

## La Conciergerie

This is ancient royal palace, built by Philippe the Fair (1284-1314). It is a place of imprisonment, torture, and death. Its gothic halls date from the Middle Ages. During the Revolution, it became a prison for thousands of arrested and condemned people. During the Reign of Terror, nearly 3 000 people left from here to meet their death on the Guillotine. See if you can track down the lists of their names. Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI and their children were imprisoned here, and the King and Queen left from here to be beheaded. The Revolutionary Tribunal kept court here.



In the cells, prisoners were housed according to their means. The “pailleux” were the most numerous and slept on “paille” or straw in “La Rue de Paris” as they could not afford to bribe the guards for better accommodation. The “pistolés” were those who could pay “un pistol” (the name of a coin) and they could share a bed. There were the privileged who could afford their own private cell. You can also visit the women’s courtyard and the dungeon occupied by Marie Antoinette which is now a chapel dedicated to her memory.

## Pont Neuf

the « new bridge » is in fact, the oldest bridge in Paris, so called because in 1578 it was the newest, and the only, stone bridge across the river. The contemporary Parisians liked their bridge because it was innovative: there were no houses built on it, so you could admire the views over the river and the Louvre; it was large, and its passing bays made it even larger; there were footpaths to protect pedestrians from mud and people on horseback. Consequently, there was a constant procession of people using the bridge, especially to get to the well at La Samaritaine. It’s hard to believe that this bridge is so old!



## La place Dauphine

Tucked well behind La Sainte Chapelle, this was once a third little marshy island. It was here that Jacques de Molay, the grand Master of the Templars was burned at the stake.

## Samaritaine.

This big department store – the original of Paris - is built on the site of the well. It covers three blocks.



## Les Bouquinistes.

are the second hand book sellers who have their little lock up stands along the edges of the river Seine. They sell all sorts of interesting, fascinating and very valuable items, as well as modern books, posters and CDs. “second hand books” in France can mean rare, limited or first editions as well as very old books. A great place for finding a treasure!

## Musee de Cluny.

How about a Museum dedicated to the Middle ages, set in an original “hotel” dating from that time, which was built on top of the original Roman bath houses for the city of Paris! It’s one of the best collection of daily life in the middle ages, but perhaps one of the most impressive sets on display are the six tapestries called “La Dame à la Licorne”, the Lady and the Unicorn. These date from the 1400s, and tell a story linked to the five senses. Look carefully at all the animals and birds on these, as the tapestry artists were trying to reproduce exotic animals they



had been told about but obviously, had never seen! Marvel at the gold and jewelled treasures that were in daily use in churches hundreds of years ago, the early “books”, and such every day items as combs and toothbrushes! Down below the Hotel, you can explore the roman architecture of the baths, and the frigidarium (cold baths).

<http://www.musee-moyenage.fr/>

## Le Jardin du Luxembourg.

This is probably the most popular park in Paris both with the locals and with tourists. It started life as the garden for the Palais du Luxembourg which was built in the early years of the 1600s for Marie de Medicis, mother of Louis XIII. She was of Italian descent, so the architect, Salomon de Brosse designed the palace in a Florentine style. The gardens around it were designed in a French style, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were opened for public use. The French have loved them ever since!



The Palais has had a chequered history; in 1794, during the French Revolution, the palace served as a prison. It also served as the headquarters of the Luftwaffe during the Second World War. It currently houses the French Senate. There is an octagonal pond in the centre of the park, called le Grand Bassin. You can hire radio controlled boats here to sail on it. The park is popular with chess and boules players too. There are two fountains; the oldest one, the Fontaine de Medicis, dating from 1624 and at the southern end of the park, the Fontaine de l'Observatoire, a 19<sup>th</sup> century one representing the continents of the world, with a globe supported by four women, each representing a continent. To keep the design symmetrical, the sculptor left Oceania out!



## Chatelet

The world’s largest underground station. When you have experienced its multiple levels, its stairs, its escalators, its moving footpaths.... You will appreciate that it’s often worth the detour just to avoid it, unless of course it’s your final destination!

## L’hotel de ville



Each winter the square outside, the Place de Chatelet, becomes an open ice rink for Parisians to enjoy for just the cost of hiring the skates! It’s the centre for the “Nuit Blanche” (sleepless night) when Paris has non stop entertainment happening over the night throughout the city at a huge variety of venues – concerts, plays, art shows, events...something to suit everyone. Free buses and metro trains help you to get to the gigs.

## Centre Beaubourg-Georges Pompidou

This is a museum of modern art that has two names, one from the street that it is located in, and the other from the President who commissioned it. President Pompidou was a great fan of modern art and wanted to build a contemporary art museum and library. The architects wanted to construct: "surtout pas un temple de la culture intimidant". They wanted the building to look less intimidating than most museums and designed an "inside out"

Some cynical Parisians call this La Raffinerie, the Oil Refinery, since that is what it looks like from the outside. All the infrastructures were put on coded. Green for water conditioning and heating; blue for air pipes; yellow for electricity; and red for people. There is a huge escalator encased in a glass tube. The idea of the outside as a vast open space in works.



The structure was completed in 1977. It attracts about 25 000 visitors a day. Unfortunately, it's still under discussion from the purists who think it looks ugly and doesn't match its surroundings. Having all its infrastructure on the outside has made it very vulnerable to rust and corrosion, so its upkeep is quite considerable.

## The Forum des Halles.

Nowadays this is a big park and a shopping centre in the centre of Paris. It was once the site of Les Halles, the markets of Paris.

For 800 years this was the Paris market place; originally, it was a general market, but by the 1500s it sold only food. Over time, the area just became more and more crowded until 1969 when it was moved to a site near Orly airport. In those days, the marketeers worked all night. Shop keepers arrived at 4 in the morning to purchase fresh food. It was also quite common for certain "society types" to eat at the restaurants serving the market staff and clientele. Fresh onion soup and pigs' trotters were very popular! **Au Pied du Cochon** is a restaurant still there today, which has survived from that era – and still serves trotters!



<http://www.atkielski.com/inlink.php>

The old buildings became just a big hole in the ground for quite a few years until their transformation into the park and shopping centre. It is an area best avoided at night. The Church in the background is called St Eustache and is the second biggest (after Notre Dame) in Paris.

## The catacombs – the spooky tour!

Tucked away under the city are about 200km of tunnels, dark corners, and dead ends (ha!) in which you can stroll (or get lost!) Originally these tunnels were quarries from which stone was extracted to build such famous places as Notre Dame. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these galleries were used as a resting place for .....human bones. It was a solution for the problem of overcrowding in the city cemeteries.

This unique bone collection of 5 to 6 million people covers a surface of 11.000 square meters, a tiny portion of the 300 km of old mine corridors. Galleries are an average of 2.30 meters high, and the temperature is a constant 11.C, during summer and winter.



Today, it's strictly forbidden to detour from the marked route through the catacombs; but there are those who know some of the secret ways through the maze of tunnels – many of which have not been properly mapped. Just make sure you don't suffer the tragic fate of Philibert Aspaïrt, who got lost there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and whose unfortunate skeleton was not re-discovered until 11 years later .....10 metres from an exit!