



## MODERN TIMES:

# Paris in the 20th Century

France's 20th-century history splits rather neatly in two halves, before and after the Second World War. Like the century, this walking tour is also divided into **two parts** — one on the west side of the city, focusing on the **first half** of the century, and one on the east side focusing on the **second half**.

**Walking Tour A** - This part of the walk extends from the **Grand Palais and Petit Palais**, built for the 1900 Universal Exposition, to the **Palais de Tokyo** and **Palais de Chaillot**, built for the 1937 International Exposition just before World War II. Stops include a wild-looking **art nouveau mansion** and the almost modern-looking **Théâtre des Champs Elysées**. The walk is set in the elegant **8th and 16th arrondissements**, home to the **avenue des Champs Elysées** and the fashionable **avenue Montaigne**.

**Start:** Champs Elysées/Clémenceau  
Métro Station (Métro: Champs  
Elysées/ Clémenceau)

**Finish:** Palais de Chaillot  
(Métro: Trocadéro)

**Distance:** 3 miles

**Time:** 2.5 - 4 hours

**Best Days:** Wednesday - Saturday

**Walking Tour B** - This section of the walk runs between the **Tour Montparnasse** and the **Bibliothèque Nationale-François Mitterrand**. Many of the modern and post-modern buildings you'll see on this walk, such as the Tour Montparnasse itself and the **Opéra Bastille**, were quite controversial when they were constructed. You'll get a chance to judge them for yourself. You'll also see parts of two late 20th-century redevelopment projects, **Bercy** and **Paris Rive Gauche**.

**Start:** Tour Montparnasse  
(Métro: Montparnasse-  
Bienvenue)

**Finish:** Bibliothèque Nationale-Mitterrand  
(Métro: Quai de la Gare)

**Distance:** 3.5 miles plus a Métro ride

**Time:** 3 - 4 hours

**Best Days:** Tuesday - Sunday

## HISTORY

### Politics and Economics

During the first part of the 20th century, France was ravaged by two world wars and left impoverished and demoralized. As a result, the country spent much of the second half of the century recovering its political pride and economic prosperity.

France had no direct national interest in the conflict in the Balkans that ignited **World War I**. Following the assassination in Serbia of Austrian archduke Francis Ferdinand, France was drawn into the war by a combination of circumstances pervading all of Europe — interlocking alliances, nationalism, rigid military planning and the mistaken belief that any war would be brief. After France declared war, Germany invaded France by way of Belgium. German war plans presumed a quick victory in France followed by a rapid shift of forces to a Russian front. But France put up much stiffer resistance than Germany had expected. The war along the French border with Belgium evolved into a long bloody defensive struggle with battles along the Marne and Somme rivers and in places like Verdun. By the end of the war, two million Frenchmen had died and the country was impoverished and exhausted. In the Treaty of Versailles, Premier **Georges Clémenceau** extracted some measure of revenge against Germany, demanding huge reparations and claiming Alsace and Lorraine. But instead of the buffer zone he wanted in the Rhineland, Clémenceau obtained only vague (and soon forgotten) promises from France's allies that they would protect France from an incursion by Germany.

Between the two world wars, France experienced a high degree of political and economic instability. By the mid 1930's, the country was in no position to respond forcefully to Hitler's growing aggression. France, along with Britain, failed to act as Hitler rebuilt the German military in 1935, sent troops into the demilitarized Rhineland in 1936, annexed Austria in 1938, and occupied the Sudetenland and then the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939.



Finally, when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, France and Britain declared war. **World War II** began slowly during the winter, but in the spring of 1940, Hitler launched a surprise "blitzkrieg" (lightning war) against France. By June, France surrendered. The Germans occupied three-fifths of France. In the rest of France, they installed **Marshal Pétain** as head of what became known as **Vichy France**, initiating the most disgraceful period in France's history. The Vichy government collaborated with the Nazis. A small number of French citizens, led from London by Charles de Gaulle and the Free French, formed a spirited resistance movement. The war in France lasted until 1944 when the Allies landed on France's Normandy beaches in June and liberated Paris in August.



