 1st century, and the 21st-century Viaduc de Millau, a cable bridge that spans the gorge of the river Tarn. While these two incredible feats of engineering are a mere 70 miles apart, their construction is separated by centuries and by very different intentions on the part of their creators.

- The Roman Pont du Gard[13A] stands solid after two millennia, while the modern Viaduc de Millau has an estimated lifespan of 120 years. Between them, they illustrate the region's history and modernity and the extent to which the local landscape has forced successive generations to find creative solutions for the transport of water and people.

- The Pont du Gard shows that the Romans intended permanent settlement in the area. And it is only one of many fine Roman sites in this part of the country; others can be found in the cities of Orange, Arles, and Nîmes.

13A

Pont du Gard

- The Romans understood the importance of clean, fresh water and enjoyed its use in bathhouses and fountains in public spaces. In the 1st century CE, it became apparent that Nîmes needed to be better supplied, so groups of Roman engineers set out to solve the problem. A suitable water source was found near Uzès, and a route was plotted to bring the water more than 30 miles gently downhill to Nîmes.

- One of the biggest obstacles was the valley surrounding the river Gard; the solution of Roman engineers was one of the great aqueducts of the ancient world. If it's not the longest bridge built by the Romans, at 160 feet high, it is the tallest. Composed of three tiers, the aqueduct is built of blocks of sandstone that were cut to size, numbered, and hauled into place using a network of pulleys. The stones of the two lowest tiers are held in place by friction and gravity—no mortar was used—and two of the central arches over the river are the largest that remain today from the Roman world.

- The Pont du Gard was admired as an engineering triumph as soon as it was built. Two million visitors a year flock there today, but the first tourists who visited in awe and wonder were the Romans themselves!

- When the Romans left the south of France, the Pont du Gard served its primary purpose of carrying water for around 500 years and since then has been used as a bridge. A parallel road bridge was attached to the lowest tier in the 18th century on the downstream side; fortunately, the choice of stone and natural weathering has nicely blended this new addition into the aqueduct above.

TRAVEL TIP

It's possible to walk along the very top of the highest tier of the Pont du Gard, most of which is covered in stone slabs that are fairly narrow and uneven. Beware there's no guardrail, so it's not for the risk-averse or those who are afraid of heights.


Viaduc de Millau

- From this engineering and aesthetic wonder of the Roman world, let's go forward two millennia and cross a modern-day equivalent: the Viaduc de Millau, or the Millau bridge.[13B] It was completed in 2004 to span the Tarn valley and link up two parts of a main toll highway to the south, serving traffic bound for Spain.

- Before construction of the bridge, traffic on the busy north-south route was forced to leave the highway and trundle slowly through the small town of Millau on local roads. It set up a bottleneck that needed a solution, but it was not simple or easy, as the Tarn valley is very deep and wide.

- The only answer was a bridge, but the challenges to engineers were immense, so a design competition was held. It was won by an Anglo-French partnership of the British architect Norman Foster and the French engineer Michel Virlogeux. The result was a beautiful cable-stayed bridge that seems to glide out across the valley.

13B

- Like the Pont du Gard, the Millau Bridge* was not the longest in the world when it was built, spanning the gorge for one-and-a-half miles, but it was and still is the tallest, with central pylons more than 1,100 feet tall—that's taller than the Eiffel Tower. It has become such a tourist attraction, with a visitor center[13C] and observation area, that it brings revenue to the region.

- The Millau Bridge† certainly eased the local traffic problem, but more than that, it is a source of pride for the French—and typical of the sort of major infrastructure project that successive French governments are willing to support, blending function with a considerable amount of style.

Les Baux-de-Provence

- We'll stay in hill country as we travel onto the Chaîne des Alpilles, a small range of dry, chalky hills, and pay a visit to a place described as one of the most beautiful villages in France: Les Baux-de-Provence,[13D] a picturesque stone village topped with a ruined medieval citadel. Real estate prices in Les Baux can be as high as those found in the swankiest neighborhoods of Paris.

- Like the centuries-spanning bridges of Arles, Les Baux, perched on its high, rocky plateau offers stunning views over the countryside, including the Val d'Enfer, the Infernal Valley, with its singular rock shapes and limestone caves, rumored to host evil spirits.

- Strategically located, the medieval castle at the top of the village[13E] was home to influential feudal lords and a center for the troubadours who sang their poems of courtly love there. If the castle looks like it has suffered from rather more than just regular wear and tear, that could be because Les Baux was a Protestant stronghold and was later destroyed on the orders of Louis XIII and Richelieu.

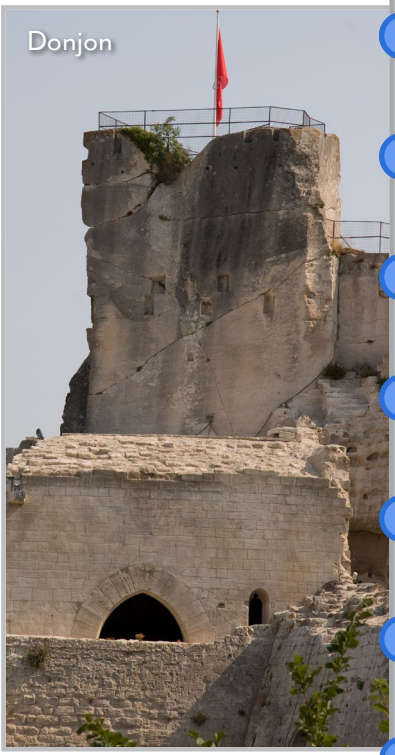
13C 13D 13E

* This phenomenal achievement came at a cost of around 400 million Euros, which is partially offset by the toll charged to drive across.

† A bend was included in the bridge's design to keep drivers alert, though drivers cross it slowly anyway, taking in both the bridge itself and the spectacular views of the Tarn valley below.

TRAVEL TIP

For the agile, a foray up to the donjon of Les Baux's ruined citadel offers a great view over the village and the surrounding area. Like the highest level of the Pont du Gard, though, this final stage is perhaps not for those who don't do heights well.


Donjon

- In the 19th century, bauxite, the ore used to make aluminum, was discovered in Les Baux. Today, the old bauxite quarries are the site for magnificent son et lumière displays, which bring thousands and thousands of visitors to the village.

Arles

- Let's head down to the lowlands and south to Arles.[13F] Arles was a Roman city, and its rise to prominence began as a result of the assistance its inhabitants provided to Julius Caesar, when he needed boats to attack nearby Marseille, a power base for his rival, Pompey. When Julius Caesar emerged triumphant, Arles was developed as a major Roman port city, at the expense of Marseille, and has retained many of its architectural treasures from the Gallo-Roman era.

13F


Les Arènes d'Arles

- Arles's most prominent Roman building still dominates the town today: the Roman amphitheater called Les Arènes.[13G] Built in the 1st century AD, the amphitheater still looks impressive, with its two tiers of fine arches and Doric and Corinthian columns. It is still used for events and can accommodate 16,000 spectators, though in Roman times, it had a third tier of arches and held up to 20,000 spectators. They were protected from the sun by large awnings that could be pulled back and forth—a feature of the finest Roman arenas.

- The arena is still one of the best-preserved Roman buildings in France, despite three early medieval towers having been built into the exterior arcade. This is because during the Moorish invasion of the period, the arena was transformed into a fortress. Later in medieval times, the arena even housed two churches and hundreds of homes, becoming a neighborhood in itself.

- In the 19th century, the arena was cleared of most of its medieval updates and restored to much of its Roman glory—and its original

purpose, including hosting major events and entertainments in Arles, especially during the summer months.

- Even older than the amphitheater, the nearby ancient Roman theater called the Théâtre Antique[13H] suffered significant losses from the repurposing of its stones, but it has been successfully rebuilt. In its heyday, it would have accommodated 12,000 spectators and was reputed to have been more beautiful and luxuriously appointed than other Roman theaters still in use today. But while very little remains of the original Roman theater in Arles, two celebrated columns, called the two widows, still stand on the site, which functions as an important open-air theater in the city, hosting prominent festivals and performances, just as it would have in Roman times.

- Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, neither was Arles, and during the Gallo-Roman period, many other features were gradually added to the city, including temples, a circus, triumphal arches, baths named for the emperor Constantine,[13I] and an impressive forum, whose foundations of vaulted galleries can be visited today in the subterranean Cryptoportiques.[13J]

- Over the following centuries, Arles retained its prominence in the region, but, due to 13th-century political machinations and the expansion of the Rhône delta, its port and consequently much of its wealth declined.

- The Romans have not been the only foreigners drawn to Arles. The quality of light in the region attracted many painters to Provence in the 19th century, including Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh. Starting in February 1888, van Gogh produced around 300 works in about a year in Arles. And it was in Arles that van Gogh famously sliced through his earlobe with a razor.

- Today, Arles celebrates his memory with a walking tour to the sites of many famous paintings and has even opened an impressive modern arts center in his name: the Fondation Vincent van Gogh. Because the sights of Arles inspired van Gogh, it is still possible to compare what he saw here with what he painted. For example, he produced seven canvases in his *Tournesols*, or *Sunflowers*, series during his time in Arles, drawing his inspiration directly from the fields of sunflowers that lie around the city.

The Lavender Fields of Provence

- Provence is home to a plant that is immediately recognizable by its smell: lavender. In the same way that New England attracts so-called leaf peepers every fall, so Provence has a thriving tourist business, offering lavender tours and picnics in the lavender fields. There is even a Lavender Museum,[13K] which boasts a large collection of copper vats, some dating from the 16th century, that are used in the extraction of lavender oil.

TRAVEL TIP

If you want to see and smell the effect of hundreds of thousands of lavender plants at their most intense, then plan on visiting Provence sometime from mid-June to the end of July. This is also when the region's sunflowers will be at their peak.

- The Romans who engineered the Pont du Gard because they wanted to bring fresh running water to Nîmes were fond of their bathhouses, and the Roman elite prided themselves on smelling clean. Lavender was one of their most commonly used perfumes, being used to scent clothes, hair, and linen. Lavender oil was even applied to the walls of Roman houses, much in the way that we might use room fresheners today. Since lavender is an herb that thrives under conditions of full sun and well-drained soil, the sunbaked hillsides of Provence allow it to thrive.

- Ever since its first cultivation, however, our ancestors valued lavender for more than its scent. It appears in all the major early European herbals; one of the most famous, *Culpeper's Herbal* of 1653, promised that a decoction of lavender would ease or cure "cramps" and "convulsions." Nicholas Culpeper's very influential book also recommended distilled lavender to ease all manner of digestive complaints and a lavender gargle to calm toothache. It really used to be thought of as an all-purpose herb, cleansing the body inside and out.

Two dishes take the best of Provence's locally grown vegetables—artichokes and eggplant—and turn them into delicious regional specialties: *barbouillade d'artichauts* and *gratin d'aubergines*, respectively.

Resources

Print

Berringer Bader, *The Lavender Lover's Handbook*.

Web

https://www.beyond.fr (website about Provence)

http://www.pontdugard.fr/en (Pont du Gard website)

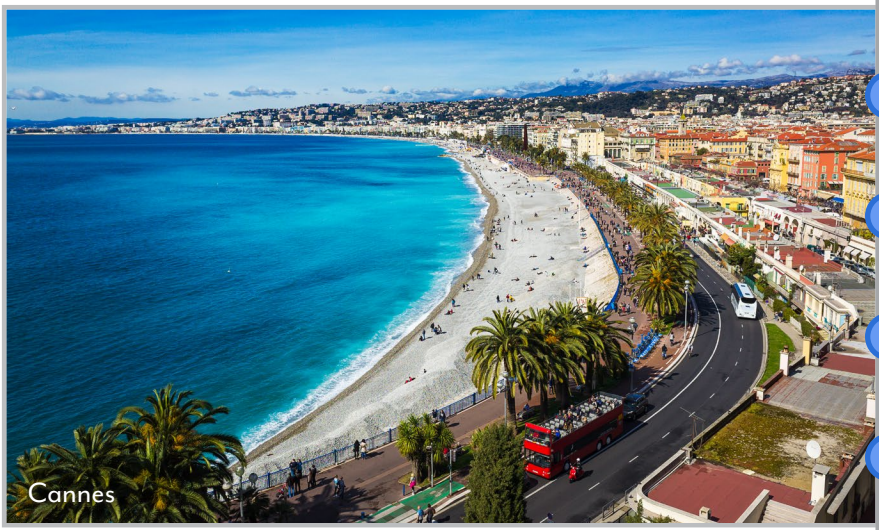
http://ee.france.fr/en/discover/viaduc-millau-1 (Millau Viaduct website; includes two-minute video)

Film

Lust for Life

14

Along the Riviera: From Marseille to Cannes



Cannes

WE NOW HEAD FURTHER EAST INTO the Provence region and return to the Mediterranean coast, focusing primarily on two contrasting but vitally important cities: working-class Marseille and glamorous Cannes. We'll be moving east along the mythical French Riviera, also known as the Côte d'Azur, for all the beautiful blues on display there.

14A

Marseille

- Marseille[14A] is France's second largest city and its biggest industrial port. Its reputation is that of a tough, working-class city. And for many people, dreams of moving to France or moving within France have Provence as their goal. If Paris can on occasion be described as gray, then Marseille's color is surely the vibrant blue of the Mediterranean.

- Marseille has survived and developed since it was founded by the Greeks in 600 BCE because it was—and still is—a busy and thriving port. And as a port, it has overseen the departures and arrivals of countless goods and peoples. Indeed, Marseille has been built on immigration for more than two millennia. After its original Greek colonists, others came from across the Mediterranean, including Spaniards, Corsicans, and Italians; Muslims and Jews; and peoples from northern and sub-Saharan Africa.

The signature dish of Marseille is bouillabaisse, which originated as a dish where less desirable and leftover fish and seafood were prepared in a large stewing pot to feed hungry fishermen and their families. Now it's considered an upscale dish, found on the menus of the finest restaurants.

- In many ways, Marseille could be viewed as France's equivalent of New York's Ellis Island, a port of entry through which the "tired and hungry" of the Mediterranean and beyond came in the hope of building a better life. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, more trade items and people arrived from even farther-flung parts of the French colonial empire, such as Indochina.

- One group to arrive in Marseille in large numbers in the middle of the 20th century were the so-called Pieds-Noirs,* Europeans and North African Jews who fled or were expelled from Algeria when that country gained independence from French rule in 1962. The number of people who left Algeria during its war of independence from France has been estimated at more than a million.

- During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, successive French governments had encouraged people to move to Algeria, where Europeans typically enjoyed a much better standard of living than most of the indigenous North African population. Severe inequalities led initially to riots and finally to a full-blown bloody and bitter war of independence from 1954 to 1962.

Pastis, Marseille's local liqueur, is distilled from star anise, licorice, and other local aromatic herbs.

* There is disagreement over the precise origin of the term, translated as "Black Feet."

- The Guerre d'Algérie, as the French call it, was to a certain degree like the Vietnam War to the United States: a very difficult period in the nation's history, full of atrocities committed by both sides, involving a conscripted army and an indigenous population, much of which was in search of self-determination. But there were also differences: Algeria was administered as a part of France, and for many French, the Algerian War was akin to a civil war.

- Tensions that arose during the war and in its aftermath led many to flee Algeria, and others were expelled following recognition of its independence in 1962. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of immigrants arriving in France, and though many were the descendants of Algeria's French colonizers, France was a country they did not know and where they were not necessarily accepted, but nor did they feel able to live in their native Algeria.

- Along with the Pieds-Noirs came another large group who were forced to flee Algeria, the Harkis, Algerian Muslims who had either fought with or supported the French during the war. Viewed as traitors in Algeria and not necessarily welcomed in France, where they were a visible reminder of the painful conflict, it could be argued that the Harkis faced even greater challenges for their new life in France than the Pieds-Noirs.

- Not all of the immigrants who passed through Marseille did so as a result of fleeing a war zone; many came for economic reasons. They were drawn as the result of a period of lengthy post-World War II expansion and growth called Les Trente Glorieuses, The 30 Glorious Years, which ran from 1946 to 1975. Kick-started and supported by the Marshall Plan, this period coincided with strong and sustained economic growth, resulting in great prosperity.

- Living standards in France increased by leaps and bounds, along with the purchasing power for a vast new range of modern consumer goods. Along with this growth and prosperity came a need for labor, especially of the unskilled variety. So France, like Britain, opened its doors to the populations of many of its former colonies, including groups from North and sub-Saharan Africa.

- Where were all these new workers and their families to be housed? Living space in many older French cities was at a premium, and France, in the midst of its own baby boom and a great demographic shift from rural areas to the cities, was having trouble housing its population. For the French, the solution to housing those arriving from France's former colonies lay in the suburbs of the industrial cities, the banlieues, which are synonymous with working-class housing projects. Banlieues were often constructed in haste to cope with the influx of immigrants, many of whom worked in the booming French economy in the aftermath of the Second World War.

- One of these housing projects is the Cité Radieuse,[14B] or Radiant City, the work of radical Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier. Marseille's Cité Radieuse is not your typical postwar housing project—it was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2016—but if the overall design of the exterior looks familiar, that is because you can see similar designs in cities all over the developed world. It is considered to be a prime example of brutalist architecture, where repeated blocks form a coherent whole, and building materials, primarily concrete, are exposed to reveal a building's structure.

- The Cité Radieuse in Marseille was built between 1947 and 1952 and holds more than 300 apartments with 23 different floor plans. It also features several of Le Corbusier's key architectural concepts, such as the use of the roof as an open-air space for amenities such as gardens. The Cité Radieuse was the first of Le Corbusier's five *unités d'habitation*, comfortable, modern housing where all the necessary amenities are on-site, with space dedicated to education, sport, leisure and entertainment, and retail.

- Today, the Cité Radieuse features a restaurant, nursery, bar, gymnasium, hotel, and even an "interior street" with shops. Its residents are generally wealthy citizens. Sadly, this is not the case for many of the housing projects that the Cité Radieuse inspired. Cost cutting and other issues meant that many similar projects were built without the amenities and facilities intended by Le Corbusier. And there are several such projects in the banlieues around Marseille.

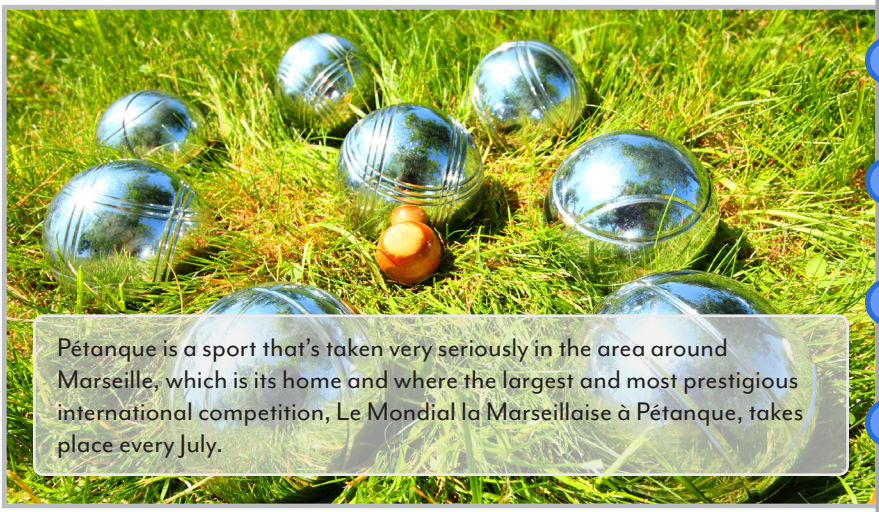
- If you look out to sea from Marseille, you can't miss another local landmark: the Château d'If.[14C] It looks like a fortress built in the bay to protect Marseille, and that was indeed its intended initial function. But it is best known as a prison, which was its function until the end of the 19th century. It housed many political and religious detainees, but its most famous prisoner is fictional: Edmond Dantès, from Alexandre Dumas's 1844 novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

TRAVEL TIP

As an illustration of the power of Dumas's novel, modern-day visitors to the Château d'If can view a cell that bears the fictional Edmond Dantès's name.

14C

Château d'If



Pétanque is a sport that's taken very seriously in the area around Marseille, which is its home and where the largest and most prestigious international competition, Le Mondial la Marseillaise à Pétanque, takes place every July.

Cannes

- Outside Hollywood, it is hard to think of a place more synonymous with film than the French coastal resort of Cannes,[14D] home to the annual Cannes film festival. Actors, actresses, and celebrities descend en masse on Cannes each May for the event, which for many in France signals the start of summer.

- A quick look around the spectacular yachts of the superrich in the Vieux Port,[14E] or Old Port, of Cannes certainly offers a stark contrast with the industrial port of Marseille. And while a few fishing boats do still bob around at anchor in Cannes, it's a far cry from its 19th-century history as a fishing port.

- Cannes's rise to fame is generally credited to an English aristocrat, Lord Brougham, who stayed there in the 19th century when he was unable to continue on his planned journey to Nice because of an outbreak of cholera to the east. The beach was more pleasant and sandier than the one along the coast in Nice. He liked the small port so much that he built a villa there. He has a rather fine place called the Square Brougham in his honor just opposite the Vieux Port.

14D

14E


Vieux Port of Cannes

- An old neighborhood called Le Suquet[14F] has some remaining medieval buildings and a great view over the city and seafront, especially at sunset. Out in the bay lies the Île Sainte-Marguerite,[14G] a small island that once housed another famous prisoner brought to life in a novel by Alexandre Dumas, *The Man in the Iron Mask*. But whereas Edmond Dantès of *The Count of Monte-Cristo* was a fictional creation, the man in the iron mask was indeed a real-life prisoner, whose true identity remains a mystery even to this day.

- The boulevard de la Croisette[14H] is the famous tree-lined promenade that runs through the town along the seafront, with exclusive multi-starred hotels and designer boutiques on one side and packed beaches that are mostly reserved for those hotels' patrons on the other. La Croisette is also where the starlets seek to make a splash during the festival. Major French figures, such as Brigitte Bardot, as well as international stars have made names for themselves while frolicking for the cameras of the eager paparazzi on La Croisette.

14F

14G

14H

- Key events during the festival are held in the impressive Palais des Festivals,[141] which is located right by one of the few public beaches in the town. The building includes a casino, de rigueur for all self-respecting resorts on the Côte d'Azur, where disposable income can be easily disposed of. Things have been this way on the Riviera for the best part of more than 100 years, when wealthy blue bloods took a fancy to the climate and the array of shades of blue on offer in the sea and the sky.

- The profusion of cities and resorts along the coast between Marseille and Monte Carlo make the Côte d'Azur France's great summer playground. You can choose from busier cities, such as Cannes and Nice, or smaller but well-known resorts, such as Cassis, Saint-Tropez, Antibes, and Cap Ferrat.

