

HISTORY WALKS

2017 - 2018

01 - Saturday 16 September 2017

ILE DE LA CITÉ

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : Exit Métro Ile de la Cité

Few travelers visiting Paris, realize that the cathedral of Notre-Dame is actually situated on an island. The Ile de la Cité is usually referred to as the epicenter of Paris, as well as the original site of the Parisi tribes of the Sequana river, now known as the Seine. This was possibly the earliest settlement in Paris--- a muddy town on the banks of a muddy river that grew to be known as one of the most beautiful places in the world. The official "navel" can be found on a small bronze plaque in the square in front of the cathedral. This is technically the very center of France. The focal point of the island is of course the Notre-Dame. Just a few yards away from it, the St. Chapelle is probably the most beautiful church in Paris and without a doubt, the finest stained glass you will ever see. The enormous windows depict the entire span of Christian history from the Book of Genesis to the coming of Christ. One of the reasons for its unified beauty is that it was designed by one architect and completed in 5 years only ! Most Gothic cathedrals took generations to construct, with hundreds of workers, lack of funding and countless subtracting factors which led to bad design. It was built in the 13th century for King Louis IX who had it built to house Jesus's Crown of Thorns.

02 - Saturday 14 October 2017

UNSUSPECTED MONTMARTRE AND WINE CELEBRATION

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : Exit métro Lamarck Caulaincourt (lift exit)

Montmartre, is the cupcake hilltop village of Paris where Miss Amélie Poulain resides. The trek upwards involves quite a few staircases that require a couple of stops to catch your breath, but I have decided to make it easy for you ; going down ! We will of course avoid the Sacre Coeur which is always packed to the gills both inside and outside. We will go behind the Basilica and a bit down the hill where locals live in just like film studios settings. October is the Grape Harvest Festival since 1934. This traditional gathering in the animated streets of Montmartre is a joyous and convivial festival that celebrates the new grape harvest. It is also a cultural festival "Celebration of Montmartre..." which has a humorous edge.

03 - Saturday 11 November 2017

PLAINE MONCEAU

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : Exit métro Courcelles

Geographically extended, the 17th arrondissement of Paris can be divided into 3 main neighbourhoods : Ternes, la Plaine Monceau and les Batignolles. During the walk, you will discover wonderful town houses (La Plaine Monceau has indeed the greatest amount of mansions in Paris) which have been described in the novel **The Hare with Amber Eyes** by British Edmund de Waal. The walk starts in the heart of Monceau. This name comes from a linguistic distortion of "Mont-Chauve" (Bald-Hill). From the 19th century, Pereire Brothers (businessmen, bankers and politicians) transformed this area into a favourite spot of Paris almost solely made of mansions. At this time, having a sumptuous residence at the Plaine Monceau was synonymous with success and fortune. Stop in front of the beautiful Orthodox Church Saint-Alexandre-Nevsky, built in the 19th century. On rue Alfred de Vigny, there is an amazing town house, housing today the Conservatoire International de Musique de Paris. On rue de Courcelles is one of the most out of the ordinary building of Paris : La Maison Loo. This pagoda had been built by a rich Chinese art trader, Ching Tsai Loo, in 1880. Also, we will remember the construction site of Miss Liberty in the nearby Gaguet factories...

04 - Saturday 9 December 2017

MURAL MUSEUM

Meeting : 11:00 pm

At : Exit métro at Porte de Clichy

Urban art (street art and post-graffiti) gives an universal message that makes us questioning society and essential values of humanity. For several years already street art took over the biggest museum in the world : the street. Showing us that art does not only come from the top of our society but also from the bottom. This way, it represents a wide range of open dialogues, as different as it's artists and the reason why it belongs to art history. The project Art42 has been created to allow everybody to discover this art that doesn't have a permanent exhibition in France yet, and give it a better visibility.

05 - Saturday 10 March 2018

EQUESTRIAN SCULPTURES

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : Exit métro Cité

In sculpture, the term "equestrian statue" describes a statue of a rider mounted on a horse. If the horse is riderless, the sculpture is usually called an "equine statue". Since popes, politicians and even some kings rarely rode horses, equestrian statues typically portrayed military commanders or militaristic leaders. Horses are notoriously difficult to render in either stone or bronze, and even the greatest sculptors experience technical difficulties of balance and weight-support. However, there can be few types of art as majestic as the immortal equestrian statue of Charlemagne across from Notre-Dame ; the statue of Henri 4th on Pont Neuf and many others along the Seine to the Grand Palais.

06 - Saturday 7 April 2018

MURALS IN THE 13th Arrondissement

Meeting : 10:00 am

At : Exit Métro Place d'Italie, corner with boulevard Vincent Auriol

The city's 13th arrondissement in Paris has in recent years become a renowned neighbourhood for a great number of large-scale artworks by both French and international graffiti-street artists.

The 13th is unlike other Parisian districts. The Parisian East-side is the richest territory for fans of the urban arts to explore. It features mostly high-rise apartment blocks. Because of this lower architectural *valeur historique*, unlike in other Parisian neighbourhoods the local townhall has been commissioning artists to go 'big' on the sides of its buildings. The works are large thanks to the support from the local mayor, contemporary art enthusiast Jérôme Coumet and his team. For the biggest and largest of these works, a vote is put out to local residents who get to have their say on what gets painted.

07 - Saturday 26 May 2018

ANIMAL STATUES

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : In from of main entrance Orsay museum by the Elephant.

As we walk the Paris streets we often bump into sculptures which represent an elephant, a horse or a lion. These animals, mostly sculpted on the building facades or meant to stand freely in the center of square witness the genius of 19th century artists. For the 16th century onwards, these animals have come outside their cages and decorate parks, street lines, public gardens and royal squares.

08 - Saturday 16 June 2018

OFF OFF LA GRANDE ARCHE

Meeting : 11:00 am

At : Entrance to the CNIT (Metro line 1, or, RER Grande Arche La Défense)

Few urban developments in the Paris metropolitan area have divided opinions as much as the business district of La Défense. Some marvel at La Défense with its collection of high-rise buildings gathered around a large pedestrian plaza, where others see it as a poor sequence of mono-functional office buildings. It is difficult to stay indifferent to this unique site, whose development was driven by an upcoming demand for large office spaces and high-rise buildings in France after the Second World War combined with the wish to maintain the historical skyline of central Paris. Since its creation in 1958, the business district of La Défense has become one of the major economic clusters in the metropolitan area and internationally renowned. It is served by one of the region's most intensively used transport hubs and tens of thousands people frequent this district daily, including office workers, residents and visitors. The urban form of La Défense is based on overlaying urban functions, a large elevated pedestrian plaza on the historic axis and a high density through high-rise buildings. Today, we will proceed to a much newer aspect of the district ; off, off La Grande Arche.