Resources

Print

Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Web

http://www.mucem.org/en (Museum of Mediterranean Cultures in Marseille)

https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/ (Cannes Film Festival official site)

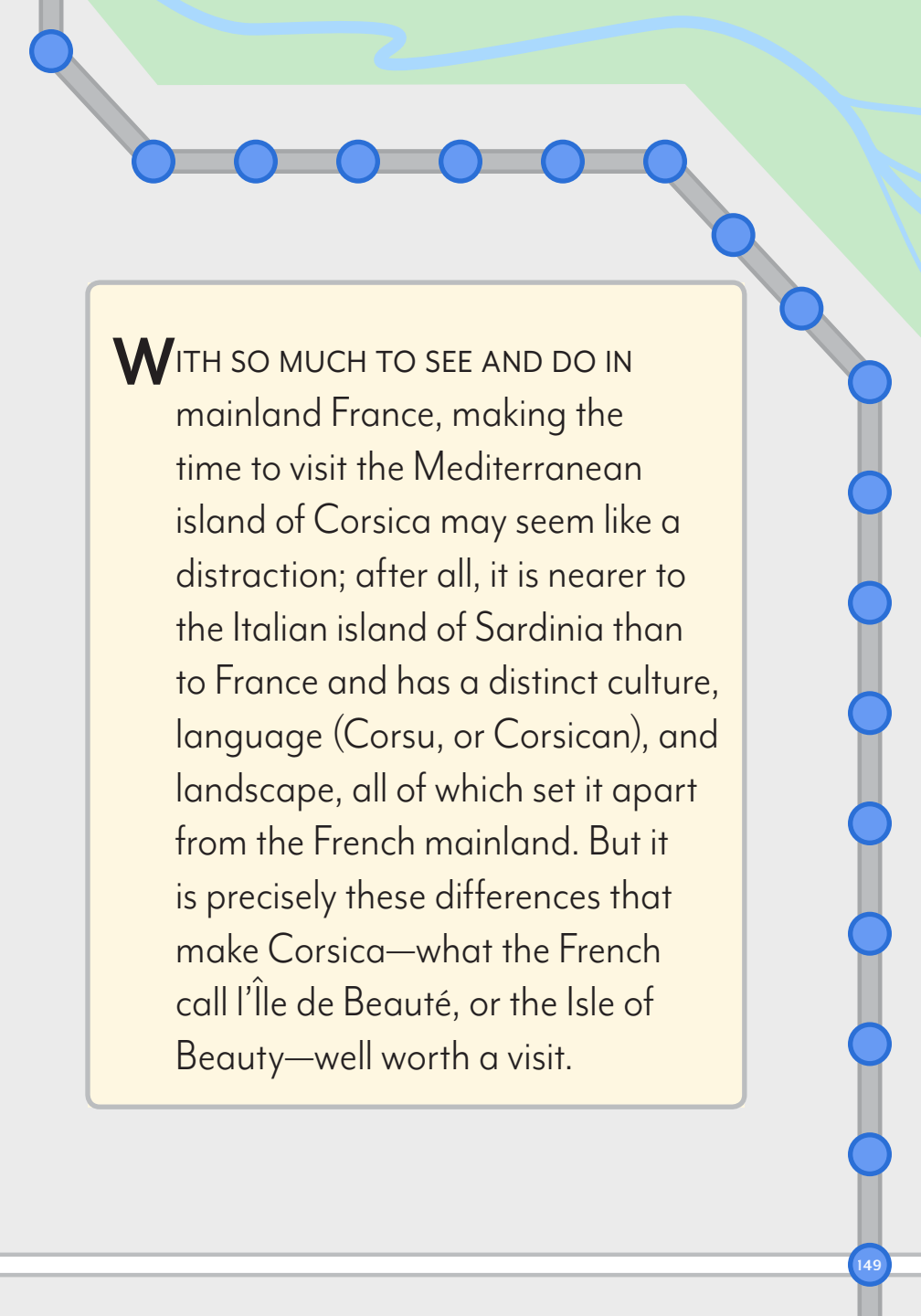
Film

La gloire de mon père

Le château de ma mère

15

Corsica: The Isle of Beauty



WITH SO MUCH TO SEE AND DO IN mainland France, making the time to visit the Mediterranean island of Corsica may seem like a distraction; after all, it is nearer to the Italian island of Sardinia than to France and has a distinct culture, language (Corsu, or Corsican), and landscape, all of which set it apart from the French mainland. But it is precisely these differences that make Corsica—what the French call l'Île de Beauté, or the Isle of Beauty—well worth a visit.

TRAVEL TIP

While Corsica does have an airport—in fact, it has four—you might want to consider getting there by ferry from Marseille, rather than flying. Ferries to Corsica offer the chance to experience being on the Mediterranean rather than simply enjoying its shimmering waters from the shore.

Ajaccio

- Located southeast of the French mainland and west of the Italian peninsula and situated immediately north of the larger Italian island of Sardinia, Corsica[15A] has a distinctive blend of French and Italian cultures. In fact, Corsica was ruled from the Italian mainland up until the mid-18th century. Then, in 1755, Corsican native Pasquale Paoli declared the island to be an independent republic.

- Realizing that Corsica's traditional Italian rulers were having trouble controlling it, France's Louis XV decided to try and seize this strategic outpost in the Mediterranean. From 1768 to 1769, Louis XV's forces fought those supporting an independent republic of Corsica. Louis's army was ultimately successful, and from 1769 onward, the island has been administered by France. Indeed, from Louis's victory in 1769 until the French Revolution, Corsica was regarded as the personal possession of the French king.

- With the benefit of hindsight, there's a historical irony to the fact that Corsica's dreams of being a self-determining republic were ended by the French king in 1769—for that is the year when the most famous Corsican, Napoléon Bonaparte, was born in the island's capital of Ajaccio.[15B] The boy who grew up on Corsica idolizing Paoli's fight for Corsican freedom would become not only the self-styled emperor of France, but the architect of an imperial policy that tried to bring millions of non-French peoples under French rule.

- Though Napoléon's parents sent him to military school in northeast France in 1779 when he was only nine and though he would only ever visit Corsica briefly again, Ajaccio has preserved the Bonaparte family home, Maison Bonaparte,[15C] as a museum. While this is a must-see for those interested in military history, it's also worth a visit if you would like to look inside a Corsican home that was in the Bonaparte family for more than 200 years, all the way up to 1923. This makes Maison Bonaparte one of the best-preserved and best-restored buildings in Ajaccio, where more than 80 percent of the houses enclosing the harbor postdate the end of the Second World War.

- The Maison Bonaparte is only a short distance from the Ajaccio Cathedral[15D]—so short a distance that when Napoléon's mother went into labor with him during a service at the cathedral, family members were able to rush her to the family home. The cathedral dates from the 16th century, and art lovers can see paintings by Tintoretto and Delacroix housed here.

Maison Bonaparte

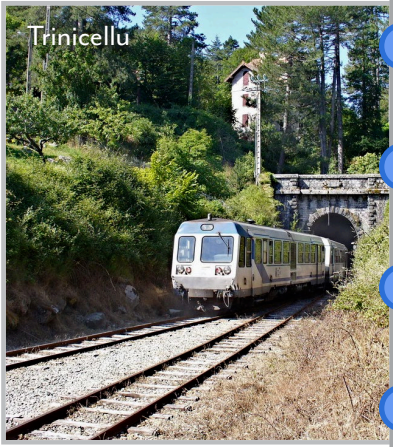
- The other building in Ajaccio that can justifiably claim a Napoléon family connection is the Musée Fesch,also known as the Musée des Beaux-Arts au Palais Fesch.[15E] The man after whom the museum is named, and to whom it owes the core of its collection, is Cardinal Joseph Fesch, who was Napoléon's uncle. In addition to showing Fesch's collection of Italian old master paintings and many copies of famous old master works, the museum also tries to celebrate Corsican artists and Corsica's history.

- If you visit the Palais Fesch, don't forget to check out the adjacent Imperial Chapel.[15F] Completed in 1859 by a member of the Bonaparte family, this impressive building houses the tombs of Napoléon's mother, Letizia, and her brother, Cardinal Fesch himself.

- Aside from these historical sites, the main attraction of Ajaccio is its location—a city built around a great natural harbor in the rugged middle of the western coast of the island. To truly appreciate the beauty of the coastline, it's best to take a short excursion from Ajaccio to one of the largely unspoiled beaches nearby.

TRAVEL TIP

The best way to see as much of Corsica as possible with the least effort is to buy a ticket for the Trinicellu, or Little Train, a narrow-gauge railway that opened in the 1850s. On the western side of the island, the railroad tracks link Ajaccio to the northern port of Calvi; further to the east, a track links the northern port of Bastia to the southern town of Porto-Vecchio.



Trinicellu


Capo di Feno

- A 25-minute car or bus ride from Ajaccio will get you to the area known as Capo di Feno,[15G] where a crescent moon of sand curves around astonishingly clear blue-green waters. It is possible to go swimming here, though the current can be surprisingly strong, and there are lifeguards on duty in July and August to look out for tourists who underestimate the waters. For those who opt to walk along the beach instead, it will become apparent that where the sand comes to an end, low-lying rocky outcrops begin. These are ideal places to sit and watch rock pools and listen to the sound of the water breaking on the shore.

- Another 20-minute ride takes you to the end of a promontory on this part of the island, where you will find the Torra di a Parata, or Tower of Parata,[15H] crowning a headland that is elevated 180 feet above the shore. The tower is a ruined 16th-century structure built in 1550/1551, when Corsica was ruled by the Italian city-state of Genoa. The site commands a panoramic view of the coastline, and the tower used to be part of a network of 150 towers built along Corsica's shores by its Genoese rulers. Most of the towers have long since disappeared, but Parata is nicely indicative of how all the others looked and worked. Taking the footpath to get to the base of the tower is well worth it to be able to take in the view.

15G

15H

Bastia

- Bastia[15I] is located in the northeast of Corsica, and it nestles between the sea and the mountainous landscape of Cap Corse, the peninsula that juts out into the Mediterranean from the northeast of the island like a finger pointing across the water to Genoa.

- Bastia is Corsica's most populous city after Ajaccio, and it is the island's main port. In fact, Bastia has three different ports, so the city authorities can keep commercial shipping away from the more scenic harbor, known as the Vieux Port,[15J] or Old Port, that is favored by tourists looking for food and drink.

- Corsica is known for its traditional charcuterie, which has a very distinctive flavor due to the chestnut-heavy diet of the free-range pigs that can be seen everywhere. The local cheese, *brocciu*, can be derived from the milk of goats or sheep and is featured in a savory cheesecake called *brocciu fiadone*.

- As Corsica boasts at least 40 varieties of grape, few of which have reached their full potential elsewhere, Bastia is home to a thriving wine trade. But you might also find harbor restaurants offering a special local aperitif that tastes of herbs and wildflowers, the Cap Corse, created in this region in the 1870s.

View of Bastia from Terra Nova fortifications

- Perhaps the best place to start exploring Bastia is the Terra Nova,[15K] a 15th-century citadel complete with ramparts that, like Ajaccio's Tower of Parata, dates from the time when Corsica was claimed by the Italian city of Genoa. The Genoese made Bastia's citadel a stronghold designed to withstand attack and offer commanding views of both land and sea. It's these views that make the Terra Nova well worth a visit, and you can get a great sense of the layout of Bastia from here. The citadel also houses a museum if you want to learn more about Bastia's history, though there is a dedicated Musée de Bastia[15L] that also tells that story.

- As you look at this port city from the Terra Nova, it's impossible to miss a church close to the waterfront, the Église Saint Jean-Baptiste de Bastia.[15M] Don't let its pale stone exterior fool you; the interior is a revelation, with ornate marble pillars and elaborate ceiling frescoes.

- A final place not to miss in Bastia is the Place Saint-Nicolas,[15N] a pedestrian-only open space surrounded by family-friendly cafés and restaurants. It hosts an annual Salon du chocolat for three days each October; this is a marketplace for local artisans and international brands to showcase their chocolate and one way that Bastia is successfully extending the tourist season into the fall.

Bonifacio

- The town of Bonifacio[150] is the most sizeable southerly settlement on Corsica. The town can claim to be Corsica's oldest, dating from at least 830 CE, and it is largely unspoiled by tourists and has charming cobbled streets and an obviously unhurried pace of life.

- Bonifacio is built on limestone cliffs, and limestone is fairly easily eroded by water. Over the centuries, the pounding of the waves has begun to undercut the white cliffs upon which Bonifacio sits, and the old town now gives the appearance of being perched precariously on a ledge jutting out over open waters.

- Even though Bonifacio has few tourists compared to other Corsican towns, it has enough to sustain boat tours to allow visitors to appreciate the geology—and the architecture that is at its mercy.

- Bonifacio, like Bastia, has a citadel,[15P] though Bonifacio's is the earliest, dating from the 9th century. This building was once the administrative hub of the French Foreign Legion. This world-famous fighting corps was founded in 1831, when, after France had been temporarily ruled by the Bourbon monarchs again, King Louis-Philippe provided the German and Swiss regiments of the Bourbons with a place in his new French military.*


Bonifacio

* Unusually for the French military, legionnaires take an oath of loyalty not to France, but to the French Foreign Legion itself.

The Heart of Corsica

- About two-thirds of Corsica is mountainous, and a lot of that mountainous terrain supports a glorious variety of wildlife. Mediterranean forests are fed by clear mountain streams that are in full spate each spring as snowmelt swells the waterways. Other soil supports a dense and varied cover of low-lying bushes and aromatic plants that is known collectively as maquis.†

- Two plants that give the maquis its distinctive appearance and aroma are both evergreen shrubs: the strawberry tree and myrtle. Strawberry trees get their name from the plant's mature, bright-red berries that look a lot like strawberries from a distance. The berries are a real favorite with herds of long-haired goats that can be found all over Corsica, and while the locals don't recommend visitors to eat the fruit straight from the tree, it does form the basis for a number of preserves and liqueurs.

- You will find myrtle in among the plants of the maquis by its smell: The evergreen leaves fill the air with a scent very like that of blueberries, and indeed myrtle berries are a deep blue. Corsicans use them to make a popular drink, *liqueur de myrte*.

† The French resistance in the Second World War got the name of Maquisards because the scrubby vegetation of southeastern France was a good place to lie low.

Field of maquis

- Because of the unspoiled natural beauty at the heart of Corsica, nature tourism has become increasingly popular, and you will find several companies offering walking tours that take in Corsican forests and the maquis. From a day to several days' duration, such tours typically allow you to select the difficulty of the walk you would feel most comfortable with.

- For serious walking enthusiasts, Corsica boasts a hiking trail that's regarded by many outdoor enthusiasts as one of the top trails in Europe. Known as the GR20—from the French Grande Randonnée, a hiking trail recognized by the French Hiking Federation—the trail crosses the whole island of Corsica, from northwest to southeast. About 10,000 hikers each year try to complete the entire route, which typically takes 14 days and offers an extraordinary range of landscapes, including pristine glacial lakes and snowcapped summits.

TRAVEL TIP

If you're attempting GR20, start in the southeast of Corsica, since the southern half of the trail is widely accepted as the easier half and walking it allows time to acclimatize before attempting the more strenuous northern part of the route. Right in the middle of GR20, and roughly in the middle of Corsica itself, is the village of Vizzanova, from which trains conveniently run to both Bastia in the northeast and Ajaccio in the west.

Resources

Print

Bouldrey, *Honorable Bandit*.

Web

https://www.visit-corsica.com/en/ (official Corsica website; includes eight-minute film)

16

Avignon: From Popes to Produce Stands

Châteauneuf-du-Pape vineyard

LET'S TRAVEL BACK TO THE MAINLAND from Corsica and journey inland to the Rhône valley, an area well known for its fine wines and the powerful wind called the mistral.* A cold, dry wind that's formed as air surges down the Rhône valley to areas of low pressure over the Mediterranean, the mistral shapes many aspects of life in Provence, where the locals have learned to adapt to it, embrace it, and use it to their advantage.

* The word *mistral* has its origin in Occitan, meaning "masterly," but has entered the French imagination in various ways, mainly as a means to describe anything fast and relentless.

The Palais des Papes

- Today, the pope lives in Vatican City in Rome, but in the 14th century, the papal court moved to Avignon, at the Palais des Papes.[16A] And more than 700 years after its completion, it is still Avignon's most imposing building and major attraction.

- Ever since the Frankish king Clovis was baptized in Reims in the 5th century, the French monarchy and the Catholic church were closely linked. Yet for French kings to communicate with a pope in Rome was a time-consuming business: Paris and Rome are just under 900 miles apart, as the crow flies. Before the advent of paved roads, royal and papal couriers braved the journey by horseback, while ambassadors could travel only as fast as an unsprung carriage would allow.

- If a French king made a request of the pope in Rome, it would be at least 40 days and probably two months before a reply could be had. As French kings grew in power and consolidated French territory, they also grew increasingly impatient at having to consult with popes in Rome.

- Simmering tensions between the monarchy and the papacy came to a head in the 14th century during the reign of the Philip IV, also known as Philip le Bel (Philip the Fair). As Philip eyed the wealth of the French church, the incumbent pope, Boniface VIII, died. Boniface's successor, Benedict XI, was pope for only about eight months before dying suddenly, and suspicion fell on one of Philip's chief ministers who had previously been excommunicated.

- With the papal conclave deadlocked over a successor to Benedict, the French king succeeded in getting his preferred candidate elected—a Frenchman who took the name of Clement V. Wary of displeasing the king and mindful of the short-lived papacy of his predecessor, Clement V refused to move to Rome—and the Avignon papacy was born. From 1305 to 1376, seven popes would command the Catholic church from Avignon, not Rome, and would answer first and foremost to a succession of French kings.

- Since no French king wanted an Avignon pope to appear to be a lesser thing than a Roman pope, accommodation befitting the

office was needed. The answer was the Palais des Papes. The earliest buildings on the site date from 1252, a good half century before Clement V housed his papal court in Avignon and began a process of expanding and aggrandizing the palace that was continued by his successors.

- So if it looks like a bit of a jumble, that's because it was built in several stages, rather than as one distinct project, and the earlier Palais Vieux, which is more modest and simple, contrasts with the more ornate and extravagant Palais Neuf. The many defensive towers built into the walls, along with the battlements, make it look more like a castle than the home of a man of God, although chapels, cloisters, and a bell tower can be found within.

- Even the Avignon popes themselves were seduced by the message of grandeur and power the Papal Palace was designed to convey—so much so that when a papacy was reestablished in Rome in 1377, the Avignon papacy continued. Two men—one in Rome and one in Avignon—each claimed to be the true pope and each excommunicated the other. This period is known as the Western Schism, and it would only end in 1417, when a single pope once again led the Catholic church from Rome. The Papal Palace remains, however, as a reminder of times that were as full of turbulence and bluster as the great mistral wind that blows through the region.

- As the palace is a UNESCO World Heritage site, it's certainly worth taking a tour. Don't expect a lot of ornate furniture and antiques, since the buildings were gradually stripped of most of their original treasures after the papacy returned to Rome, and the palace was used as a military barracks and even a prison. Even though it is fairly spartan inside, it still retains the power to impress, especially the Grand Tinel, the great meeting room where cardinals once gathered and elaborate feasts were served to thousands of guests.

Avignon says a great deal about how the performing arts are considered and receive generous subventions in France, from both the state and private sources. Coverage of very high-brow productions at Avignon features on national French television news bulletins—something you would rarely find in the United States or Britain.

- Significantly, even if the papal court left town many centuries ago, Avignon's reputation as a center for the arts and their patronage remains intact today. This is thanks in large part to the annual performing arts festival that takes place every midsummer, generally in July. The Festival d'Avignon, simply often just called Avignon,† was founded by a respected French actor, Jean Vilar, just after World War II, as a showcase for lesser-known and more modern theatrical works.

- The most prestigious productions are held in the Cour d'Honneur, or the Great Courtyard, inside the Palais des Papes. During the festival, the whole town of Avignon is overrun by actors, musicians, and dancers—along with hordes of spectators—from all over the world.

TRAVEL TIP

Many theaters of major cities, including Paris, are dark over the summer months—in part because nearly every serious French thespian will have decamped to Avignon. And unless you've booked a room months ahead of time, it can be impossible to find accommodation.

† Indeed, if you casually dropped the word *Avignon* into a conversation about your summer plans, a French person would probably assume you were referring to the festival rather than the city.

The Pont d'Avignon

- On the Rhône River, a site that has been immortalized in song for centuries is the famous Pont d'Avignon.[16B] There are several bridges across the Rhône in Avignon, but the song is about the Pont Saint-Bénézet, built in the 12th century. It was once a toll bridge that brought in considerable revenue until most of the bridge was washed away during a bad flood at the end of the 17th century. What we have left today are four arches of what would have been a 22-arch span and a mere shadow of what would have been a 1,000-yard-long bridge in its heyday.

- A small chapel dedicated to Saint Nicolas still exists on what remains of the bridge, but that hardly explains why this may be one of the most visited incomplete bridges in the world. Perhaps we must attribute this to a 15th-century folk song that is still immensely popular with kids (and French learners) all over the world.

Pont d'Avignon

With the rich and fertile land around the Rhône and the fabulous sunny and warm climate, Avignon—and, indeed, Provence in general—is a perfect place to grow fruit and vegetables. The signature vegetarian dish of Provence is ratatouille, whose name, like several other dishes in the south of France, is derived from an Occitan verb meaning "to stir up."

- As you leave Avignon, you'll probably step through a gate in the old city walls, as most of the key sites in Avignon are intra muros. These ramparts run for more than two-and-a-half miles around the city, and today we have two very distinct groups to thank for them: the popes who had them built in the 14th century and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc,‡ who renovated them in the 19th century.

- As a marker of where the old town met the new modern one in the 19th century, the original city train station[16C] lies just outside the city walls.

‡ Viollet-le-Duc worked on the walls of Carcassonne as well as the restoration of Notre-Dame and the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

- Slightly northwest of Avignon is a small town that is also the name of a legendary wine: Châteauneuf-du-Pape,[16D] which translates to the Pope's New Castle—and that's precisely what it was in the 14th century, when the castle was built there as a summer residence for the pontiff.[16E] Nowadays, it draws tourists and is better known as home to the vineyards that produce one of the finest Côtes du Rhône.

- If the distinctively embossed bottles help it stand out on the shelves of better wine stores, it finds favor with many wine critics who appreciate its bold, full body while not necessarily being forced to wait too long for it to mature.

- Like many of the best French wines, it's a blend. In this case, it's a combination of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre grapes, along with some other varietals in much smaller quantities. It's a popular choice for those looking for a wine with big tannins to work with hearty meat dishes (especially beef and lamb) and stronger cheeses. Since the growing area feels the force of the mistral winds, the vines apparently suffer from fewer pests than would otherwise be expected. Fewer pests means less use of pesticides, and all this contributes to the importance of a specific *terroir*.

Mourvèdre grapes

Mont Ventoux

- One of the best places to feel the full force of the mistral is on top of a mountain, and the tallest in the region is Mont Ventoux,[16F] where it can gust to up to 200 miles per hour. Mont Ventoux might only be a mere 6,000 feet tall, but it stands out like a beacon from the surrounding countryside. Its proximity to Avignon has also contributed to its fame, and the poet Petrarch, who was at the Avignon papal court, was one of the first to wax lyrical about its imposing and daunting outlook.

- The top of the mountain is bare limestone scree; there are no trees or foliage, making it look almost like a lunar landscape. From a distance on a hot, sunny day, it seems like the top of Mont Ventoux is covered in snow, but that only happens in winter. During most of the year, it's just bare white rock. There is little to no water here, especially during the summer months. It is one of the harshest and most inhospitable places on the planet—but it is well worth a visit.

- In recent years, it has become a favorite challenge for cyclists and features regularly in the Tour de France, the most famous cycling race in the world, which takes place every July. Because of several extremely steep gradients and the challenges of the summit, Mont Ventoux has been nicknamed Le Géant de Provence, or the Giant of Provence, and has been described as the "most fearsome climb in cycling."

- Unsurprisingly, Mont Ventoux has seen many dramatic episodes unfold over the years, none more so than the sad death of Englishman Tom Simpson during the Tour de France of 1967. There is a granite memorial on the spot where he died,[16G] a few hundred yards from the top of Mont Ventoux.

Resources

Print

Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, "The Tour de France as Epic."

La Pradelle, *Market Day in Provence*.

Mayle, *A Year in Provence*.

Web

http://www.palais-des-papes.com/en/content/discover (Palais des Papes website)

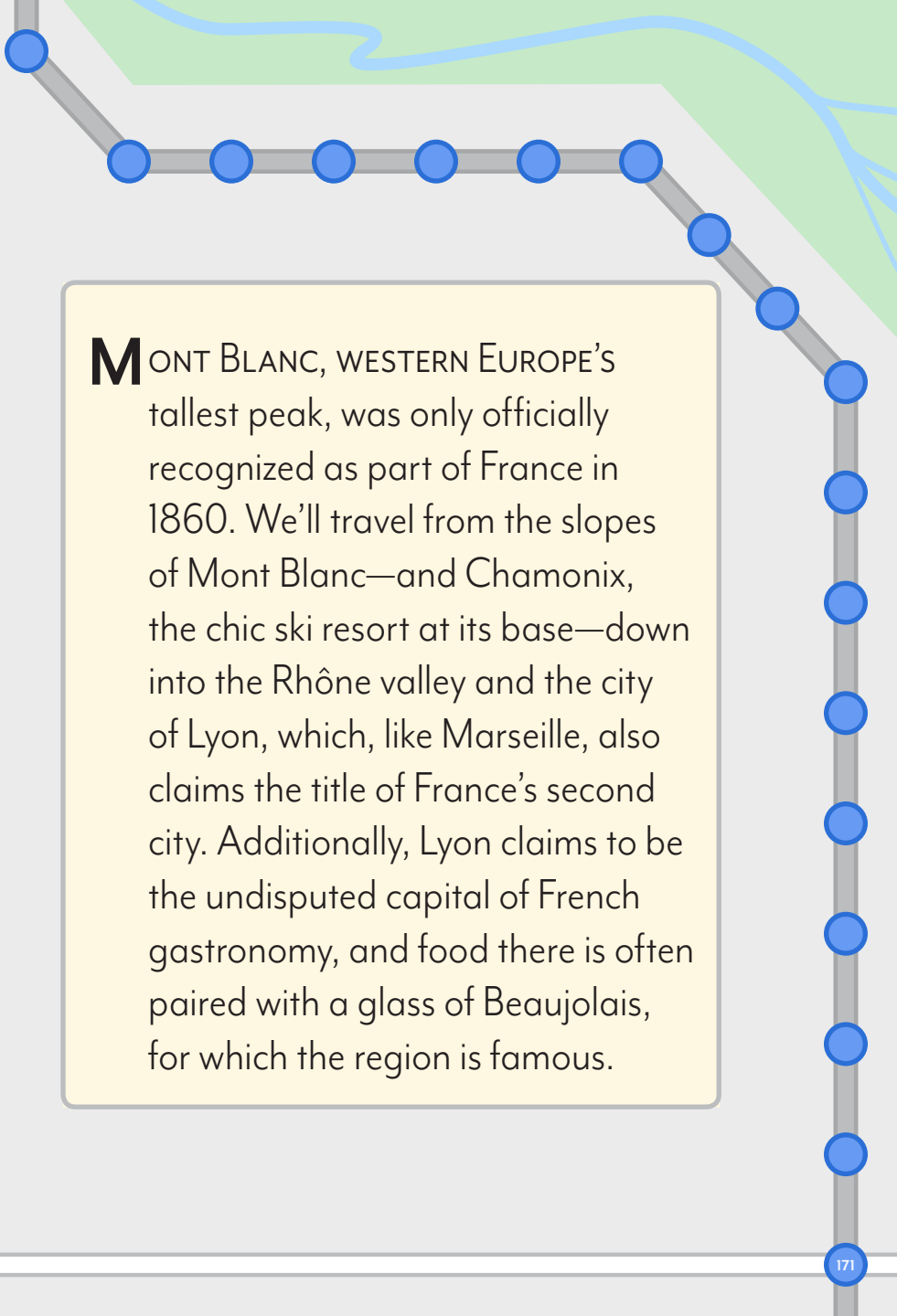
Film

Jean de Florette

Manon des sources

17

The French Alps, Lyon, and Beaujolais



Mont Blanc, western Europe's tallest peak, was only officially recognized as part of France in 1860. We'll travel from the slopes of Mont Blanc—and Chamonix, the chic ski resort at its base—down into the Rhône valley and the city of Lyon, which, like Marseille, also claims the title of France's second city. Additionally, Lyon claims to be the undisputed capital of French gastronomy, and food there is often paired with a glass of Beaujolais, for which the region is famous.

Mont Blanc

- Mont Blanc[17A] (White Mountain) is so named because of its permanently snowcapped summit. It is part of the French Alps, which, in the greater geological scheme of things, is a fairly young mountain range. At roughly 16,000 feet, Mont Blanc is the Alps' tallest peak—and more than twice as tall as Mont Ventoux. But you don't need to be a climber to appreciate the alpine scenery, where glaciers have carved spectacular vistas through the mountains.

- Though if you are interested in climbing, then Mont Blanc can claim to be where rock and ice climbing as a pastime was born. The first recorded ascent of the mountain took place in 1786—by two men from the village at its base, Chamonix.[17B] Since then, many thousands have scaled Mont Blanc, and about 200 people now summit it each day during the summer months. Unfortunately, at least 1,400 people have lost their lives in the attempt over the years.

- Mont Blanc's original name was the Montagne Maudite, or Cursed Mountain. Other spectacular peaks in the Massif du Mont Blanc, or Mont Blanc range, include the sharp-peaked and sheer-faced Aiguille du Midi,[17C] which, like Mont Blanc, is large enough to be seen from the top of Mont Ventoux.

17A 17B 17C

- Climbing is not the only alpine sport associated with Mont Blanc; skiing in its various forms takes pride of place among the winter sports in France, and for many, Chamonix/Mont Blanc is its capital. It hosted the first Winter Olympics in 1924 and today welcomes around 5 million visitors a year. Tourism is the big industry here, as it is for much of the French Alps. City officials in Chamonix lobbied to have the name of the mountain added to its full name—to become Chamonix–Mont-Blanc—just in case anyone was wondering where Chamonix* was located.

- From Chamonix, it's easy to access slopes of varying difficulty, and the whole town is geared up to cater to the hordes of visitors, especially during the winter. While summer can also be busy in the Alps, it's definitely the season to visit if you enjoy looking at the landscape, as the countryside is even more eye-catching with all the alpine flowers in bloom. Since much of the land is too steep to be farmed and is often used mainly for grazing animals, pesticides are less common, resulting in an array of wildflowers.

* To locals and the après-ski crowd, Chamonix is simply known as Cham.

Lyon's Gastronomic Delights

- The city of Lyon[17D] is located in the lowlands of the Rhône valley. Like Marseille, it claims to be France's second city; unlike Marseille, it claims to be France's top foodie destination, even above Paris.

- Geographically, Lyon is roughly halfway between Paris and the Mediterranean, so it is a good place to blend the best culinary traditions from the north and south of France. It's a major city in the Rhône valley, so it's near the region of Burgundy, which is famous for fine wine and food. And given that Lyon is also where the Rhône and the Saône Rivers meet, it's located at a major transportation axis in France and has been since Roman times, so produce from outside the area has always found a ready way into the city. All of this has made Lyon very attractive to top chefs.

- Two of Lyon's finest chefs are Paul Bocuse and Eugénie Brazier. Bocuse, whose statue sits proudly in the tourist office in Lyon, founded several Michelin three-star restaurants. In the 1960s, he was credited with the creation of nouvelle cuisine in France, using fresh ingredients and lighter sauces in contrast to the heavier dishes of classic French cuisine.

- Brazier was the proprietor of the acclaimed restaurant La Mère Brazier,[17E] which set the standard for haute cuisine in early to mid-20th-century France. She, unfortunately, is a lot less well known than her student, Bocuse, but she was the first chef—male or female—to hold six Michelin stars at the same time, a record she kept for 65 years. She has been described as the mother of modern French cooking, creating such delights as *langouste belle aurore*, lobster served in brandy and cream.

Eugénie Brazier's cookbook, *Les secrets de la mère Brazier*, was published in 2009, and in 2014, it was translated into English as *La Mère Brazier: The Mother of Modern French Cooking*.

- Lyon is an ideal place for fine dining. It has tradition to draw on—a reputation to live up to—and outstanding fresh produce is readily available. But you can also dine out well on a budget in Lyon. If you prefer a more informal dining experience, then you should seek out what are generally small and intimate restaurants called *bouchons*, many of which are still holding their own, even in the era of fast food. *Bouchons* are the Lyons equivalent of the bistro and are found in the older parts of town. While there is no typical Lyon cuisine, the dishes on offer at the *bouchons* reflect local agriculture and will likely include pork, veal, lamb, and game. Fish is generally widely on offer, too.

Beaujolais

- Known as a *bouchons* wine, Beaujolais owes its wine dominance of the region to the fact that, in 1395, Duke Philip the Bold outlawed the growing of the Gamay grape variety in his duchy of Burgundy. He much preferred wine from the Pinot Noir grape and declared that this was more suitable for an aristocratic palate—inadvertently laying the foundation for Burgundy's modern wine trade.

- To obey Philip, Gamay cultivation moved south of his lands and came into its own along a 30-mile stretch of the Saône, where 98 percent of all grapes grown are now Gamay. Take Gamay grapes, add some Pinot Noir, and you get Beaujolais.


Beaujolais vineyard

- It used to be that the wine had a reputation as the cheap and cheerful drink that locals used to celebrate a successful harvest. But in the 1970s, winemaker and entrepreneur Georges Duboeuf had the ingenious idea of building on a longstanding friendly rivalry to see which Beaujolais producer could be first to get their new vintage to Paris. With some clever marketing, the arrival of each year's Beaujolais nouveau became an event.

- Beaujolais wine is naturally light and low in tannins—qualities that are the opposite of the most notable red Burgundies and Bordeaux wines—but Duboeuf turned this lightness into an asset, marketing Beaujolais as a wine that anyone could enjoy immediately, not something that was fussy and had to be stored in particular conditions in order to mature. Beaujolais nouveau can even be served chilled—unusual for a red, but perfect for a summer drink.

- The winemakers of the region pride themselves on what has become known as the Beaujolais method, which delivers maximum color and aroma from the grapes with minimum acidity and which takes approximately two months to turn grapes from the vine into bottled wine—ready for drinking on Beaujolais Nouveau Day, the third Thursday of November each year.

Notable Sites of Lyon

- Located at the confluence of two of France's major rivers—the Rhône and the Saône—the city of Lyon developed on the rivers' banks, as well as in an area called the Presqu'île, or Peninsula. As you look at the numerous bridges and the banks of the rivers, you could almost imagine yourself in Paris.

- Like Paris, and indeed Marseille, Lyon has its own 19th-century Catholic cathedral perched on its highest point: the Notre-Dame de Fourvière.[17F] It represents another very visible reminder of the importance of the Catholic church in France and its concerted effort at the end of the 19th century to persuade the faithful to return to its embrace, as opposed to atheistic left-wing ideologies and the secularism of the republic.

Notre-Dame de Fourvière

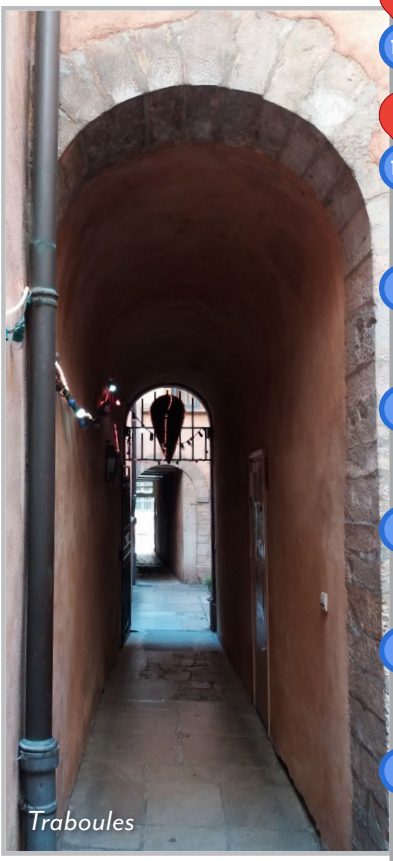
- Not only can the basilica be seen from just about all areas of the city, but it also affords the best views over the city. The Romans understood this about its site, which was also the location of the city's ancient Roman forum. Two well-preserved Roman theaters are also found in the vicinity, one with a 10,000-seat capacity[17G] and a smaller one that once had a roof.[17H] They are yet another reminder of how the center and south of France were major centers of Gallo-Roman culture and civilization.

17G

17H

- From the vantage point of the basilica, let's wander back down the hill to the Vieux Lyon[171] neighborhood and cross over the Saône into a part of town called the Croix-Rousse,[17J] once home to the city's silk weavers. These two neighborhoods are honeycombed with narrow, covered passageways—generally hidden—that are a feature of Lyon and that are called the *traboules*.

- In Gallo-Roman and medieval times, these passageways were designed to allow access to the river Saône for water. As the silk trade developed after the Renaissance, the *traboules* became a means of carrying precious and fragile cargo while sheltered from the elements. Estimates of the number of *traboules* vary; some say there are as many as 400 in Lyon. They have acquired a special poignancy since, as a network of secret passageways, they were widely used by members of the resistance during World War II.



Traboules

TRAVEL TIP

There are at least 40 *traboules* in Lyon that are open to the public—if you know what to look for. You will find small, discreet signs on the walls in the Vieux Lyon and Croix-Rousse neighborhoods: an arrow next to a lion's head. Maps and apps are available to help.

- Auguste and Louis Lumière are two brothers who were not born in Lyon but are forever associated with the city, as it was here that what they invented made them famous the world over: the Cinématographe, or the movies.

- Cinema is so revered in France because it's where it all began—and the French are extremely proud of that fact. And what better place to visit to demonstrate this than the Institut Lumière,[17K] located slightly east of central Lyon.

- The institute is where the first motion picture, *La sortie des usines Lumière*, or *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, was shot in March 1895. This flickering 50-second black-and-white spectacle launched a phenomenon that has transformed the world's visual culture. The Cinématographe, which photographed, developed, and projected images, was like nothing before it. Since it was portable, light, and easy to use and consumed relatively little film stock, the Cinématographe held immense appeal.

- A public showing was organized for the end of 1895 in Paris—essentially the first public movie show ever. Moving images like those projected by the Cinématographe had never been seen before. The Cinématographe would go on to be developed and enhanced and would lend its name to a radical new form of creative expression: cinema. The Lumières' home and the site of their factory has become a place of pilgrimage for lovers of the seventh art, as the French refer to cinema.

17K

Resource

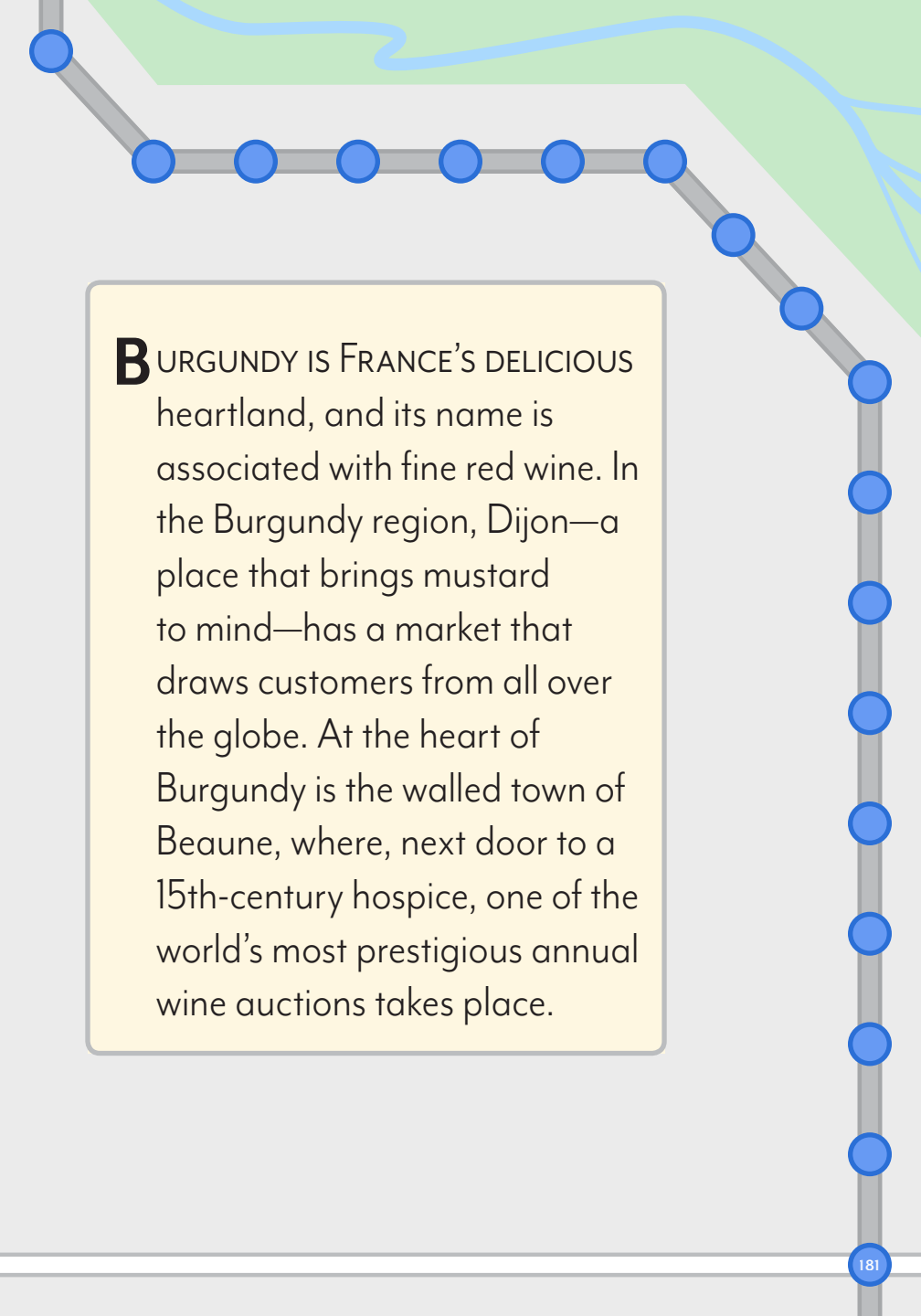
Web

https://en.lyon-france.com/Discover-Lyon/heritage-unesco (Lyon tourist website)

18

Dijon and Burgundy: The Delicious Heartland

Les Halles Centrales



BURGUNDY IS FRANCE'S DELICIOUS heartland, and its name is associated with fine red wine. In the Burgundy region, Dijon—a place that brings mustard to mind—has a market that draws customers from all over the globe. At the heart of Burgundy is the walled town of Beaune, where, next door to a 15th-century hospice, one of the world's most prestigious annual wine auctions takes place.

Les Halles Centrales

- Burgundy[18A] is yet another region of France that seems to retain its own very distinct identity. In the 14th and 15th centuries, Burgundy was politically independent from the rest of the country and an extremely wealthy duchy. Burgundian independence only ended in 1477, with the death of Charles le Téméraire, the last duke of Burgundy from the Valois dynasty. Shortly after Charles's death, the large duchy was carved up between France and the Hapsburg empire (with its power base in what is modern-day Austria).

- Since Burgundy was—and is—a prosperous region, its acquisition was an excellent deal for France. It's easy to see, however, why regional pride persists here, since Burgundy was its own independent state up until the medieval period. And it's this history of wealthy dukes ruling Burgundy, with a determination to make their court as splendid as possible, that helps explain the quality of the earliest-surviving buildings in the region.

- A structure that has great significance for Dijon and Burgundy is Les Halles Centrales,[18B] the covered market that houses around 200 stalls and that was built toward the end of the 19th century. The market's design is the work of Louis-Clément Weinberger and was clearly inspired by the great Les Halles market of Paris—a building that kept Paris fed for more than a hundred years before it was largely demolished in 1971.

- Like the Eiffel Tower,* Dijon's covered market is a 19th-century homage to the architectural possibilities of cast iron. Just as the great medieval cathedrals make stone seem weightless as it soars in columns and vaults to form roofs, so 19th-century builders achieved similar feats with cast iron. So even if you don't want anything from the market, you should still pay a visit to Les Halles Centrales just to marvel at how elegant iron architecture can be.

* Some guidebooks erroneously claim that Les Halles Centrales was designed by Gustave Eiffel—best known for his design of the Parisian tower that bears his name—though he was born in Dijon.

- And just like the craftsmen of the great medieval cathedrals, who put decoration in places that would not necessarily be obvious to users of their buildings, so the builders of Dijon's covered market incorporated decorative features that hark back to earlier times. In particular, the designs of animal heads and gods are included in many of the spandrels, or areas where the pillars meet the arches.

- For the French, shopping at markets like Les Halles Centrales is all about a cultural tradition based on a quest for a perceived freshness and an interaction with the vendor that is not found in most supermarkets.

- The most successful market vendors are those who understand the art of staging their products—putting the best, brightest, freshest-looking fruit and vegetables at the top of abundant pyramids and trying to array the different items with the skill of a painter to catch the eye of the buyer. This sought-after visual appeal of the items, coupled with a vendor's affability for the customer he or she is dealing with at the time, can make a visit to the market a far more engaging experience than a trip to the supermarket.

TRAVEL TIP

You should never just grab at fruit on a French market stall; the vendor has probably spent hours arranging his or her stand and may give you a frosty look, or worse, if you start fondling items without permission. Saying bonjour, smiling, and pointing at something you're interested in is the wisest means of initiating a closer look.

- Perhaps even more importantly, though, markets also have an important social function in France, as a meeting place for shoppers, still mainly women, who keep to a regular routine. Many covered markets, such as Les Halles Centrales in Dijon, feature a *buvette*, or drinks stand/café where vendors and patrons can congregate and relax.

- Like most of the large covered markets in France, in Les Halles Centrales you'll find local *bouchers* (butchers), *charcutiers* (pork butchers), *fromagers* (cheese stalls), *boulangers* (bakers), and *épiciers* (spice stalls, which will often primarily sell fruits and vegetables). A large number of products that are sold in Les Halles Centrales of Dijon come from far and wide, but many of the most sought-after items are local. You can even find *traiteurs*, catering stalls that sell ready-made specialties of the region that just need to be heated up in an oven. One of the most popular local dishes you can buy in this way is *boeuf* (beef) *bourguignon*.

Burgundy's Best-Known Foods

- People come to Burgundy to enjoy an authentic *boeuf bourguignon* because of all the local ingredients found in the genuine article. This is far more sophisticated than your average beef stew: The beef should be tender but marbled meat from the famous white Charolais cattle who graze in the south of Burgundy. The mushrooms, cured pork, and onions, along with other vegetables and herbs, should all come from the Burgundy region. And that stock used to slowly braise this dish should ideally include a local red Burgundy.


Boeuf bourguignon

- But local Charolais beef is not the only example of high-quality livestock found in the region. The celebrated white-feathered *poulets de Bresse*, or Bresse chickens, are prized by chefs and have their own *appellation d'origine contrôlée*; apart from their breed, they also have to be raised in the region to achieve that desirable status.

- Though hardly livestock, snails are also a specialty of the region—known as the oysters of Burgundy—and black snails are highly sought-after. The traditional accompaniment is garlic butter and parsley.

- Dijon's best-known food item is surely that "condiment of kings"—mustard—even though mustard is no longer mass-produced in Dijon itself. What goes into Dijon mustard is primarily a blend of fine mustard seeds, wine, and the highly acidic juice of unripe grapes, known as *verjus*. Inevitably, Dijon has several stores that specialize in the sale of mustard, and the variety of blends on sale in such stores is impressive.

- The local black currants, or cassis, are used to make the popular liqueur crème de cassis. This can be drunk on its own, but in its most popular form, it is enjoyed in a Kir, which mixes the local liqueur with white wine—ideally a white Burgundy, such as Chablis.† Today, a Kir is probably France's favorite aperitif, especially for those who have a sweet tooth. A notable exception to this Burgundy-centered cocktail is the Kir Royale, which uses Champagne in place of white wine.

TRAVEL TIP

If you order a Kir in a café, you may be given the option of a different fruit liqueur than crème de cassis to add to your drink—such as a Kir Framboise, made with raspberry liqueur.

† The Kir cocktail is named after Félix Kir, a former mayor of Dijon and Catholic priest who served it at municipal functions to showcase both the local liqueur and white wine.

Beaune

- Let's move on to Beaune[18C] in the heart of the Côte-d'Or, the Golden Hillside, which combines the prestigious Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune wine regions.

- The Hôtel-Dieu,[18D] also known as the Hospices de Beaune, was built toward the end of the Hundred Years' War as a charity hospital to accommodate the poor, sick, and starving. Burgundy at the time was a duchy—and one that also included parts of northern France, Flanders, and Holland—and characteristic elements of these regions, especially Flanders, appear in its architecture.

- The Hôtel-Dieu has been described as a jewel of medieval architecture, and perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this incredible building is the roof. As you walk up to the Hôtel-Dieu, all you will see from the street is a plain slate roof. But step through the relatively modest entrance door, stand in the central courtyard, and take in the multicolored roof tiles, glazed and arranged to form various geometrical motifs.


Hôtel-Dieu

- The expense of such a design feature, when it was first built, means that it's typically only seen on valued public buildings or prestigious private ones. Here in Beaune, however, the roof covers a charity hospital meant to serve as an almshouse for the poor. The elaborate roof, seen only by those in the courtyard, seems to say that the purpose of the building is worth celebrating and taking pride in and that all those who enter should raise their eyes above things at ground level.

- But for the modern visitor to the Hôtel-Dieu, it's not just a question of looking up but also going in. Among the medieval treasures inside, you will find a work by the Flemish great master Rogier van der Weyden, the altarpiece polyptych entitled *Le Jugement dernier*, or *Last Judgement*. Like all early paintings on this theme, the vivid colors and depictions of those damned to an eternity in hell were supposed to terrify viewers and focus their minds on leading a blameless life. In complete contrast to this, there is the large Salle des Pôvres, or Room of the Poor, with a fine painted ceiling—not intended to be terrifying—and an array of 28 four-poster beds to accommodate the needy.

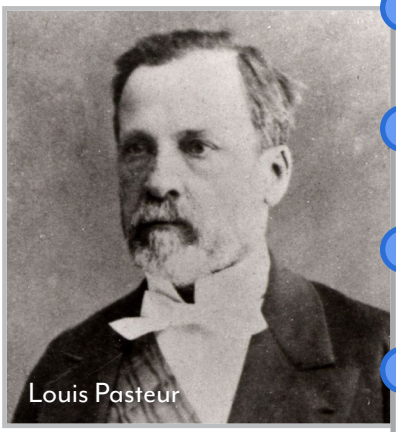
- Nicolas Rolin, who financed the Hôtel-Dieu in the 15th century, also endowed the hospice with vineyards. Other local notables followed his example, and so began the Hôtel-Dieu's connection with the world of fine wines. On the third Sunday in November every year, a celebrated charity wine auction administered by Christie's takes place in Beaune. But this is not just a staid auction of fine wines; it is part of a three-day festival known as the Trois Glorieuses, which includes performances, parades, and even a half-marathon, as well as the obvious wine tastings.

Le Jugement dernier, Rogier van der Weyden

- Old and rare vintages from all over Burgundy are featured at the tastings, while the auction itself is mainly made up of *grands crus* and *premiers crus* from the hospice's own estates. Beyond a mere auction, though, sales also serve to set the prices for the entire vintage, although they tend to be inflated because the goal of the sale is charitable. Today, you don't even have to be present in Beaune to participate in the auction; Christie's LIVE allows well-heeled wine lovers from all over the world to participate in the bidding online.

Louis Pasteur: Savior of the French Wine Industry

- A significant amount of French wine being produced and transported in the mid-19th century tasted foul—it was essentially vinegar. This was a national crisis, and in 1863, Emperor Napoléon III called upon Burgundy native Louis Pasteur to find a solution.


Louis Pasteur

- The reason he was brought in to help the French wine industry is because of the life saving reputation his work had already earned him. As a chemist who worked as a biologist, he transformed lives with his scientific discoveries and is even described as a father of microbiology. Pasteur is the man behind numerous discoveries that have changed all our lives, including vaccination, microbial fermentation, and the understanding of a need to combat germs.

- If rabies and anthrax are no longer the threat they were in the Western world, then that is thanks to Pasteur. If you enjoy wine, beer, and milk without becoming sick, then that, too, is probably due to pasteurization, the process of applying mild heat to prevent bacterial contamination—a process that was later named in his honor.

- Why was a lot of mid-19th century French wine undrinkable? Pasteur observed bacteria in this wine. In an effort to destroy bacteria, Pasteur experimented with boiling wine, but this made it taste even worse. A sweet spot was needed that killed the bacteria but didn't spoil the wine, and that point proved to be 57 degrees Celsius, or 135 degrees Fahrenheit. And voilà—French wine was saved. Little wonder, then, that the major institution for scientific research in France should be called the Institut Pasteur.

Pasteur is supposed to have said, "A bottle of wine contains more philosophy than all the books in the world."

Resources

Print

Ridley, *The Discovery of Jeanne Baret*.

Web

https://www.beaune-tourism.com (Beaune tourist office)

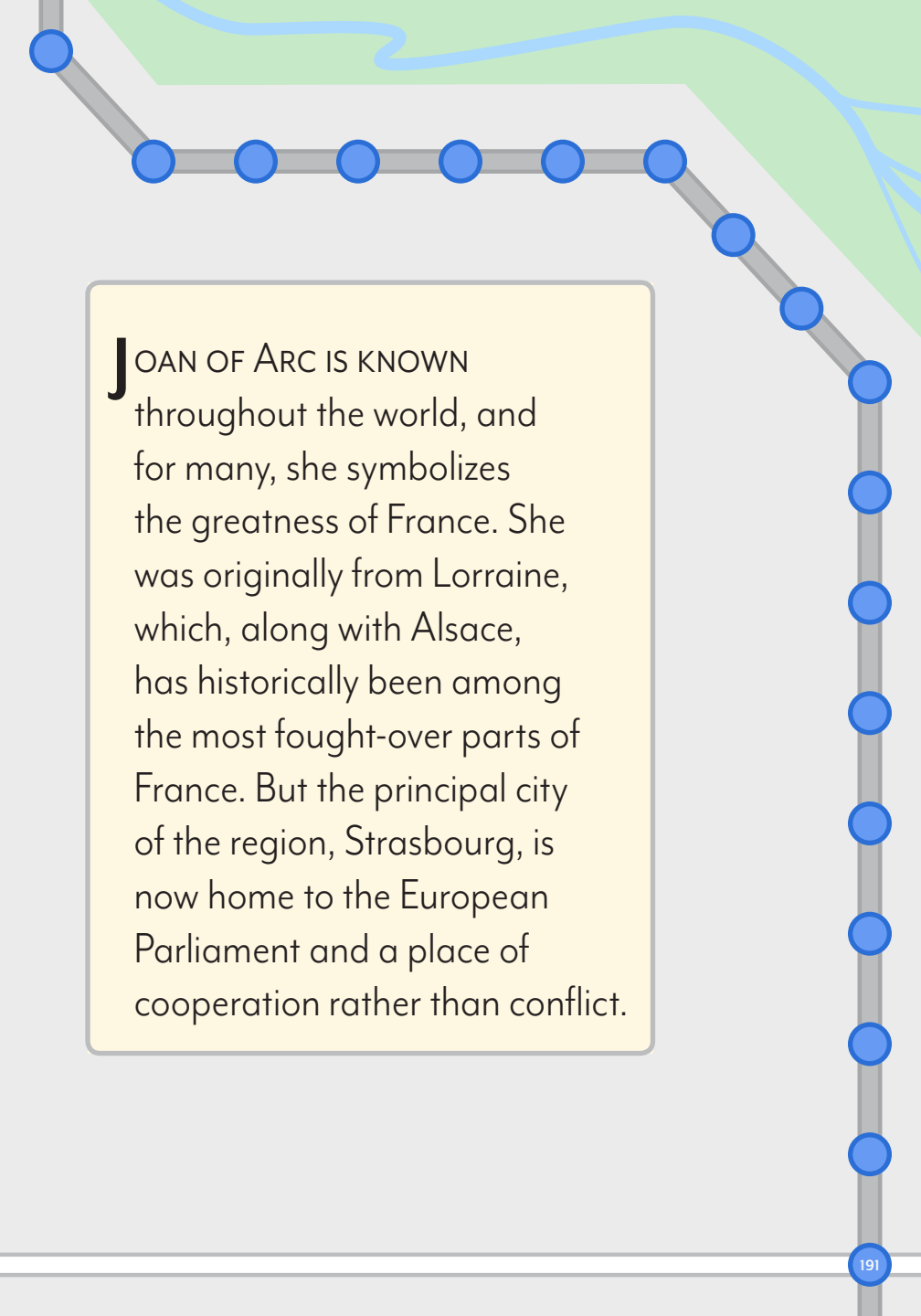
Film

Lucie Aubrac

A Year in Burgundy

19

Alsace and Lorraine: France Meets Germany



JOAN OF ARC IS KNOWN throughout the world, and for many, she symbolizes the greatness of France. She was originally from Lorraine, which, along with Alsace, has historically been among the most fought-over parts of France. But the principal city of the region, Strasbourg, is now home to the European Parliament and a place of cooperation rather than conflict.

Lorraine: Home of Joan of Arc

- Let's journey into Lorraine[19A] and the home of Jeanne d'Arc—Joan of Arc—France's best-known heroine. If you visit the small hamlet of Domrémy, where she was born, you can still see her parents' house.[19B] The village was later renamed Domrémy-la-Pucelle in her honor, as Jeanne la Pucelle, or Joan the Maiden, is her nickname.

- Joan was a true believer in her Catholic faith. At age 13, she claims to have had her first vision, which featured the archangel Michael, who instructed her to save France—and over the following few years, she genuinely did.

- Fought in the late Middle Ages, the Hundred Years' War between France and England was essentially a dynastic struggle between the French Capetians and the English Plantagenets, the latter holding much land in France at the time. France had been devastated by defeats such as Agincourt in 1415. When Joan appeared on the scene in 1429, France was at its lowest ebb.

- Charles, the dauphin, or heir to the French throne, held only a small area of land and was unable to be crowned in Reims, as tradition dictated. He was known pejoratively as the *roi de Bourges*, or king of Bourges, the small town in the center of France where he had moved the French court for safety. On top of that, the English held Paris and were besieging the key city of Orléans. All appeared lost—and then Joan rode in to the rescue.

- Back in her native Lorraine, Joan had been pestering a local nobleman for permission to visit the court of the dauphin. Fortunately for France, he finally gave in. She donned men's clothing, cut her hair, and convinced Charles of her visions, credentials, and purity—a *pucelle*, or maiden, could not be in league with the devil, after all. Against all odds, she raised the Siege of Orléans and energized the French forces, leading them on to more victories. Thanks to Joan, the dauphin Charles was able to be crowned Charles VII, king of France, in Reims in 1429.

- Joan was from a peasant background—an uneducated female teenager who was leading a French army—yet she appears to have more than held her own at the French court. Unfortunately for Joan, she was captured by the Burgundians at Compiègne in northern France. As a consequence of complicated 15th-century political allegiances, Joan was sold to the English, who understandably wanted her out of the picture. She was tried before an ecclesiastical court on a charge of heresy regarding her visions. The French clerics, who were aligned with the English, found her guilty, and she was burned at the stake in Rouen in 1431, aged just 19—though she was posthumously cleared of the heresy charge by another ecclesiastical court soon after the end of the Hundred Years' War.

- Over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, Joan's exploits inspired new generations of Frenchmen and women from both the left and the right sides of the political spectrum, and a large, gold-colored equestrian statue of Joan of Arc now stands near the Louvre in Paris as a prominent symbol of what she achieved for her country.

Joan of Arc at the Siege of Orléans

Alsace: Lorraine's Neighbor

- It becomes easier to understand why Joan of Arc has become such a key figure for French nationalism and national identity when you look at where she came from.

- Alsace[19C] and its neighbor Lorraine have changed hands five times since the 17th century. This has always been a contested region, and thus it's another region that has its own distinct history and culture. In the case of Alsace, you could also add its own language; Alsatian, a German dialect, is still widely spoken in rural areas. You may even see bilingual French-Alsatian street signs, as Alsatian is recognized as a regional language by the French government, though its use in the general population is in decline.

- The Vosges Mountains,[19D] which lie between Alsace and Lorraine, may be less spectacular than the Alps, but there are gorgeous views to be had. Based on the architecture of this small village, Lorraine looks more alpine or German than typically French.

Vosges Mountains

- In 1870, France suffered a humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and was forced to cede all of Alsace and much of Lorraine, as well as forced to pay crippling reparations to the victors. With the Franco-German border having moved west and now inside what had been France, this meant that much of the fighting in World War I took place in Lorraine, rather than farther east.

- The battle that defines La Grande Guerre, or the Great War, for the French is the Battle of Verdun, which raged for most of 1916. It has been estimated that there were close to 1 million casualties at Verdun. The German commander had stated that his aim was to bleed the French forces dry—and in that he was successful, even if the French are viewed as having been eventually victorious. Whole villages in the region that were caught in the crossfire disappeared off the map.

- Since much of the fighting took place in her native Lorraine, Joan of Arc was the perfect heroine to save and protect France once again. For the French propaganda effort, damaged statues of Joan indicated German barbarity, whereas intact ones among the rubble were proof of her miraculous powers. Even after the war, Joan appeared in statues to commemorate the fallen.

- Today, Lorraine is still peppered with reminders of the Grande Guerre, including forts and various defenses. Thanks to the change in the position of the border, Lorraine's neighbor Alsace was saved from much of the destruction in that terrible war.

Local Alsatian fare includes *baeckeoffe*, a meat stew, and *choucroute garnie*, a hearty sauerkraut with boiled potatoes, pork loin, bacon, and a variety of sausages.


Choucroute garnie

Strasbourg

- Let's head east to Strasbourg,[19E] whose newer neighborhoods touch the west bank of the Rhine. For many, it's a city that symbolizes European cooperation and harmony rather than conflict.

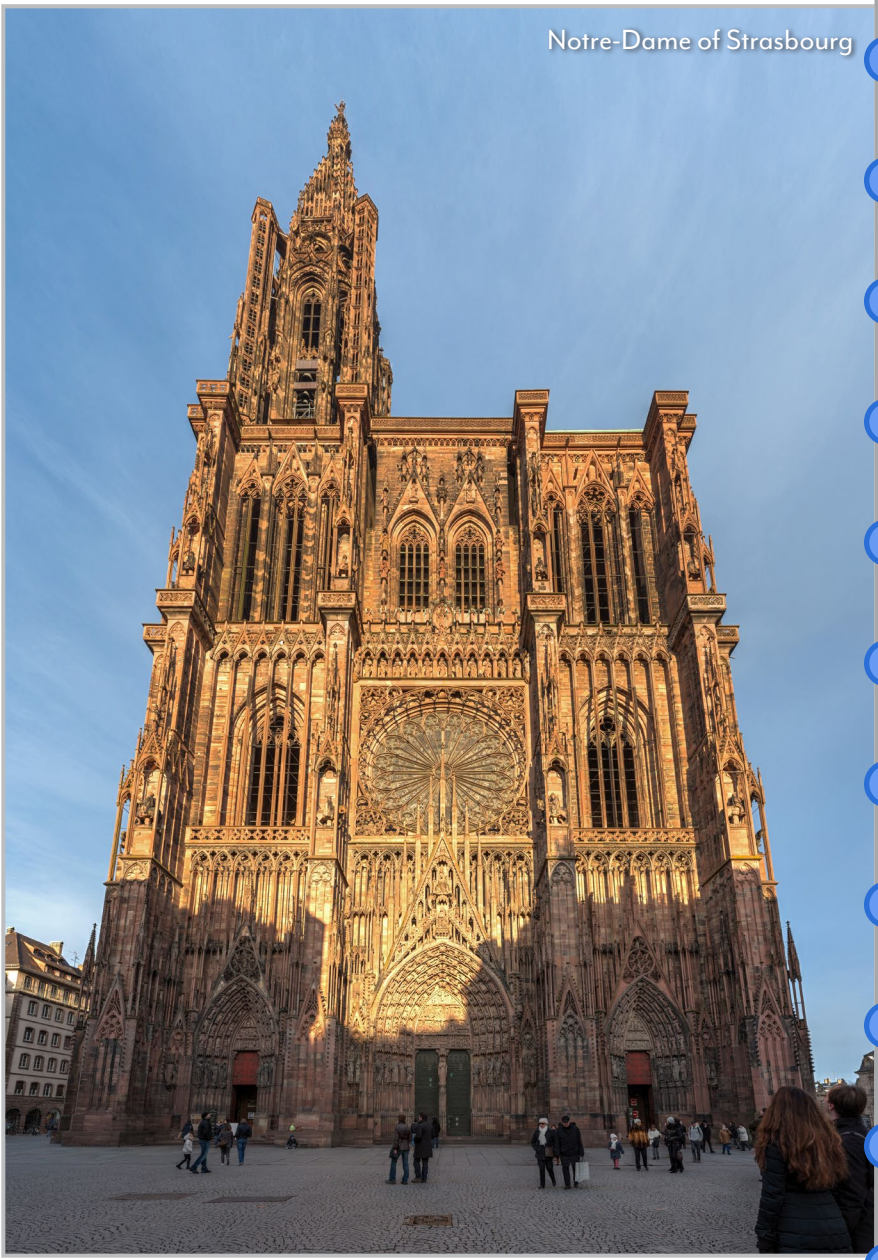
- The picturesque center of Strasbourg is located on the Grande Île,[19F] situated on the bank of the Ill River, which feeds into the Rhine a few miles downstream. The standout building on the Grande Île is the cathedral—as is also the case in many European and French cities—and for Strasbourg, it's the Cathédrale Notre-Dame.[19G]

- Begun in the 11th century and only completed with a single vertiginously tall spire in the 15th century, the Notre-Dame of Strasbourg, especially the intricately sculpted west façade, looks way too delicate and ornate to have survived nearly six centuries and many destructive wars. Repairs had to be made after World War II, but they were done well, as is often the case in France.

- There are a few things that set this cathedral apart from many others in France. The first is the color of the stone: It's essentially a pink sandstone, also found in many of the larger stone buildings in the area, that gives a lovely reddish tone to the cathedral in the sunlight. The second is the very large astronomical clock,* L'Horloge Astronomique, built during the Renaissance that puts on a show inside the cathedral every day at 12:30.

- Much of the Grande Île, and the especially pretty section called Petite France,[19H] is pedestrianized for easy and relaxed strolling. The half-timbered black-and-white buildings, many from the 16th and 17th centuries, catch the eye, and it's easy to understand why this is a very tourist-centered neighborhood. The signs and markings on these buildings are in French but are written in a Gothic script, adding that Germanic feel.

* The clock's mechanism is actually from the 19th century, but that does help ensure that it runs consistently on time.



Notre-Dame of Strasbourg

Petite France

- The Grande Île features many restaurants and cafés, where you can find many good things to eat and drink. And since Germany is just a 15-minute tram ride away across the Rhine, there are many local lager-style beers to choose from.

- Alsace prides itself as being a rare French region that produces and enjoys both fine wine and good beer. Beer was initially brewed in monasteries, but breweries not linked to the church started to appear in 13th-century Strasbourg. Large-scale brewing began to develop in the 19th century, and beer is no longer considered to be just a working-class thirst quencher in France.

- These factors mean that beer is extremely big business in Alsace, which brews half of the beer produced in the country. Among the big local players are Kronenbourg, Karlsbrau, Fischer, and Meteor. Heineken France also has a very large presence in the Strasbourg suburb of Schiltigheim.

- Much like in the US, the UK, and the north of France, small-scale specialty craft brewers are currently thriving in Alsace. Just like in nearby Germany, although lagers are the most popular type of year-round beers, special seasonal offerings also appear, including a March beer, brewed with new barley, and a Christmas ale, a darker, heartier brew.

- Alsace is also one of France's major wine producers, and one of the rare places where the wine is named for its type of grape—in this case, Riesling or Gewürztraminer—rather than its location. And the picturesque wine-producing villages in Alsace are well worth a visit, even if it can seem more like a tour through Germany rather than France. The 100-mile-long Route du Vin in Alsace is an extremely popular tourist trail.

- If you can only manage one stop, that would probably be Riquewihr,[191] one of the most visited towns in France. Full of gorgeous medieval and Renaissance-era half-timbered houses, Riquewihr is very much a key modern center of wine production. It's also a place to pick up some of the fine local liqueurs, such as mirabelle, a plum brandy, and kirsch, a very popular cherry brandy.

- Out in the Alsatian countryside and also in parts of Lorraine, you may run into some of the fortifications of the Maginot Line, built before World War II to protect France from German invasion. Or you may be walking above them without knowing what's below your feet. The Maginot Line features huge bunkers, an underground train system, and hidden artillery posts, many linked by a network of subterranean tunnels equipped with air-filtration systems. But when the German attack came, the Maginot Line was bypassed and rendered a great military white elephant.

TRAVEL TIP

Strasbourg is home to one of the largest Christmas markets in Europe—so keep that in mind for travel here in December.

The French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," was written and first performed at the height of the revolution in 1792 at the Banque de France building in the Place Broglie in Strasbourg.

- Strasbourg is a highly important location on the European and world stage as one of the three European Union capitals, along with Brussels and Luxembourg. It also hosts several institutions outside the remit of the European Union, but the big player in town is the Parlement Européen,[19] or the European Parliament, a huge body with more than 700 representatives elected from all the member states of the European Union. Located a few miles from the Grande Île, the European administration buildings are an essential part of the city and include the impressive Louise Weiss building (named in honor of a long-serving French European parliamentarian), which houses the European Parliament.

- When the Conseil de l'Europe, or Council of Europe, was founded in 1949, with the goal of protecting democracy and human rights, it was decided to place the institution in Strasbourg precisely because of the city's war-torn, conflict-filled past. Today, Strasbourg views itself geographically and administratively at the very heart of Europe.

Parlement Européen

Resources

Print

Horne, *The Price of Glory*.

Warner, *Joan of Arc*.

Web

https://www.visit.alsace/en/strasbourg/ (official Alsace region Strasbourg tourist site)

https://www.meusetourism.com/en/sightseeing/step-into-history/the-great-war-in-the-meuse.html (official Meuse region website)

https://www.verdun-douaumont.com/en/ (Douaumont Ossuary website)

http://www.lignemaginot.com (Maginot Line website)

Film

La grande illusion

Paths of Glory

20

Paris Transformed: *La Belle Époque*

After our tour of France's regions, we travel back to Paris to take a look at how the growth of road and rail networks in the 19th century put the city at the hub of modern France. It was a time when Paris, and indeed France, underwent several profound social and cultural revolutions and the foundations were laid for the modern city we know today.

Napoléon III's Vision for Paris

- For Paris, the years between 1789 and 1848 was a period of revolution and the repeated overthrow of successive governing regimes. The revolution in 1848 finally got rid of the French monarchy for good. With left-wing ideologies taking root among a rapidly growing urban proletariat, hopes were high on the left for success in the elections that followed the revolution of 1848. It was the right, however, that emerged victorious, and it was a man named Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, nephew of Emperor Napoléon, who was declared president of the new Second Republic.

- Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte admired the wide streets and spacious parks of London and wondered if Paris could look as good. This seemed like a long-term project, and Louis-Napoléon had a problem: The constitution of the Second Republic only allowed a president one term. Something had to be done, and a coup d'état was manufactured in 1851 to transform Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, president of the Second Republic, into Emperor Napoléon III and launch France into a period called the Second Empire. With more power and authority at his command, the freshly minted Napoléon III was able to put his ambitious and expensive goals into action on a huge scale.

- To understand precisely what conditions Parisians were living in just before the Second Empire, we can delve into the pages of one of the finest writers of the period: Honoré de Balzac. The French equivalent of Charles Dickens, Balzac claimed to be France's secret historian, revealing in his fiction what is hidden from official versions of events.

- In his 1833 novel entitled *Ferragus*, Balzac describes Paris as *le plus délicieux des monstres*, "the most delicious of monsters." The Paris of the time attracted people in even though it was capable of devouring and destroying them. Hordes of people arrived from the provinces in hopes of making their fortune, and many of them had to live in squalid and overcrowded living conditions.

20A

- But it was not all dirt and grime in Paris during the first half of the 19th century. A growing bourgeoisie, with wealth and disposable income, showed an interest in the shops and consumer goods that were starting to appear.

- Early attempts to solve the issue of how to stay clean while strolling the streets of Paris were the *galeries*, or *passages*. Many of these covered arcades are still thriving today and can be found on the Rive Droite, or North Bank, of the Seine. One of the best known is the Galerie Vivienne,[20A] on the rue Vivienne, which opened in 1823. Visiting it is like stepping back in time to the 19th century.

- What these *galeries* have in common is that they are covered with glass and iron roofs, meaning that they are light and comfortable places to stroll, protected from the elements. If you wander around some of the neighborhoods on the Rive Droite, you'll probably come across several of these *passages*—and they are well worth a visit.

Haussmann's Transformation of Paris

- With the development of the arcades, early 19th-century Paris was gradually transforming into the modern city it is today. But the major changes to Paris that took place in the second half of the 19th century are attributed to Baron Haussmann, the man who, more than most, has left his mark on the city.

- Georges-Eugène Haussmann was in charge of the radical redesign of Paris. He was named Préfet (Prefect) de la Seine by Napoléon III in 1853 and was essentially the state-appointed* administrator in charge of Paris and its surrounding area.

- The place where these Second Empire changes were the most pronounced was around the Arc de Triomphe,† 20B where the number of avenues emanating from it grew from five to 12—hence the name Place de l'Étoile, also known as the Place Charles de Gaulle, as the word *étoile* means "star," for all the radiating avenues ‡that run from its center. And it's arguably because of these impressive and beautiful avenues that the Arc de Triomphe, the scene of French national celebrations, retains so much prestige.

- The area between the Place de la Concorde, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Place de l'Alma is known as the Triangle d'Or, or Golden Triangle, where many of the richest Parisians live, eat, and shop.

- Over a period of 17 years, Haussmann oversaw the demolition of around 12,000 buildings, especially in the maze of narrow streets at the center of the city. This was change on a massive scale and during a relatively short time frame. These were the great *percées*, or thruways, into the crowded older medieval neighborhoods that really stirred controversy.

20B

* The first directly elected mayor of Paris in modern times was Jacques Chirac, and that happened as late as 1977.

† The Arc de Triomphe was begun by the first Emperor Napoléon in 1806 but only completed 30 years later.

‡ The radiating avenues are mostly named after celebrated Napoleonic victories and famous Frenchmen.

TRAVEL TIP

The Place de l'Étoile/Charles de Gaulle is an extremely busy roundabout, so don't even think about crossing the road on foot to get to the Arc de Triomphe. The underground passageways are the only safe means to get there in one piece.

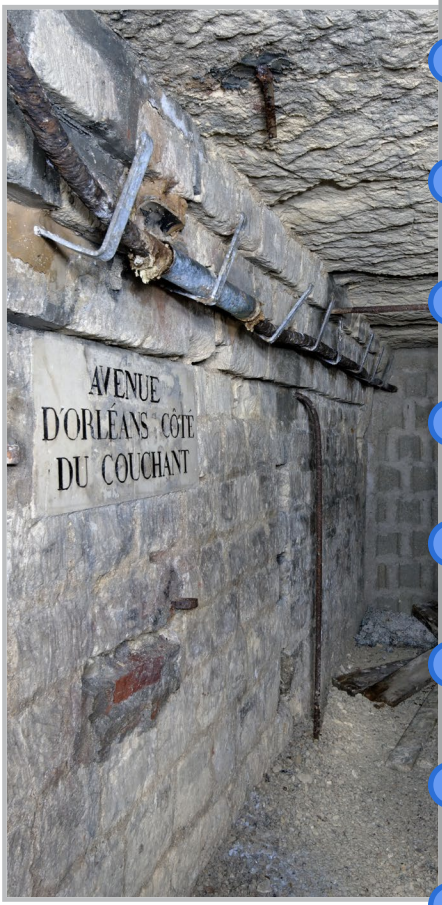
- Some of Haussmann's work involved clearances of medieval (some would say slum) neighborhoods. The best place to see this is actually right in the very heart of not only Paris, but France itself—on the Parvis de Notre-Dame,[20C] the large open esplanade in front of the cathedral, on the Île de la Cité. But in the 19th century, the scene would have been very different.

- On the ground in front of the west façade of the Notre-Dame cathedral are some zigzag lines etched into the pavement. These are the outlines of the buildings and streets demolished by Haussmann. And based on these outlines, the streets appear to have been very narrow and the houses densely packed.

- There were distinct advantages to cleaning up the city and widening the roads to create the lovely boulevards we enjoy today. Yes, there is a case that a major goal of this transformation was to enable the authorities to control the city more easily, but sanitation in old Paris had been extremely poor. Trash and human and animal waste ended up in channels in the streets, which ran into streams, which ended up in the filthy Seine River. Water was mainly drawn from wells but was often a source of fatal diseases—cholera outbreaks earlier in the 19th century had been devastating—and the situation was getting even worse as more and more people were crowding into Paris to find work.

- Apart from clearing neighborhoods and widening many streets, Haussmann also developed the Parisian sewer system, which for many was a lifesaver. Since the start of the 13th century, drainage channels in the middle of the streets were the way that Parisians took care of their wastewater, and this made the city both smelly and unhealthy. Some alleyways still retain a camber that directs rainwater into a central channel today. The 14th century brought the first vaulted drainage tunnels, but they were few and far between.

- It took Haussmann and an engineer named Eugène Belgrand to expand an underground sewerage system for Paris. Belgrand's great innovation was to harness the hydraulic power of the waste and rainwater to generate flow into the system. There are currently some 1,300 miles of sewerage tunnels under the city. It can be easy to lose your bearings below ground, so the roads above at street level are also signposted in the sewers, creating a kind of parallel alternative underground Paris.



Many Parisians are especially proud of the sewers. They have their own museum[20D] near the Pont de l'Alma (Alma Bridge) in a very select part of the city.

20D

- But if the narrow passageways of the sewers can leave you queasy, there's nothing like the open spaces of the Grands Boulevards to make you realize you're in Paris. And the characteristic buildings on these fine avenues are the *immeubles haussmanniens*, or Haussmann-style apartment blocks, many of which were built during the Second Empire or soon after. It has been estimated that around 60 percent of the apartments in Paris either are termed *haussmannien* or are influenced by this architectural style.

- An *immeuble haussmannien* cannot be taller than seven stories. The standout feature is the cut, or dressed, stone façade. All the floors have to be set at the same level, as are the windows, giving these buildings a lovely architectural unity.

Immeuble haussmannien

20E

Architectural Jewels of Paris

- Apart from the apartment blocks, several of the Grands Boulevards also feature buildings that likewise represent a new phenomenon in the second half of the 19th century: the great Parisian department stores, called the Grands Magasins, or Great Shops. Some of the best known are Galeries Lafayette and Printemps, the Bon Marché, and the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville.

- But the greatest architectural jewel of Paris from around this period is the Palais Garnier, or Opéra Garnier,[20E] and it's in the same neighborhood as several of the Grands Magasins. As often happens in France, a competition was established to select the design for the grand new opera house, and the winner was a young architect named Charles Garnier, whose design had been the largest and the most ambitious. It was designed to impress from the outside, with statues of gods, nymphs, and Apollo on top of the dome, along with a series of great musicians and the arts.

This was the height of *La Belle Époque*, or the Belle Epoque, a period between 1870 and 1914—and on up to the present day—when those with wealth enjoyed many of its advantages, including electricity and new consumer goods, many of which were sold in the nearby department stores.

Opéra Garnier

- The 2,000-seat auditorium is impressive, especially with a mid-20th-century ceiling by Marc Chagall. But the most telling feature of the Opéra Garnier is perhaps the Grand Foyer. It is extremely large, with the Grand Escalier, or Grand Staircase, featuring colored marble columns, molded stucco, and gorgeous frescoes on the ceiling. Mirrors give the impression of amplifying the space to make it appear even more imposing.

- The theater was an essential component of social life for wealthy Parisians—it was important to see and be seen there. Relationships were established and business deals were made in the foyers of Parisian theaters; for many, the performance was of secondary or little importance, compared to the value of visibility to one's social standing.

- Apart from the boulevards, housing, and sewers, another great addition to Paris were several parks—to give the residents a chance to breathe some fresher air and enjoy some green space. One of the most enjoyable new inner-city spaces from this period is the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in eastern Paris.[20F] Built on the hilly site of a former quarry and trash dump, it was designed by engineer Adolphe Alphand and architect Gabriel Davioud along the lines of the less regimented English parks.

- A lake and an accompanying island were built, along with a 200-foot-long suspended footbridge to give the impression of being in nature. This sense was enhanced by the winding pathways that run over the landscape within the park to create the illusion that it's larger than its 60 acres. But you are in Paris, and this is just an impression of nature—even the stalactites in the grotto containing a waterfall are humanmade—but it's still worth a visit. The imitation classical temple on the highest point offers some great views over the city and made the Buttes-Chaumont extremely popular with visitors. Even today, it offers the chance to find some calm among all the hustle and bustle of the city.

- The nearby neighborhoods of Belleville and Ménilmontant, which had been considered separate entities, villages on the edge of Paris, were gradually being absorbed into the great metropolitan area of Paris as it grew exponentially in the 19th century.

20F

Parc des Buttes-Chaumont

Resources

Print

Balzac, *Old Man Goriot*.

Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*.

Rees, trans., *The Penguin Book of French Poetry*.

Sand, *The Story of My Life*.

Film

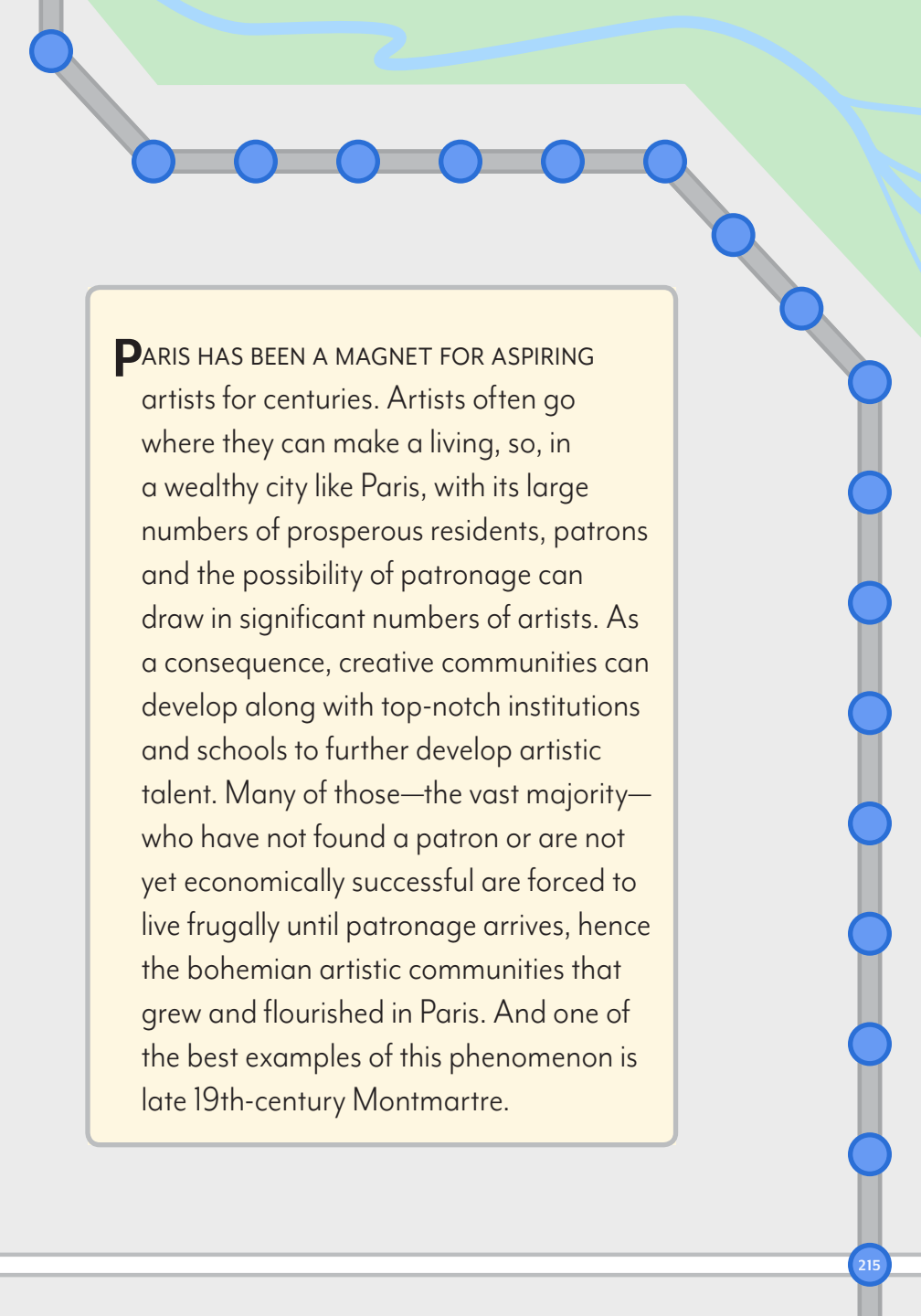
Impromptu

Ratatouille

21

Bohemian Paris: Artists and Expats

Bal du moulin de la Galette, Pierre-Auguste Renoir



PARIS HAS BEEN A MAGNET FOR ASPIRING artists for centuries. Artists often go where they can make a living, so, in a wealthy city like Paris, with its large numbers of prosperous residents, patrons and the possibility of patronage can draw in significant numbers of artists. As a consequence, creative communities can develop along with top-notch institutions and schools to further develop artistic talent. Many of those—the vast majority—who have not found a patron or are not yet economically successful are forced to live frugally until patronage arrives, hence the bohemian artistic communities that grew and flourished in Paris. And one of the best examples of this phenomenon is late 19th-century Montmartre.

The Montmartre Neighborhood

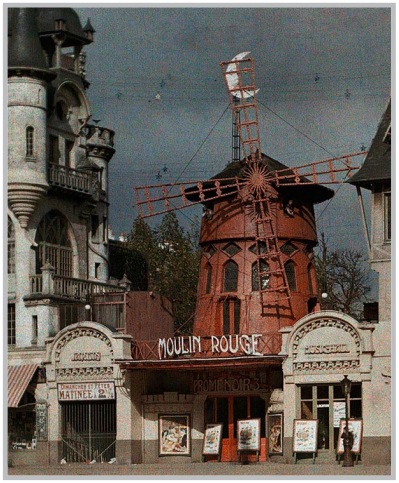
- Baron Haussmann's radical redesign of Paris, which included the clearances of poor and working-class neighborhoods from the center of the city, displaced many people who moved to what were then the outskirts of Paris, especially in the north and east. The village of Montmartre[21A] saw a major increase in population and was incorporated into the city of Paris in 1860. As a low-rent neighborhood reputed for the quality of its light, Montmartre drew artists such as Théodore Géricault, Horace Vernet, and Camille Corot during the early and mid-19th century.

- What had been a trickle became a flood in the 1880s, as a future who's who of world art moved in—and not just painters, but writers, poets, and musicians, too. Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec found plenty of subjects to paint in the lively cafés, bars, and cabarets—some of which are called *guinguettes*, a name for a suburban bar/restaurant and dance hall where pleasure and crime often mixed.

Arlequin au verre, Pablo Picasso

A common way for starving artists to pay their bar tabs was with a canvas or two, and one such transaction was made by a young Spanish painter who lived in the Montmartre neighborhood—Pablo Picasso—who handed over his *Arlequin au verre*, or *Harlequin with Glass*, to Au Lapin Agile, a *guinguette* that is still standing today. Picasso's work now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

- Among the most famous cabarets is the Moulin Rouge[21B] (or Red Mill) on the boulevard de Clichy, just below Montmartre. Brought back into the spotlight by Baz Luhrmann's 2001 hit movie of the same name, the Moulin Rouge opened toward the end of the 19th century and appears prominently in the posters and paintings of Toulouse-Lautrec. Today, the Moulin Rouge caters mainly to tourists and offers a song-and-dance revue, but parts of this area around Pigalle still have connections to the sex trade.



- One of the places where several artists lived and worked during the Belle Epoque was the Bateau-Lavoir,[21C] or the Drunken Boat, a rickety old piano factory that was turned into studio space and living quarters. The name was coined by a resident, the poet Max Jacob, because the building swayed in bad weather. And like a real-life version of Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème*,* this really was artistic bohemia. The residents are reputed to have roasted in the summers and frozen in the winters. Located at 13 rue Ravignan on the Place Émile Goudeau, it was home to Pablo Picasso,† Kees van Dongen, and Amedeo Modigliani, among many others. It burned down in 1970 but today retains the façade with a rebuilt interior.

- Montmartre—a place of crime, debauchery, pleasure, and radical artistic innovation—would seem be a strange place to put an enormous basilica. But that's what happened at the end of the 19th century, when the Basilique du Sacré-Cœur[21D] was placed on this highest and most noticeable spot in Paris.

* One of the best-loved and most influential operas ever written, *La Bohème* tells the tale of Rodolfo and Mimi, the star-crossed lovers who meet and fall in love in 1830s Paris.

† Around 1907, the Bateau-Lavoir is where Picasso developed cubism—showing a figure from multiple perspectives.


Basilique du Sacré-Cœur

- All of the very prominent Catholic church building projects from this period that feature in other major cities were part of an ongoing struggle for the hearts and minds of the French people between the secular republic and the Catholic church.

- Two prominent Catholic businessmen promised to put up funding for this great building should France be spared during the impending Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Unfortunately, though, France was defeated. Paris was spared destruction, at least by the Prussians—that was left to the French themselves in the bitter conflict known as the Commune that followed between the French government troops and Parisian left-wing radicals, who had taken control of the city.

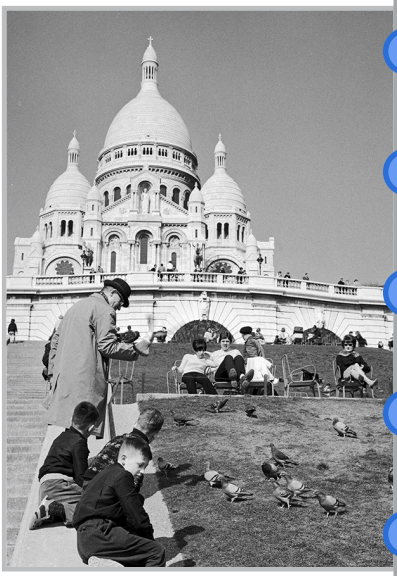
- As a defiantly working-class neighborhood, Montmartre was one of the hot spots of fighting

during the Commune. After the Franco-Prussian War, an order for the Sacré-Cœur to be built was imposed by the conservative legislature, the National Assembly.

- This did not go down well with the locals—something that has not been quickly forgotten. In 2004 and with the intention of balance, the city of Paris rather mischievously renamed the square at the foot of the steps to the Sacré-Cœur in honor of Louise Michel, a leader of the radical and anticlerical Communards.

- If the idea of putting a large church on the highest point in Paris where bloody street battles had been fought was not controversial enough, the selection, via competition, of the most outrageous design added fuel to the flames. Paul Abadie's design has been categorized as Romano-Byzantine, with its bright white stone and huge ovoid dome. In the past, it has been derogatorily described as a wedding cake, but there is no doubt that it is very impressive and has even become a beloved Parisian landmark over time.

- The steps leading up to the basilica are another draw to the neighborhood and were an important part of the French counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, as singers, poets, and actors performed on the steps for the crowds. The location of these assemblies was probably more due to the spectacular and free views over Paris rather than the proximity of the basilica, although the free mixing of the faithful and the faithless is indicative of what was happening in France at the time and is still going on today.



- A place that has been popular with many artists for quite some time is the Cimetière de Montmartre,[21E] the main local cemetery. Famous artists and performers buried here include Jacques Offenbach, composer of *opérettes*, or comic operas; Romantic composer Hector Berlioz; New Wave filmmaker François Truffaut; Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky; and La Goulue, an early star cancan dancer from the Moulin Rouge and a favorite model for Toulouse-Lautrec.

The Cimetière du Père-Lachaise

- But if you want to visit Paris's most famous cemetery—and arguably the most renowned last resting place in the world—you need to travel east to the Cimetière du Père-Lachaise.[21F]

- Large cities like Paris have long had a problem of where to bury the dead. The catacombs of Paris are filled with bones taken from the older cemeteries of central Paris. At the turn of the 19th century, Napoléon directed the construction of a major new necropolis on the ground that had belonged to Louis XIV's confessor, the wealthy Père de la Chaise.

- To gain immediate acceptance for the new cemetery and to give it some prestige, the remains of two celebrated writers, Molière and Jean de La Fontaine, were transferred there. But the big attraction was the double coffin of those celebrated great lovers Abélard and Héloïse,‡ whose story many view as the origin of the myth of Paris as the world's great romantic city.

- The cemetery is large, comprised of more than a hundred acres, and sits on the top of a hill overlooking much of the city. Skilled architects and landscapers such as Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart gave the cemetery its meandering pathways and the feel of an English garden, even if the plots are very densely packed together.

‡ Abélard was a famous 12th-century theologian and philosopher who began an illicit affair with Héloïse, the niece of Canon Fulbert of Notre-Dame. When Héloïse gave birth to a son, Canon Fulbert had Abélard attacked by thugs and castrated. Forced into separation, the lovers stayed in touch through letters, and their story became the stuff of legend.

TRAVEL TIP

A map of the Père-Lachaise cemetery, which can be bought or is also displayed on signposts, lists the locations of the graves of France's great and good.

- Divided up into areas called *divisions*, Père-Lachaise almost has the feel of a sculpture garden rather than a cemetery, and it's interesting to see that certain individuals—such as Honoré de Balzac, Eugène Delacroix, Marcel Proust, and Edith Piaf—have well-tended graves, whereas other literary and artistic heroes and heroines have fallen into neglect. As a rule of thumb, artists' graves tend to be the most elaborate and interesting.

- One of the most poignant spots in the cemetery, which is still venerated by the political left in France, is the Mur des Fédérés, or the Federalists' Wall, where the 147 remaining fighters of the Commune were lined up and shot one spring morning in May 1871.§ Little wonder, then, that this spot has become a place of pilgrimage for the left, and many leading French communists and socialists are buried in the vicinity.

- But you don't need to be French to be buried in Père-Lachaise, and religion is not an issue, either; the graves there include those of many for whom Paris was an adopted home or a creative preference. These include dancers, such as Isadora Duncan; artists, such as Amedeo Modigliani; writers, such as Gertrude Stein; and musicians, such as Frédéric Chopin. In particular, the graves of cult heroes Oscar Wilde and Jim Morrison—two men who ended their days in Paris and were there in part as an escape from their home countries—attract much attention from admirers.

§ The Commune controlled Paris for two months before the army was sent in. Père-Lachaise cemetery was where the Communards made one of their last stands. After an evening of fighting between the gravestones, the survivors surrendered and were summarily executed.

The Allure of Paris

- Foreign artists were drawn to Paris because it was, and still is, an energetic center of artistic creativity, but they also came to seek freedoms—and, in some cases, an anonymity—that they could not find back home.

- Some of the American writers who flocked to Paris early in the 20th century—the so-called Lost Generation—included such literary icons as Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and T. S. Eliot. The phrase *Lost Generation*, credited by Hemingway to having been coined by Stein, sums up the idea of a group who had lost their faith in the art and society of the pre–World War I period, along with standard conventions of religion and morality.

- The Great War had left the world in a state of shock and turmoil. Many of the survivors were psychologically harmed by their experiences, and Sigmund Freud's theories were popular among the surrealists, many based in Paris, who searched for radical new means of artistic expression in an effort to unlock the unconscious mind. In the 1920s and 1930s, then, Paris became a center for new avant-garde expressions of creativity. Even if you were short on cash, if you were prepared to slum it a little, you could find your artistic bohemia, and maybe even your true self, far from the fetters and conventions of life back in the States.

- As rents rose in Montmartre, the Rive Gauche and especially Montparnasse in the southwest of the city became the haunt of artists, musicians, photographers, and writers. In many cases, the living conditions and plumbing in the neighborhood had not greatly improved. Many writers and artists sought refuge in the numerous cafés, bars, and bistros that lined the streets of the Rive Gauche.

- Two of the most famous cafés from the time that are still going strong today are Les Deux Magots[21G] and Café de Flore,[21H] both of which are on the boulevard Saint-Germain. Don't expect to find artistic bohemia at these cafés today; coffee at either of these establishments, especially on the *terrasse*, or outside pavement area, does not come cheap.

- A place that was, and still is, a legend among the Paris expat community is Shakespeare and Company[¶211]—a bookstore, lending library, and so much more. The epicenter of the Lost Generation, Shakespeare and Company is now located on the south bank of the Seine just opposite Notre-Dame. The bookstore represents artistic bohemia with a very generous and human face; young artists and writers are allowed to stay in the upstairs without any charge, on condition for doing some minor chores.

¶ Sylvia Beach, one of the original owners, was the first publisher of James Joyce's controversial novel *Ulysses*, now considered a literary masterpiece.

Shakespeare and Company

Resources

Print

Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*.

Horne, *The Fall of Paris*.

McCullough, *The Greater Journey*.

Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*.

Film

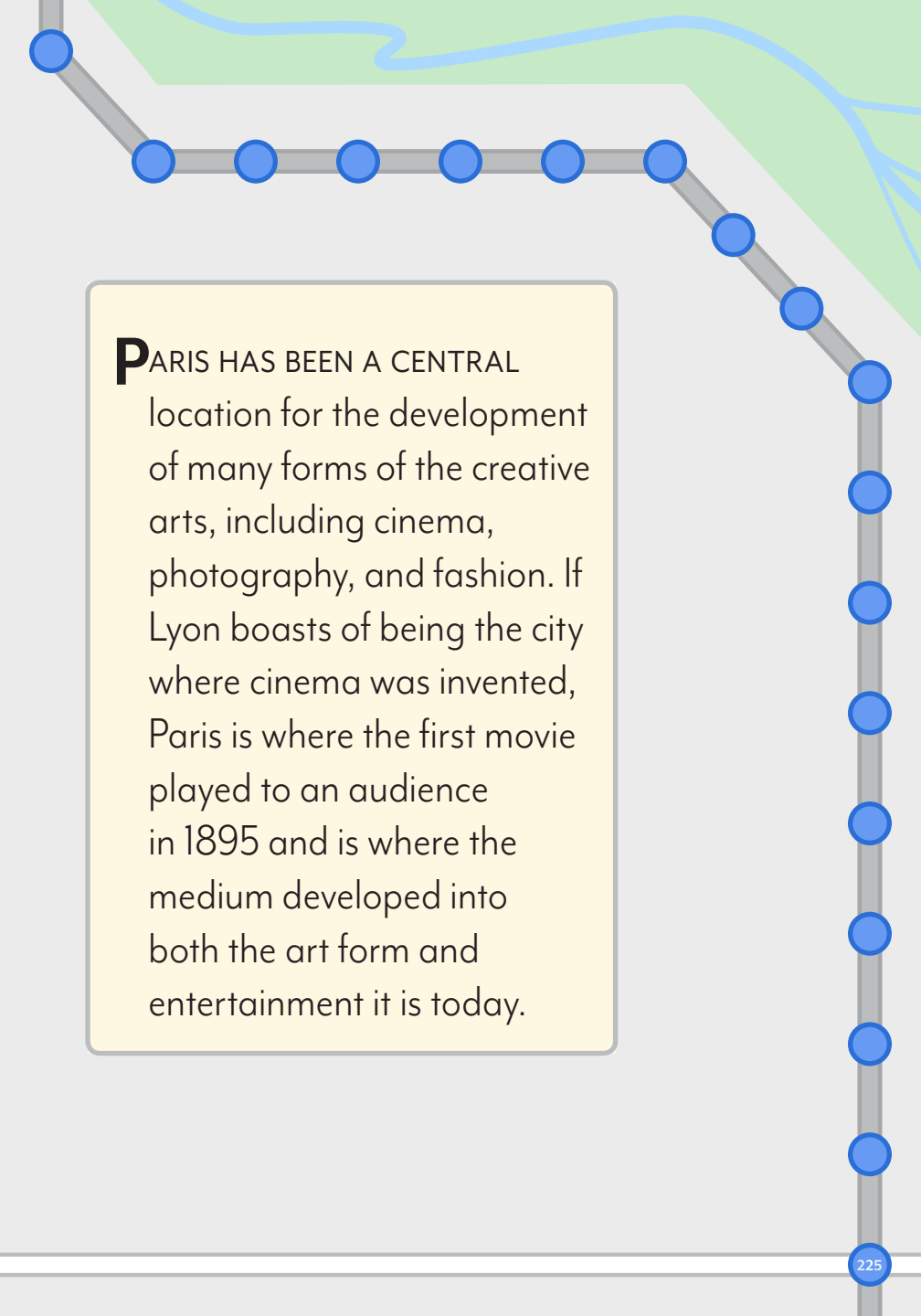
Colette

Midnight in Paris

La môme (La vie en rose)

22

Paris: The Capital of Design



PARIS HAS BEEN A CENTRAL location for the development of many forms of the creative arts, including cinema, photography, and fashion. If Lyon boasts of being the city where cinema was invented, Paris is where the first movie played to an audience in 1895 and is where the medium developed into both the art form and entertainment it is today.

Cinema

- Located at Bercy on the north bank of the Seine in a cubist-inspired building designed by the Canadian American architect Frank Gehry, the Cinémathèque Française[22A] houses exhibition space as well as multiple screens and pretty much everything a film buff would long to see. Regular high-profile temporary exhibitions feature the work of top international filmmakers, but it's the permanent exhibition—on display in the *musée*, or museum—that underlines just how important cinema is to the French and what a key role it plays in the cultural life of France.

- From the earliest optical devices, such as the camera obscura, the magic lantern, and the peepshow box, to the innovations of the Lumière brothers and others, the museum shows how visual entertainments have evolved over the centuries and the part France has played in this development. It honors the achievements of, among others, Georges Méliès,* who, at around the turn of the 20th century, was the first person to film fictional stories and a great technical innovator in filmmaking. He was essentially the first-ever movie director.

- Originally founded in the 1930s by Henri Langlois, the Cinémathèque also houses an extensive research library that is open to the general public as well as specialists in film studies. For more than 80 years, then, and in several different locations across Paris, the Cinémathèque has drawn those interested in film to its doors, including the group of young men in the 1950s who later wrote extensively on film and became groundbreakers in their own right as La Nouvelle Vague, or the French New Wave.

With around 200 million tickets sold per year, France has the highest number of moviegoers in Europe, and Paris is the center of the cinephile universe, with more tickets sold than anywhere else on the continent.

22A

* Martin Scorsese credits Méliès with having "invented everything" and pays tribute to Méliès in his 2011 movie *Hugo*.

Cinémathèque Française

- François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Claude Chabrol are acknowledged as three key figures of this radical new movement, although other directors, such as Agnès Varda, Alain Resnais, and Eric Rohmer are closely associated with it. As different as their films are, what these young people shared was a desire to break free of the shackles of the French studio system of the 1950s and 1960s, where directors were essentially technicians who had to wait their turn before being allowed to make their first feature, often later in their career.

- These young filmmakers also wanted more influence and control over their films. While easily replaceable directors had often previously done the will of the studios and their leading actors, the new band of New Wave directors believed in the importance of the director as an auteur—in other words, as important to the movie and the creative process as the writer.

- With the development of new, lighter, less expensive cameras and film stock, these filmmakers had both the means and the youthful energy to take their radical new ideas about moviemaking to the streets, and that's precisely what they did. And since they were living in arguably the most photogenic city in the world, the results were impressive.

- As a result, today Paris serves as one of the world's great movie sets, with trucks and vans filled with lighting and sound gear a regular sight on the city's streets. Crowds of cognoscenti regularly seek out locations like the café† used in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's 2001 movie called *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*, known as *Amélie* to English-speaking audiences.

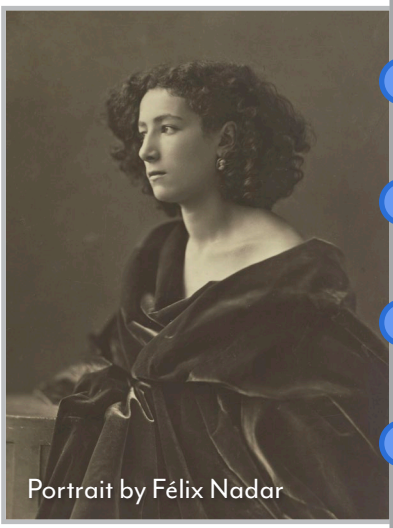
† The Café des Deux Moulins on the rue Lepic in Montmartre.

Photography

- Photography is another extremely popular artistic and creative medium in France—all the more so because, like cinema, photography can be claimed to be have been invented here, in a small village in Burgundy in the mid-1820s. Nicéphore Niépce was fascinated by the printing technique of lithography, which was all the rage at the time, and discovered a way to make a permanent print on a plate from a source of natural light so as to exactly reproduce the original image.

- In 1829, Niépce formed a partnership with Louis Daguerre,‡ who later formed his own technique, called the daguerreotype, and with that, photography moved from rural Burgundy to urban Paris. Daguerre's technique became the first commercially viable form of photography, and soon many wealthy people were lining up to have their portraits done.

- Another great early French photographer was Félix Nadar, who pioneered the use of artificial lighting to enhance his portraiture as well as aerial photography from a balloon. Nadar's catalog of portraits is a who's who of the hippest 19th-century writers, artists, actors, and musicians. Others, such as Charles Marville, used the new technology to capture those areas of Paris about to be demolished as part of Baron Haussmann's plan.



Portrait by Félix Nadar

‡ Daguerre is credited with having taken the first photograph of a person, as a man appears in his shot of the boulevard du Temple, a major street in Paris, in 1839.

- As the technology improved, cameras became more portable and film stock more sensitive to lower-light conditions, so more and more artists turned their talents to photography. Paris thus cemented its role as a world center for this relatively new means of documenting both reality and artistic expression.

- There is a large number of photo exhibitions at dedicated locations, such as the Maison Européenne de la Photographie[22B] and the recently renovated former public baths called Les Douches la Galerie,[22C] which is located near the picturesque Canal Saint-Martin. But even smaller locations, such as libraries, bookstores, cafés, administrative buildings, banks, and cultural centers, can be used to host exhibitions of photography. Parisians eager to be present at the hippest events will keep their eyes peeled for vernissages, or private exhibition openings.

Fashion

- As the capital of the fashion world, Paris hosts the Musée de la Mode et du Textile, part of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs,[22D] located on the rue de Rivoli next to the Louvre. The Musée de la Mode et du Textile contains one of the largest collections of costumes, fabric, and accessories in the world and features the work of celebrated designers such as Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent.

- The Cité de la Mode et du Design is located in Les Docks, the old industrial warehouses on the bank of the Seine near the Gare d'Austerlitz. The site draws many of the coolest designers and the hippest crowd to what had been a rundown part of Paris, and it houses the Institut Français de la Mode, a state-run fashion school.


Musée de la Mode et du Textile exhibit

- During Paris Fashion Week, of which there are several during the course of the year, the collections for the future fall/winter and spring/summer season pairings in *prêt-à-porter féminin*, haute couture, and *masculin* are rolled out to much media glitz—and often in the most prestigious of exhibition spaces, such as Versailles, the Carrousel du Louvre, and the Grand Palais.

- And while the more creative clothes to come down the catwalk wouldn't necessarily work on the sidewalk, the *défilés de mode*, or fashion parades of designs for the new seasons by the major fashion houses, always seem to make the French network television news.

- The center of the rag trade, where many French clothes are made, is located around Sentier,[22E] north of the river near the Bourse, or stock exchange, an area that has focused on dressmaking for centuries. The top design houses tend to boast the swankiest and most prestigious addresses: near or on the rue de Rivoli and the rue Saint-Honoré, close to the Louvre; and the avenue Montaigne, part of the Triangle d'Or, or Golden Triangle.

- For a relatively short street, the avenue Montaigne[22F] has one of the densest concentrations of designer stores per square foot of sidewalk in the world, and for the French, the name alone conjures up an appealing world of high-end luxury goods and haute couture. Here, you can find the salons of Dior and Ungaro, along with retail stores of such household names as Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana, Ralph Lauren, Giorgio Armani, and Prada.

22E

22F

- The Paris fashion world is populated by the world's best, brightest, and, occasionally, most brash designers, many of whom are not French. The German-born Karl Lagerfeld did more than just keep the house of Chanel afloat, as did Britons John Galliano at Dior and Alexander McQueen at Givenchy; they kept these fashion houses at the cutting edge and relevant.

- Apart from the large fashion houses, many of the world's top designers have their own showrooms and/or stores in Paris, including Azzedine Alaïa, Isabel Marant, Sonia Rykiel, Stella McCartney, and the near-ubiquitous Jean-Paul Gaultier.

Decorative Arts

- At the edge of the city and the start of the Parisian suburbs is Sèvres,[22G] a name that is synonymous with the finest French porcelain and yet another type of item that can be found in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

- In the 18th century, fine porcelain, also known as white gold, was all the rage. Europeans were importing vast quantities of porcelain from China but were desperate to produce their own. The Germans got there first with MEISSEN, and the French soon followed.

- Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour lobbied for a royal porcelain factory to be established at Sèvres, halfway between the center of Paris and Versailles—and so began a tradition for the finest in French luxury porcelain.

- Up the hill from the river Seine is the the official ceramics museum[22H] located in the building where the porcelain factory relocated in the 19th century. The original 18th-century factory is now the headquarters of the Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques, a think tank for international educational reform.

- Limoges in central France developed as a rival to Sèvres because the essential kaolin clay was found nearby, but Sèvres retained the royal seal of approval and a reputation for the production of the very finest French porcelain.

Culinary Arts

- Le Cordon Bleu,[221] which has been training chefs since the end of the 19th century, is one of the world's finest culinary schools. The phrase *cordon bleu* directly translates to "blue ribbon,"[§] and in the 17th and 18th centuries, references to the term meant the crème de la crème of the French aristocracy. Their banquets, prepared by the kingdom's finest chefs, became the stuff of legend in their own right, and since the chivalric order was abolished during the revolution, the expression became associated with the finest in the culinary arts and those who prepared it.

- Early in the 19th century, a cookbook was published entitled *Le cordon bleu, ou nouvelle cuisinière bourgeoise* by Mademoiselle Marguerite, indicating how the expression, though still linked to excellence, was now firmly associated with food. In 1895, a periodical called *La cuisinière cordon bleu* appeared and included recipes and suggestions from many of the leading chefs of the day.

- A year later, cordon bleu classes in the culinary arts were offered at the Palais Royal, near the Louvre in Paris. With the name and brand established, so began a tradition that is still thriving today, although the school itself is now located in an ultramodern building near the Tour Eiffel on the south bank of the Seine. Le Cordon Bleu has branch campuses all over the world and specializes in both the culinary arts and hospitality management—but Paris remains at its heart.

Perhaps the best-known Cordon Bleu–trained chef is Julia Child, the woman who demystified the art of French cooking and encouraged generations of Americans to try their hand at legendary but often closely guarded French recipes.

§ Initially, the term *cordon bleu* was associated with a high order of chivalry, instituted by French king Henry III in the 16th century as l'Ordre des Chevaliers du Saint-Esprit, or the Order of the Knights of the Holy Spirit, whose members wore a medal with a blue ribbon.

Resources

Print

Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*.

Film

A bout de souffle (Breathless)

Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Amélie)

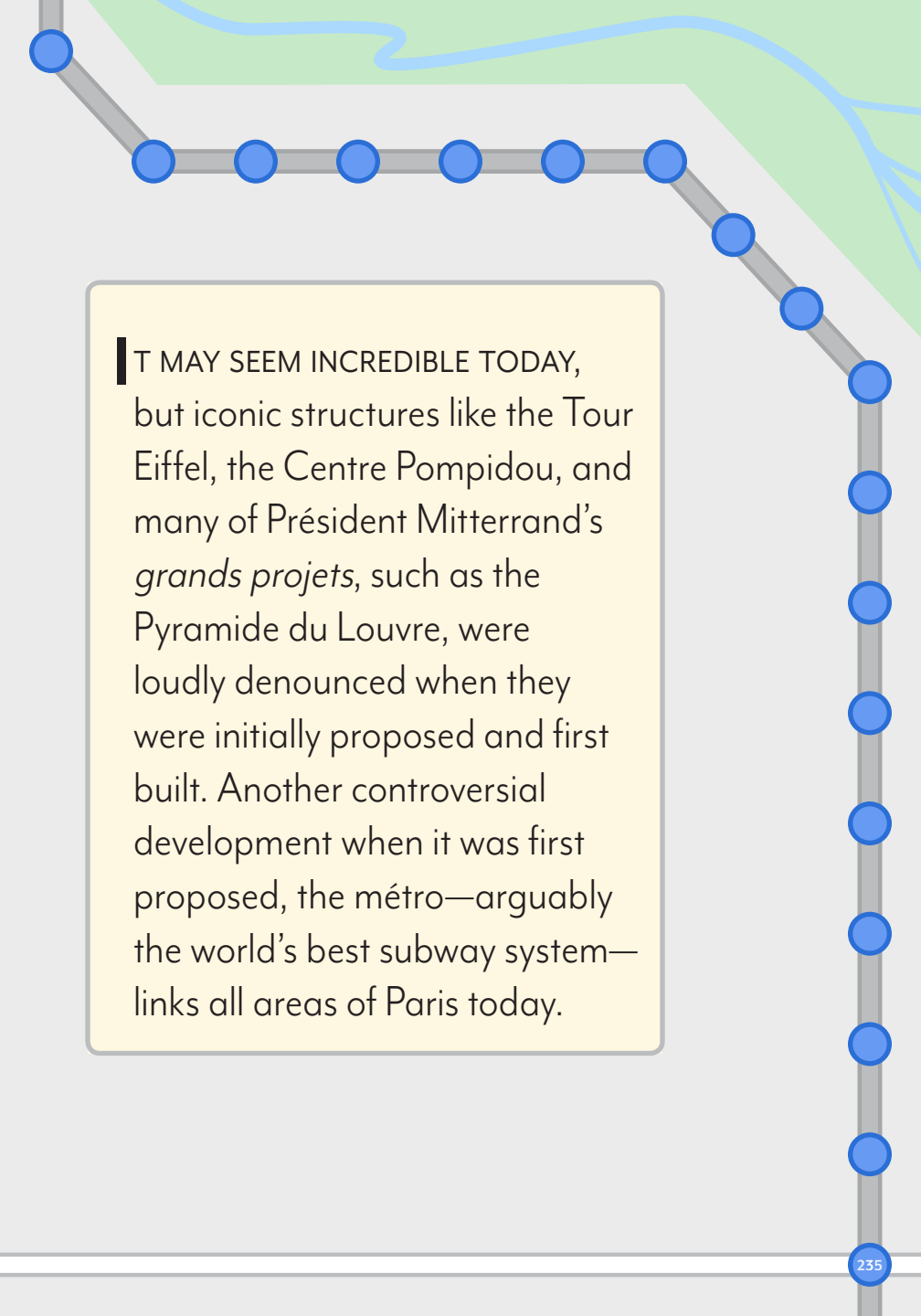
Prêt à porter (Ready to Wear)

Les quatre cents coups (The 400 Blows)

Un voyage dans la lune (A Trip to the Moon)

23

Paris and the Future



IT MAY SEEM INCREDIBLE TODAY, but iconic structures like the Tour Eiffel, the Centre Pompidou, and many of Président Mitterrand's *grands projets*, such as the Pyramide du Louvre, were loudly denounced when they were initially proposed and first built. Another controversial development when it was first proposed, the métro—arguably the world's best subway system—links all areas of Paris today.

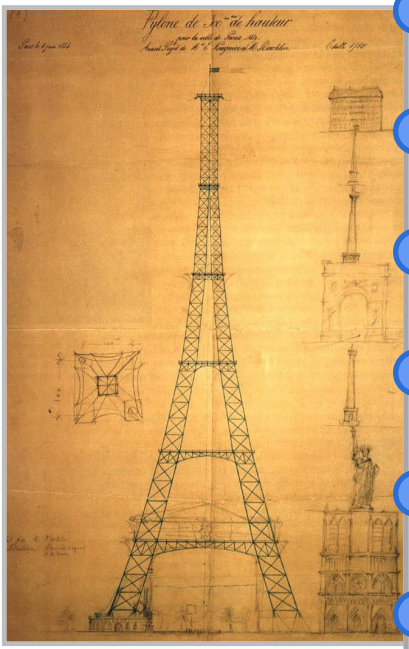
The Tour Eiffel

- The year 1889 was the centennial of the first great French Revolution, and memories of France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 made the republic even more keen to show that France was still a major industrial world power. The Exposition Universelle, or World's Fair, of 1889 was the perfect opportunity to show the world what France was made of.

- A competition was announced to build a grand centerpiece for the exposition, and the winner was a 1,000-foot-tall wrought iron tower designed by Émile Nouguier and Maurice Koechlin, who worked for an engineering company run by Gustave Eiffel.

- Eiffel and his company had earned a reputation for building bridges, and for some commentators, the new tower's design resembled a bridge turned on its side, with the four immense pylons curving inward to meet at the center. The latticework of the structure was a tip of the hat to that most modern of building materials—iron—while also making it stable in high winds.

- As the tallest humanmade object in the world at the time and a modern engineering marvel, it should have been the very essence of French industrial prowess. But for many of the 50 or so prominent intellectuals who signed a petition opposing construction in 1887, it was an abomination, a "gigantic black factory chimney" about to cast an "odious shadow" over the city.



- On top of that, for a structure made of modern industrial materials, the Tour Eiffel[23A] seemed to serve no actual purpose; even Gustave Eiffel himself is reported to have described the tower named after him as a "300-meter flagpole." The great modern French philosopher Roland Barthes conceded that, unlike other monuments, there is no interior for the visitor to see. Beyond a tourist attraction in itself, its main function would appear to be a viewing platform for Paris.

- And sure enough, even though it was used as a radio transmitter early in the 20th century, the future of this seemingly functionless structure could have been bleak were it not for the hordes of visitors who flocked to see it, climb its 1,700 steps, and later ride in its elevators to admire this engineering wonder and the superb views over the whole of the city. Far from being a blot on the Parisian landscape, it captured the popular imagination, attracting some 2 million visitors during its first year and around a cumulative 300 million since, many drawn by its iconic appeal.

- Since it was initially estimated to stand for only around 20 years but is still a feature of the Parisian skyline more than 130 years later, the Tour Eiffel can now only be considered a bold success that the French are extremely proud of, despite the initial controversy.

- The Exposition Universelle of 1900 featured more architectural wonders involving the use of cast iron in construction. These include the Grand Palais[23B] and Petit Palais,[23C] which are still used as impressive exhibition spaces today, and the Pont Alexandre III,[23D] described by historian Colin Jones as the "most gloriously exuberant of all Parisian bridges." Along with the great train stations of the period, the Grand Palais, with its glass-and-iron roof, is almost a secular cathedral to the glory of the republic and the industrial age.

Le Métropolitain

- There's no doubt, though, that the most remarkable vestige of the great Exposition Universelle that took place in Paris at the dawn of the 20th century is Le Métropolitain, or the métro, whose first line came into service in 1900. If the Tour Eiffel just stands above ground and has seemingly little or no practical function, the métro is the subway system that keeps Paris moving—travel within the city without regularly descending its steps is barely unthinkable. And unlike many of the mass transit systems in major cities scattered across the globe, the métro can also be a showcase for good design.

- For example, the beautiful curved art deco ironwork around the entrances to some of the stations were designed by Hector Guimard. One of the best places to see a Guimard-designed entrance with a glass canopy is the Abbesses station in Montmartre, even though it was moved here at a later date from another station.

- The viaducts that the métro lines are built on are yet another reminder of the early 20th century, when iron and stone combined to bring strength and durability to what was then the only means to avoid the streets clogged with traffic. And the métro has not stopped developing: Lines were numbered as they were built over time, and we are now into the teens, with line 14 being both fully automated and driverless. Existing lines are also being extended into the suburbs, and rolling stock is constantly being renewed, along with safety features, such as sliding doors on platforms as well as on the trains themselves.

- There are métro stations where it can be worth taking a moment to read the historical or cultural notices, such as Parmentier on line 3,[23E] which tells the story of the potato in France, or the replica statues from Egyptian and classical antiquity that are housed on the platforms of Louvre-Rivoli on line 1.[23F] More replica statues that are equally impressive can be seen on the central platform of Varenne station,[23G] which lies near the Musée Rodin; at this station are large versions of *The Thinker* and *Monument to Balzac* in pride of place as your métro line 13 train cruises through.

- Arts et Métiers[23H] is a station on line 11 that transports you into a Jules Verne–inspired steampunk fantasy world. In the early 1990s, the Paris mass transit company RATP commissioned a Belgian graphic artist, François Schuiten, to design a platform to honor the bicentennial of the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, whose museum, which celebrates the best in French industrial design, is located right near the station. With polished copper walls, the station feels like the interior of Captain Nemo's fictional submarine, the *Nautilus*, which featured in the novel *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*.

- There are many other interesting stations, too, often named for the streets they run underneath, but also for major figures from French and world history and culture, including Franklin D. Roosevelt[23I] on the prestigious line 1.

TRAVEL TIP

The best way to make any journey in Paris is to use the RATP.fr website or their app, which offers a variety of travel options.

The Centre Pompidou

- Another controversial building project was the Centre Pompidou,[23J] also known by the name of its neighborhood, Beaubourg. When construction started in 1971, many were shocked by the bold design, even though it was not significantly taller than the surrounding buildings. If postwar Paris had been perceived as gray, here was a multicolored modernist jolt to the system.

- President Georges Pompidou was Charles de Gaulle's successor from 1969 to 1974. Though he was a conservative politician, his taste in art and that of his wife, Claude, was decidedly contemporary and modern. In 1969, he decided that a rundown site in the heart of Paris near the Marais should be the location of a new multidisciplinary cultural center, including an exhibition and performance space as well as a library.

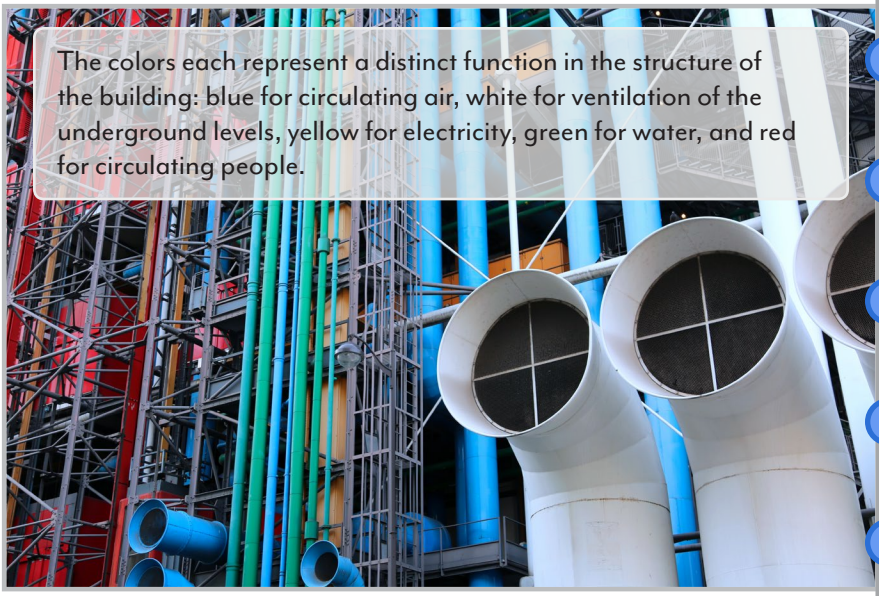
- A worldwide competition was opened to design the proposed building, and it attracted nearly 700 proposals from nearly 70 countries. The winning design came from three young architects: one British, Richard Rogers, and two Italians, Renzo Piano and Gianfranco Franchini.

- Once its design was unveiled, just like the Tour Eiffel, the Centre Pompidou met considerable opposition and was only forced through on orders from Pompidou himself. The architects described the project as an "inside turned outside," with much of the piping, ductwork, and escalators housed externally to free up a maximum of space within the structure.

- For some critics, it looked like an oil refinery, and its proximity to the elegant 17th-century mansions of the Marais created a jarring effect—a shock of the new. But for many visitors, the Centre Pompidou, like the Tour Eiffel before it, was an instant hit. And when the center required a major renovation just 20 years after its opening, architect Rogers claimed that the wear and tear was undeniable proof of its astonishing success.

TRAVEL TIP

For a great view over the south, west, and north of Paris, the small charge for an escalator ride up to the top floor of the Centre Pompidou is easily worth it.



The colors each represent a distinct function in the structure of the building: blue for circulating air, white for ventilation of the underground levels, yellow for electricity, green for water, and red for circulating people.

The *Grands Projets*

- Many buildings appeared during the presidency of François Mitterrand during the 1980s and 1990s as part of the *grands projets*—major architectural initiatives designed to show France's grandeur. But the great playpen for ambitious modernism was a development to the western edge of Paris called La Défense,[23K] a business, financial, and commercial district where there were fewer design restrictions, especially regarding height. Thus, almost all of Paris's skyscrapers are located here.

- At La Défense, you can admire structures as diverse as the Center of New Industries and Technologies, which appeared in the late 1950s, and various towers, such as the Tour Engie, the Tour Majunga, the Tour First, and the Tour Total, with many more planned by the offices of such celebrated architects as Norman Foster and Jean Nouvel.

- But the centerpiece of La Défense is the Grande Arche de la Défense,[23L] designed by Denmark's Johan Otto von Spreckelsen. Like the Tour Eiffel, the Grande Arche was built to commemorate an anniversary of the French Revolution, this time the bicentennial of 1989. Unlike the Tour Eiffel, the Grande Arche was intended to have a practical function, including exhibition, conference, and office space. It was also built to continue the Grand Axe, an impressive straight line starting in the courtyard of the Louvre and running along the Champs-Élysées, through the Arc de Triomphe, to the Grande Arche de la Défense.

TRAVEL TIP

With its white Carrara marble, the Grande Arche de la Défense stands out from the skyscrapers of La Défense when viewed from the center of Paris, but, like the Tour Eiffel, it also offers great views of Paris itself—specifically from its roof terrace.

- What had been a derelict railway station on the south bank of the Seine near the Louvre is now home to the greatest collection of impressionist art in the world: the Musée d'Orsay,[23M] which was opened to much fanfare in 1986. Visiting the museum is a great way to see how painting and sculpture evolved at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries—perhaps France's most celebrated era of artistic creativity.

- If the Musée d'Orsay was met with near-universal acclaim, the Pyramide du Louvre,[23N] across the Seine from the Musée d'Orsay, provoked howls of protest on par with the Tour Eiffel and the Centre Pompidou when it opened in 1989. Designed by Chinese American architect Ioh Ming Pei, the Pyramide du Louvre is a five-story glass pyramid that sits in the middle of the Cour Napoléon, the grand courtyard of the Louvre—the world's largest and most visited museum. It was intended to promote easier access to the museum, but many critics were shocked by the placement of an ultramodern glass-and-metal pyramid in the middle of the courtyard of what had been a 17th-century royal palace.

- The main pyramid is surrounded by three smaller ones, and an inverted pyramid brings plenty of natural light into the underground shopping area and museum entrance. Like the Tour Eiffel and the Centre Pompidou, the Pyramide du Louvre has grown on the French, and even many of those who had initially opposed it now appreciate its daring combination of something radically new in an otherwise-old location.

Focus on the Future

- France as a country is proud of its architectural heritage from the past, but it's also bold enough to push the envelope with daring modernist projects.

- In 2007, then-president Nicolas Sarkozy announced a new initiative, Grand Paris—the creation of a "Greater Paris," with its eyes fixed firmly on the future. With ambitious projects centered on transportation, energy, housing, and commerce, Grand Paris aims to showcase the city as a world model for quality of life and sustainability. It is imaginative planning on a large scale and already the largest infrastructure project in Europe.

Resources

Print

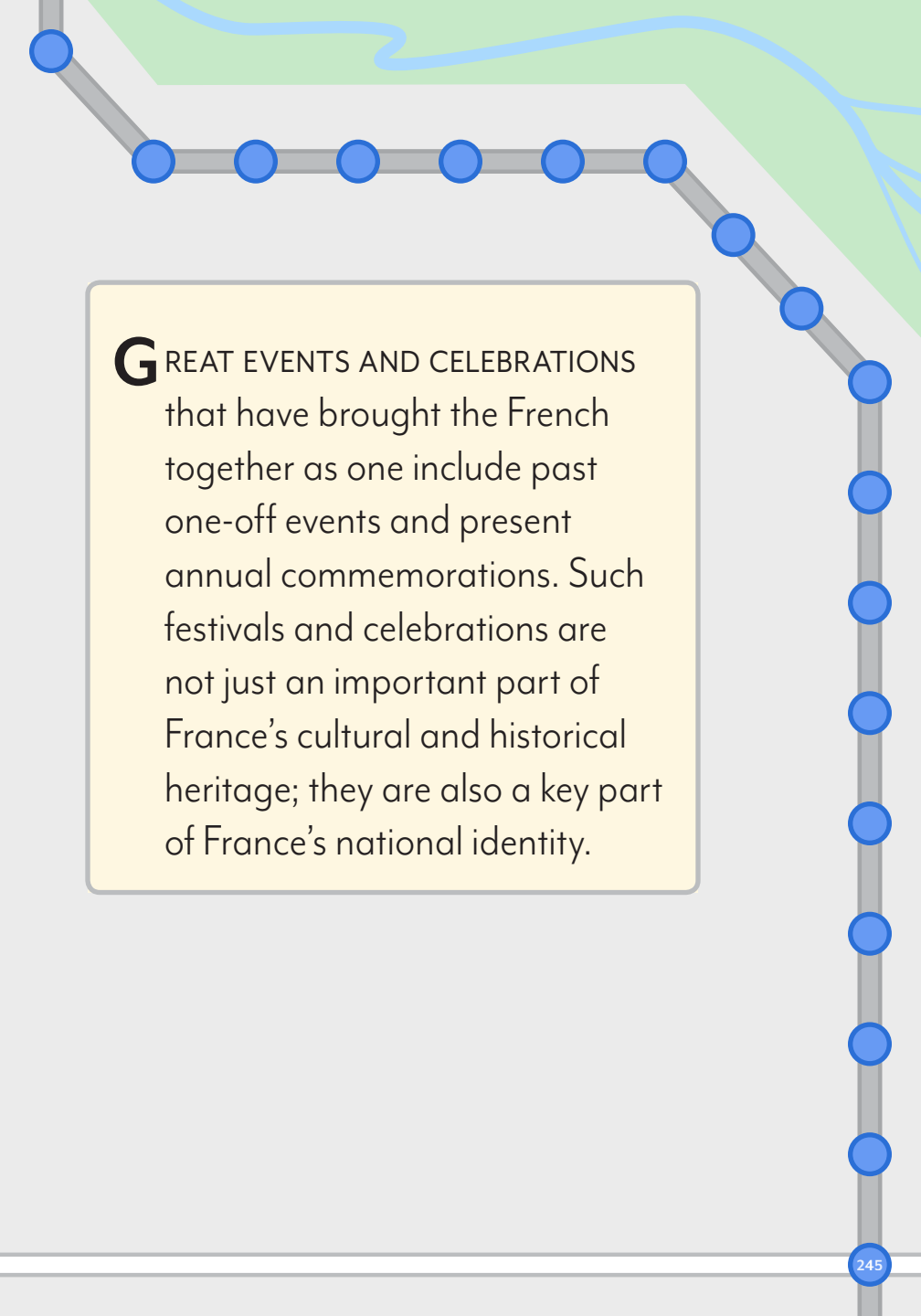
Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, "The Eiffel Tower."

Web

https://www.toureiffel.paris/en (official Eiffel Tower/Tour Eiffel website)

24

United France: Celebrating Together



GREAT EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS that have brought the French together as one include past one-off events and present annual commemorations. Such festivals and celebrations are not just an important part of France's cultural and historical heritage; they are also a key part of France's national identity.

24A

The Stade de France

- The Stade de France[*24A]—the French national stadium—was purposely built for a major event: the 1998 FIFA World Cup. The stadium is the ideal place to showcase the very best in French sport, as well as big concerts, offering great views for 80,000 people.

- On July 12, 1998, the stadium was packed for the biggest game in soccer: the final of the World Cup. Billions of television viewers around the globe watched the match, in which the host nation, France, took on the heavy favorites, the perennial soccer powerhouse, Brazil.

- France cruised to a fine victory of three to zero. It was by far their best performance of the tournament against the strongest opponent, and mayhem, coupled with delirium, ensued. When the final whistle blew, the collective joy and hysteria in the stadium set off a chain reaction from the cafés, bars, and living rooms of France, which spilled out onto the streets.

- Intersections in Paris were mobbed with revelers. Traffic was at a standstill, car horns sounded nonstop, fans waved French flags from their immobile vehicles, and firecrackers exploded into the night. While the French men's national soccer team has since won other major trophies—such as the European Championship in 2000 and the World Cup in 2018, both hosted abroad—the celebrations for these wins were nothing compared to the first-ever World Cup win that happened on home soil in 1998.

- The Stade de France offers an almost tangible home advantage, as the gusto with which "La Marseillaise," the French national anthem, is sung before both soccer and rugby[†] games is considered to be worth several points to the French team. It is the only stadium in the world to have hosted finals for both the soccer and rugby World Cups. It also hosts major athletics events and has become a great shrine to French sporting success and celebration.

* The Stade de France was built on a brownfield site of an old gasworks in the poor Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis in an effort to regenerate the area.

† If soccer is the number-one sport for the French, rugby is firmly the number-two sport—and arguably more popular than soccer in parts of the south of France.

The Champs-Élysées

- Another Parisian location where the French gather to celebrate their great sporting successes is the Champs-Élysées.[24B] On July 12, 1998, images of the newly crowned world champion French soccer team were flashed up onto the Arc de Triomphe almost as soon as the final whistle had blown, a gesture that was repeated in 2018.

- On an evening of victory, the Champs-Élysées is a preferred location to congregate and party. But *la plus belle avenue du monde*—"the most beautiful avenue in the world," as the Champs-Élysées is known—is also the location for two other essential events in the French calendar, and these happen in July every year: the final stage of the Tour de France and the Bastille Day military parade.

- The Tour de France is unquestionably the most famous and prestigious cycle race in the world. With daily *étapes*, or stages, spread out over more than three weeks, covering more than 2,000 miles, the tour, also known as *la grande boucle*, or "the big loop," is also one of the most challenging and grueling sporting events on the planet.

TRAVEL TIP

If you're in France during the Tour de France, you can watch the stages live on national television, but you can also watch the daily shows, which give the historical and cultural backgrounds to the places the tour visits.

- Terrain has to be varied, including flat and mountain stages and time trials, so as not to favor a particular type of cyclist. The route changes every year and alternates between a clockwise and a counterclockwise circuit. Certain stages, such as Mont Ventoux near Avignon, feature regularly on the tour, but many regions, cities, towns, and villages jostle for inclusion on the race route.

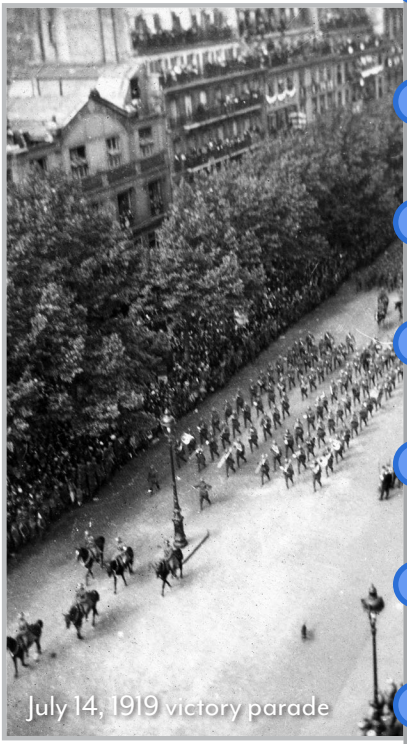
- In terms of the location of the stages, though, there is a constant, and that is to finish on the Champs-Élysées. By the last day of the tour, the winner of the race has usually been decided, so convention dictates that the final stage from just outside Paris and onto the Champs-Élysées is essentially ceremonial—a victory lap. You might even see the members of the victorious team sharing a celebratory glass of champagne as they whizz through the streets of the capital. The winner's podium is set up on the Champs-Élysées to clearly show the Arc de Triomphe in the background.

- The other great annual summer event that showcases France on the Champs-Élysées is the traditional *défilé militaire*, or military parade, for Bastille Day on July 14th. It's another event that is shown on national television. Although it is a military parade, it's less about showing off state-of-the-art military hardware—although you will generally see fighter jets, tanks, and armored vehicles—than an opportunity to honor the republic and its armed services with the pomp and ceremonial splendor of a parade. Most of the participants will be wearing dress uniforms rather than combat gear. Units from the armed forces of France's allies are also invited to participate.

- But the Bastille Day parade has not always been held on the Champs-Élysées, and the first military parade to celebrate *la fête nationale*—the French name for this national feast day—took place in 1880. This was a few years after the republic was reinstated in 1870 and July 14th was made a national holiday.

- Initially held at Longchamp Racecourse in the Bois de Boulogne to the west of Paris, the *défilé militaire* was moved to the Champs-Élysées in 1919 as a victory parade for World War I. The public relations impact of a parade down one of the most recognizable and prestigious avenues in the world was not lost on the occupying German army in World War II. Its significance was also recognized by Charles de Gaulle and served as proof positive of the liberation of Paris in August 1944 as he strode down the Champs-Élysées to a hero's welcome.

- During the 1970s, several Bastille Day parades took place between the site of the start of the revolution in 1789—the actual Place de la Bastille—and the Place de la République, a routing that was felt to be more in tune with the idea of a celebration of the ideals of the French Republic. The *quatorze juillet* (July 14th) parade was moved back to the Champs-Élysées in 1980 and has remained there since, which is understandable in view of the broad width of the avenue and the highly photogenic monuments located there.



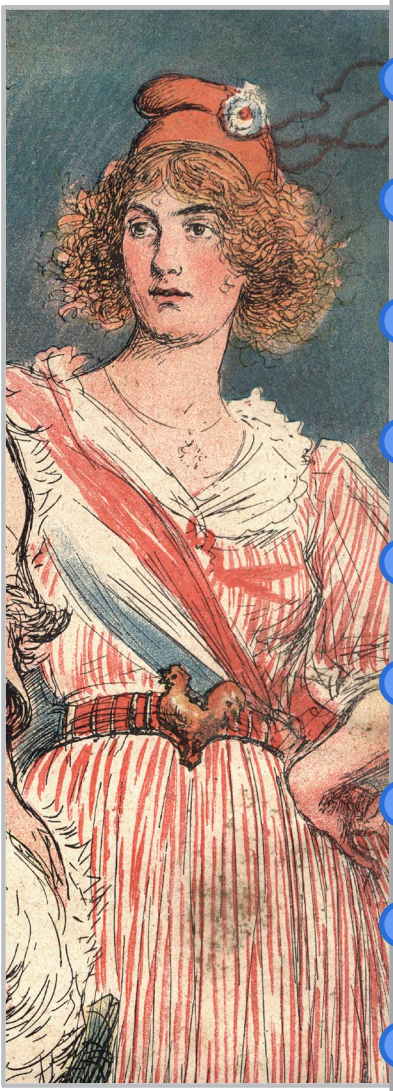
July 14, 1919 victory parade

24C

The Place de la République

- At its heart, the Place de la République[24C] contains a huge 19th-century statue of Marianne, the female personification of the French Republic, the French equivalent of Lady Liberty. Marianne's image can be found everywhere in France, from postage stamps and coins to schools and official buildings.

- Early models for Marianne, such as the figure used in Léopold Morice's statue on the Place de la République, were not easy to identify, but after 1969, it was decided to use a recognizably famous and beautiful French woman as the model. Recent incarnations of this French icon have included actresses Brigitte Bardot and Catherine Deneuve and models Inès de la Fressange and Laeticia Casta. What all these Mariannes have in common is that they proudly wear the red Phrygian bonnet—a symbol of freedom for emancipated slaves in Roman times that was embraced by the revolution and, as a consequence, by the French Republic.



- An expensive renovation of the Place de la République made it pedestrian-friendly, and many events, such as outdoor concerts, take place here, especially in the summer. It sits above the intersection of several métro lines, so if you take the métro in Paris, you will probably change lines at République.

- For the French, the Place de la République is the main place where they like to assemble during times when the republic is perceived to be under threat, such as following the terrorist attacks of 2015, when vast numbers gathered here to show support and solidarity to the victims.

- Although the Place de la République might not be a place of national celebration in the same way as the Champs-Élysées is, most French people are generally deeply proud of their republic, founded on the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This large square in the east of Paris is, in many ways, a shrine to those three essential values, which are personified in the three stone statues that feature on the plinth above which Marianne stands, holding aloft an olive branch in one hand and the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen) in the other.

Place de la République following terrorist attacks of 2015

National Cultural Festivals

- The French calendar also includes cultural festivals that, even though they are not holidays, are enthusiastically embraced all over the country.

- The two best-known festivals are the Fête de la Musique and the Fête du Cinéma, which both take place in June. Both of these festivals were begun with French government support in the 1980s under then–Minister of Culture Jack Lang, but they remain extremely popular in France today. Since his Ministry of Culture benefitted from a large increase in funding at the time, Lang was able to offer government support to many new cultural initiatives.

- The Fête de la Musique is held every year on June 21‡—the longest night of the year and thus perfect for getting out and about. In a city like Paris, where it began, you'll find music emanating from practically every public space.

- This festival was initiated in 1982 by an administrator named Maurice Fleuret, who, along with Lang, wondered why there were so few public concerts despite the fact that many millions of French people play a musical instrument. The idea was to get people out playing music in the streets.

- The Fête de la Musique takes place all over France, and in larger cities like Paris, you can attend classical concerts by major orchestras and jazz ensembles. Or, if more popular genres are your thing, then large and small rock, folk, hip-hop, Afrobeat, and reggae shows are played all over town, from the most prestigious concert halls and churches to the smallest cafés.

TRAVEL TIP

Since all the concerts of the Fête de la Musique have to be free and open to the public, lines can form for the biggest shows, and free tickets occasionally have to be requested online in order to attend. But if you're a music lover, this is heaven.

‡ The Fête de la Musique has become so popular that June 21st has been adopted as World Music Day in cities all over the globe.

- The Fête du Cinéma is the other great cultural festival that the French have embraced that also takes place in late June. Summers used to be the quietest time for moviegoing in France—everyone was at the beach. In 1985, a collaborative initiative was launched by Lang's Ministry of Culture and the Fédération Nationale des Cinémas Français, a cinema lobby, to boost attendance at French movie theaters. The precise format and duration of the festival have changed over the years, but it has always involved heavily reduced ticket prices (around five dollars per film).

- Theaters are generally packed during the Fête du Cinéma, with a consequence that many people end up watching movies they did not originally intend to see or decide to check out a lesser-known movie that might not be their normal fare because the cost is so low. The result is a major boost in movie attendance in France—where numbers are already the highest in Europe. And since a proportion of box office profits goes toward funding the French movie industry, the success of initiatives like the Fête du Cinéma is considered a win-win for both movies and moviegoers in France. The success of the Fête du Cinéma has even led to similar initiatives in France, such as the Printemps du Cinéma, which takes place in the spring.

Resources

Web

https://www.letour.fr/en/ (official website of the Tour de France)

http://traduction.culture.gouv.fr/url/Result.aspx?to=en&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffetedelamusique.culture.gouv.fr%2F (official Fête de la Musique site)

http://feteducinema.com (official Fête du Cinéma website)

http://traduction.culture.gouv.fr/url/Result.aspx?to=en&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjourneesdupatrimoine.culture.gouv.fr%2F (European Heritage Days/Journées Européennes du Patrimoine website)

http://quefaire.paris.fr/nuitblanche (Nuit Blanche website; includes videos)

Places Visited

CLICK TO NAVIGATE BACK TO LECTURE

Lecture 1—*Point Zéro*: Charting Our Course

A	Île de la Cité	75004 Paris
B	Point zéro	Parvis Notre-Dame - Pl. Jean-Paul II 75004 Paris
C	Charles de Gaulle Airport	95700 Roissy-en-France

Lecture 2—The Birth and Rise of Paris

A	Crypte Archéologique	7 Parvis Notre-Dame - Pl. Jean-Paul II 75004 Paris
B	Arènes de Lutèce	49 Rue Monge 75005 Paris
C	Thermes de Cluny	28 Rue du Sommerard 75005 Paris
D	The Sorbonne	75005 Paris
E	Latin Quarter	75005 Paris
F	Collège de France	75005 Paris

G	Notre-Dame de Paris	6 Parvis Notre-Dame - Pl. Jean-Paul II 75004 Paris
H	Sainte-Chapelle	8 Boulevard du Palais 75001 Paris
I	Pont Neuf	75001 Paris
J	The Louvre	Rue de Rivoli 75001 Paris
K	Place Dauphine	75001 Paris
L	Place des Vosges	75004 Paris
M	Le Marais	75003 Paris

Lecture 3—The Splendor of Versailles

A	Palace of Versailles	Place d'Armes 78000 Versailles
B	Gardens of Versailles	Place d'Armes 78000 Versailles
C	Hall of Mirrors	Place d'Armes 78000 Versailles
D	The Grand Trianon	Porte Saint-Antoine 78000 Versailles

Lecture 4—Paris in Revolution

A	Le Procope	13 Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie 75006 Paris
B	Place de la Concorde	75008 Paris
C	Musée de la Préfecture de Police	4 Rue de la Montagne Sainte Geneviève 75005 Paris
D	Arc de Triomphe	Place Charles de Gaulle 75008 Paris
E	Madeleine Church	Place de la Madeleine 75008 Paris
F	Banque de France	48 Rue Notre Dame des Victoires 75002 Paris
G	Pont des Arts	75006 Paris
H	Colonne de Juillet	Place de la Bastille 75004 Paris

Lecture 5—Northeast to Champagne

A	Notre-Dame de Reims	Place du Cardinal Luçon 51100 Reims
B	Ruinart	4 Rue des Crayères 51100 Reims

C	Veuve Clicquot	1 Rue Albert Thomas 51100 Reims
D	French National Cemetery at Douaumont	55100 Douaumont
E	Ors Communal Cemetery	59360 Ors
F	Museum of the Great War	Place André Audinot 80200 Péronne
G	Somme American Cemetery	D57 02420 Bony
H	Villers-Cotterêts	02600 Villers-Cotterêts

6

Lecture 6—Normandy at War: Beaches and Bunkers

A	Saint-Valery-sur-Somme	80230 Saint-Valery-sur-Somme
B	Dives-sur-Mer	14160 Dives-sur-Mer
C	Centre Guillaume-le-Conquérant	13B Rue de Nesmond 14400 Bayeux
D	Dunkirk	59240 Dunkerque
E	The East Mole	Rue Militaire 59140 Dunkerque
F	Zuydcoote Beach	Rue de Wattrelos 59123 Zuydcoote

G	Sainte-Mère-Église	50480 Sainte-Mère-Église
H	Pegasus Bridge	14860 Ranville
I	Beaches of Normandy Landings	50480 Utah Beach 14710 Omaha Beach 14114 Gold Beach 14470 Juno Beach 14780 Sword Beach
J	Iron Mike Memorial	6-, 10 La Fière 50480 Sainte-Mère-Église

7

Lecture 7—Normandy at Ease: Painters and Pilgrims

A	Le Havre	(various)
B	Côte d'Albâtre	76790 Côte d'Albâtre
C	Fondation Monet in Giverny	84 Rue Claude Monet 27620 Giverny
D	Côte Fleurie	14640 Côte Fleurie
E	Camembert	61120 Camembert
F	Musée du Camembert	10 Avenue du Général de Gaulle 61120 Vimoutiers
G	Mont Saint-Michel	50170 Mont Saint-Michel

Lecture 8—Brittany: The Wild West

A	Saint-Malo	35400 Saint-Malo
B	Fort National	60 Chaussée du Sillon 35400 Saint-Malo
C	Fort du Grand Bé	35400 Saint-Malo
D	Fort du Petit Bé	35400 Saint-Malo
E	Fort de la Varde	35400 Saint-Malo
F	Fort de la Conchée	35400 Saint-Malo
G	Saint-Brieuc	22000 Saint-Brieuc
H	Binic	22520 Binic
I	Plage de la Banche	22520 Binic
J	Plage de l'avant-Port	3bis Quai Jean Bart 22520 Binic
K	Bay of Douarnenez	29100 Douarnenez
L	Pointe du Raz	29770 Plogoff
M	Quimper	29000 Quimper
N	Lorient	56100 Lorient
O	Citadel of Port-Louis	Avenue du Fort de l'Aigle 56290 Port-Louis
P	Megaliths of Carnac	D196 56340 Carnac

Lecture 9—The Loire Valley: Among the Châteaux

A	Notre-Dame de Chartres	16 Cloître Notre Dame 28000 Chartres
B	Loire Valley	(various)
C	Château d'Azay-le-Rideau	Rue de Pineau 37190 Azay-le-Rideau
D	Château de Chenonceaux	37150 Chenonceaux
E	Nantes	(various)
F	Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery	Quai de la Fosse Passerelle Victor-Schoelcher 44000 Nantes
G	Feydeau	44000 Nantes
H	Jules Verne Museum	3 Rue de l'Hermitage 44100 Nantes
I	Les Machines de l'Île	Parc des Chantiers, Boulevard Léon Bureau 44200 Nantes

Lecture 10—Bordeaux and the Coast of Aquitaine

A	Cathedral Saint-Pierre	1 Rue Sainte-Croix 86000 Poitiers
B	Bordeaux	(various)
C	Grande Façade	2-5 Place de la Comédie 33000 Bordeaux

D	Place de la Bourse	33000 Bordeaux
E	Grand Théâtre	Place de la Comédie 33000 Bordeaux

Lecture 11—The French Basque Region and the Pyrenees

A	Bayonne	64100 Bayonne
B	Daranatz	15 Rue Port Neuf 64100 Bayonne
C	Chocolat Cazenave	19 Rue Port Neuf 64100 Bayonne
D	Bayonne Citadel	Avenue de la Citadelle 64100 Bayonne
E	Les Remparts de Bayonne	Allée Catherine de Bourbon 64100 Bayonne
F	Basque Museum	37 Quai des Corsaires 64100 Bayonne
G	Biarritz	64200 Biarritz
H	Lighthouse	60 B Esp, Espl. Elisabeth II 64200 Biarritz
I	Saint-Jean-de-Luz	64500 Saint-Jean-de-Luz
J	Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste	Rue Léon Gambetta 64500 Saint-Jean-de-Luz

K	*Roncevaux Pass*	*31669* *Navarre, Spain*
L	Lourdes	65100 Lourdes

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Lecture 12—The Camargue: Land of the Cathars

A	Château de Peyrepertuse	11350 Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse
B	Château de Montségur	09300 Montségur
C	Carcassonne	11000 Carcassonne
D	Cité de Carcassonne	1 Rue Viollet le Duc 11000 Carcassonne
E	Camargue Natural Regional Park	Mas du pont de Rousty, RD 570 13200 Arles
F	Montpellier	(various)
G	Place de la Comédie	34000 Montpellier
H	Arc de Triomphe	Rue Foch 34000 Montpellier
I	Antigone	34000 Montpellier
J	Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile	5 Boulevard Général Sibille 81000 Albi
K	Musée Toulouse-Lautrec	Palais de la Berbie, Place Sainte-Cécile 81000 Albi
L	Castelnaudary	11400 Castelnaudary

Lecture 13—Arles: A Jewel of Provence

A	Pont du Gard	400 Route du Pont du Gard 30210 Vers-Pont-du-Gard
B	Viaduc de Millau	12400 Millau
C	Millau Viaduct Information and Tours	Aire du Viaduc 12100 Millau
D	Les Baux-de-Provence	13520 Les Baux-de-Provence
E	Château des Baux	Grand Rue 13520 Les Baux-de-Provence
F	Arles	(various)
G	Les Arènes	1 Rond-Point des Arènes 13200 Arles
H	Théâtre Antique	8 Rue du Cloître 13200 Arles
I	Thermes de Constantin	Rue du Grand Prieuré 13200 Arles
J	Cryptoportiques	5 Rue Balze 13200 Arles
K	Lavender Museum	276 Route de Gordes 84220 Cabrières-d'Avignon

Lecture 14—Along the Riviera: From Marseille to Cannes

A	Marseille	(various)
B	Cité Radieuse	280 Boulevard Michelet 13008 Marseille
C	Château d'If	Embarcadère Frioul If, 1 Quai de la Fraternité 13001 Marseille
D	Cannes	(various)
E	Le Vieux Port	Jetée Albert Edouard 06400 Cannes
F	Le Suquet	06400 Cannes
G	Île Sainte-Marguerite	06400 Cannes
H	Boulevard de la Croisette	06400 Cannes
I	Palais des Festivals	1 Boulevard de la Croisette 06400 Cannes

Lecture 15—Corsica: The Isle of Beauty

A	Corsica	(various)
B	Ajaccio	(various)
C	Maison Bonaparte	Rue Saint-Charles 20000 Ajaccio

D	Ajaccio Cathedral	Rue Forcioli Conti 20000 Ajaccio
E	Musée des Beaux-Arts au Palais Fesch	50-52 Rue Cardinal Fesch 20000 Ajaccio
F	Imperial Chapel	50-54 Rue Cardinal Fesch 20000 Ajaccio
G	Capo di Feno	20090 Ajaccio
H	Torra di a Parata	8 Route des Sanguinaires 20000 Ajaccio
I	Bastia	(various)
J	Vieux Port	20200 Bastia
K	La Citadelle	Rue Chanoine Louis Vincenti 20200 Bastia
L	Musée de Bastia	Cours Favale 20200 Bastia
M	Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Bastia	4 Rue Cardinal Viale Prelà 20200 Bastia
N	Place Saint-Nicolas	Allée Général Fieschi 20200 Bastia
O	Bonifacio	20169 Bonifacio
P	Citadelle de Bonifacio	Bastion de l'Etendard 20169 Bonifacio

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Lecture 16—Avignon: From Popes to Produce Stands

A	Palais des Papes	Place du Palais 84000 Avignon
B	Pont d'Avignon	Boulevard de la Ligne 84000 Avignon
C	Train Station	Boulevard Saint-Roch BP 60175 84008 Avignon
D	Châteauneuf-du-Pape	84230 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
E	Castle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape	Château des Papes 84230 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
F	Mont Ventoux	84390 Brantes
G	Tom Simpson's Memorial	2 9. Sk. 51710 Bédoin

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Lecture 17—The French Alps, Lyon, and Beaujolais

A	Mont Blanc	74400 Chamonix-Mont-Blanc
B	Chamonix	74400 Chamonix
C	Aiguille du Midi	74400 Chamonix
D	Lyon	(various)
E	La Mère Brazier	12 Rue Royale 69001 Lyon

F	Notre Dame de Fourvière	8 Place de Fourvière 69005 Lyon
G	Théâtre Gallo Romain	Rue de l'Antiquaille 69005 Lyon, France
H	Odeon of Lyon	17 Rue Cleberg 69005 Lyon
I	Vieux Lyon	69005 Lyon
J	La Croix-Rousse	69004 Lyon
K	Institut Lumière	Rue du Premier Film 69008 Lyon

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Lecture 18—Dijon and Burgundy: The Delicious Heartland

A	Burgundy	(various)
B	Les Halles Centrales	1 Rue Bannelier 21000 Dijon
C	Beaune	21200 Beaune
D	Hôtel-Dieu Museum	Rue de l'Hôtel Dieu 21200 Beaune

Lecture 19—Alsace and Lorraine: France Meets Germany

A	Lorraine	(various)
B	Birthplace of Joan of Arc	2 Rue de la Basilique 88630 Domrémy-la-Pucelle
C	Alsace	(various)
D	Vosges Mountains	68380 Metzeral
E	Strasbourg	(various)
F	Grande Île	24 Rue Thomann 67000 Strasbourg
G	Notre Dame de Strasbourg	Place de la Cathédrale 67000 Strasbourg
H	Petite-France	67000 Strasbourg
I	Riquewihr	68340 Riquewihr
J	Parlement Européen	67000 Strasbourg

Lecture 20—Paris Transformed: *La Belle Époque*

A	Galerie Vivienne	75002 Paris
B	Arc de Triomphe	Place Charles de Gaulle 75008 Paris
C	Parvis Notre-Dame	Parvis Notre-Dame - Pl. Jean-Paul II 75004 Paris

D	Sewers Museum	93 Quai d'Orsay 75007 Paris
E	Opéra Garnier	75009 Paris
F	Parc des Buttes-Chaumont	1 Rue Botzaris, 75019 Paris

Lecture 21—Bohemian Paris: Artists and Expats

A	Montmartre	75018 Paris
B	Moulin Rouge	82 Boulevard de Clichy 75018 Paris
C	Le Bateau-Lavoir	75018 Paris
D	Basilique du Sacré-Cœur	35 Rue du Chevalier de la Barre 75018 Paris
E	Cimetière de Montmartre	20 Avenue Rachel 75018 Paris
F	Cimetière du Père-Lachaise	8 Boulevard de Ménilmontant 75020 Paris
G	Les Deux Magots	6 Place Saint-Germain des Prés 75006 Paris
H	Café de Flore	172 Boulevard Saint-Germain 75006 Paris
I	Shakespeare and Company	37 Rue de la Bûcherie 75005 Paris

Lecture 22—Paris: The Capital of Design

A	Cinémathèque Française	51 Rue de Bercy 75012 Paris
B	Maison Européenne de la Photographie	5/7 Rue de Fourcy 75004 Paris
C	Les Douches la Galerie	5 Rue Legouvé 75010 Paris
D	Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris	107 Rue de Rivoli 75001 Paris
E	Sentier	75002 Paris
F	Avenue Montaigne	75008 Paris
G	Sèvres	(various)
H	Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres	2 Place de la Manufacture 92310 Sèvres
I	Le Cordon Bleu	13-15 Quai André Citroën 75015 Paris

Lecture 23—Paris and the Future

A	Tour Eiffel	Champ de Mars, 5 Avenue Anatole France 75007 Paris
B	Grand Palais	3 Avenue du Général Eisenhower 75008 Paris
C	Petit Palais	Avenue Winston Churchill 75008 Paris

D	Pont Alexandre III	75008 Paris
E	Parmentier	75011 Paris
F	Louvre–Rivoli	75001 Paris
G	Varenne	75007 Paris
H	Arts et Métiers	75003 Paris
I	Franklin D. Roosevelt	75008 Paris
J	Centre Pompidou	Place Georges-Pompidou 75004 Paris
K	La Défense	(various)
L	Grande Arche de la Defense	1 Parvis de la Défense 92800 Puteaux
M	Musée d'Orsay	1 Rue de la Légion d'Honneur 75007 Paris
N	Pyramide du Louvre	75001 Paris

Lecture 24—United France: Celebrating Together

A	Stade de France	93200 Saint-Denis
B	Champs-Élysées	75008 Paris
C	Place de la République	75010 Paris

Filmography

A bout de souffle (Breathless). Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. Paris: Les Films Impéria, 1960.

Au revoir les enfants. Directed by Louis Malle. Paris: Nouvelles Editions de Films, 1987.

Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis (Welcome to the Sticks). Directed by Dany Boon. Paris: Pathé Renn, 2008.

The Cave of Forgotten Dreams. Directed by Werner Herzog. Pasadena, CA: Creative Differences, 2010.

Le château de ma mère (My Mother's Castle). Directed by Yves Robert. Paris: Gaumont, 1990.

Coco avant Chanel (Coco before Chanel). Directed by Anne Fontaine. Paris: Haut et Court, 2009.

Colette. Directed by Wash Westmoreland. New York: Bleeker Street, 2018.

Dunkirk. Directed by Christopher Nolan. London: Syncopy, 2017.

Les enfants du paradis (Children of Paradise). Directed by Marcel Carné. Paris: Société Nouvelle Pathé Cinéma, 1945.

Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Amélie). Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Paris: Claudie Ossard Productions, 2001.

La gloire de mon père (My Father's Glory). Directed by Yves Robert. Paris: Gaumont, 1990.

La grande illusion. Directed by Jean Renoir. Paris: Réalisation d'art cinématographique, 1937.

Impromptu. Directed by James Lapine. Paris: Ariane Films, 1991.

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Lucie Aubrac. Directed by Claude Berri. Paris: Centre National de la Cinématographie, 1997.

Lust for Life. Directed by Vincente Minelli and George Cukor. Beverly Hills, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1956.

Midnight in Paris. Directed by Woody Allen. Barcelona: Mediapro, 2011.

Manon des sources (Manon of the Spring). Directed by Claude Berri. Paris: DD Productions, 1986.

La môme (La vie en rose). Directed by Olivier Dahan. Paris: Légende Films, 2007.

Paths of Glory. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Beverly Hills, CA: Bryna Productions, 1957.

Prêt à porter (Ready to Wear). Directed by Robert Altman. Los Angeles: Miramax Film, 1994.

Les quatre cents coups (The 400 Blows). Directed by François Truffaut. Paris: Les Films du Carrosse, 1959.

Ratatouille. Directed by Brad Bird and Jan Pinkava. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Pictures, 2007.

Le retour de Martin Guerre (The Return of Martin Guerre). Directed by Daniel Vigne. Paris: SFPC, 1982.

Saving Private Ryan. Directed by Stephen Spielberg. Universal City, CA: Dreamworks, 1998.

Un voyage dans la lune (A Trip to the Moon). Directed by Georges Méliès. Montreuil-sous-Bois, France: Méliès Studios, 1902.

A Year in Burgundy. Directed by David Kennard. Mill Valley, CA: InCA Productions, 2013.

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