Charles de Gaulle

After the war, **Charles de Gaulle** became head of a provisional government. When the **Fourth Republic** was created with a chief executive de Gaulle considered to be too weak, he retired. He remained politically engaged but on the sidelines until 1958. By that point, France had lost Indochina, Morocco and Tunisia and was on the brink of civil war over the issue of Algerian independence. The National Assembly asked de Gaulle to take control of the government and empowered him to write a new constitution. He created the **Fifth Republic** with a strong presidency, granted independence to Algeria, and set about trying to return France to the status of a great power with a key role in the Cold War. In pursuit of this objective, he invested in nuclear weapons, pulled France out of NATO's military command, and resisted American and British efforts to influence events in Europe.

Ultimately, de Gaulle's decreasing popularity, coupled with widespread economic unrest and a violent student uprising in 1968, led to the end of his government. He retired in 1969 and died a year later. From 1969 on, France has fluctuated between conservative and liberal governments. **Georges Pompidou**, de Gaulle's Prime Minister, replaced him and served as President from 1969-1974 when **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, another conservative, was elected. In 1981, **François Mitterrand**, a Socialist, became President. He was reelected in 1988. In 1995, **Jacques Chirac**, the conservative Mayor of Paris replaced Mitterrand.

During the course of the 20th century, France went through many economic ups and downs. After being devastated economically by the First World War, the country went through a brief period of prosperity in the 1920's before being hit by the **Great Depression** in the 1930's. A liberal coalition government, the Popular Front, tried to address the problems of the Depression by measures such as a minimum wage and a forty-hour work week but was largely unsuccessful.

After the Second World War, the **Marshall Plan** helped the country rebuild its infrastructure and industrial base, ushering in a period of dramatic economic growth in the 50's and 60's. But economic problems contributed to de Gaulle's downfall at the end of the 1960's, and at the end of the 1970's were the reason François Mitterrand's Socialist government was elected. The Socialists raised the minimum wage, shortened the work week to thirty-nine hours, and nationalized many major banks and industries. These measures did little to improve the economy. By his second term, Mitterrand became much more economically conservative.



Throughout the second half of the 20th century, France's economy was helped overall by its active participation in what began in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community and evolved in 1994 into the **European Union**, a full fledged economic and monetary union.



## Philosophy, Science and Religion

Throughout the 20th century, philosophers and scientists created more and more uncertainty about God, religion, rationality, predictability in nature, and the superiority of Western culture. Sigmund Freud's ideas about the **human unconscious**, developed in the late 19th century, spread widely in the 20th century and seriously undermined belief in the rational nature of human beings. Albert Einstein's **theory of relativity** challenged previous Newtonian belief in a mechanized, orderly natural world. Werner Heisenberg's **uncertainty principal** as applied to electrons further eroded confidence in the predictability of nature.

The horrors of the world wars, of course, seriously undermined previous beliefs in an "age of progress" guided by rational human beings. Following the two wars, French existentialist philosophers **Jean-Paul Sartre** and **Albert Camus** gave voice to a growing sense of disillusion and uncertainty. According to their philosophy of **existentialism**, the world is absurd and without meaning. Man in the absence of God is alone in the universe with no past, no future, no hope and only himself to rely on. Following Camus and Sartre, other French philosophers such as **Jacques Derrida** took the existentialists' ideas about free will and personal responsibility even further. Their philosophies looked at ways people create their own meaning within their own cultural contexts. They argued that there is no fixed truth or universal meaning.

## Architecture



Paris Métro Station



Palais de Chaillot

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the **art nouveau** architectural style evolved as a reaction against the formal "beaux arts" neoclassical style. Art nouveau is distinguished by long curved lines, stylized vegetal and floral motifs, and asymmetry. In 1900, the glass and iron railings and canopies at the entrances to the Paris Métro, designed by Hector Guimard, became the most visible art nouveau structures in Paris. However, art nouveau remained in vogue for less than a decade and is generally seen in retrospect as more of a decorative than an architectural style.

The **stripped-down classical** and **art deco** styles became popular during the jazz age of the 1920's and early 1930's. Stripped-down classical's streamlined styling was facilitated by new reinforced concrete building technology. Art deco's decorative features were often taken from ancient cultures, especially Egypt, following the discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1922. The term was coined from the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels.



Office Towers La Défense

By the 1970's a backlash developed in many parts of the world against modern architecture. In Paris, high-rise buildings were a particular focus of criticism but there were other concerns as well. Modern buildings were also criticized for being too sterile, boxy and boring, and for violating the historical context and traditions of the city.



Institut du Monde Arab



Louvre Pyramid



La Villette Géode

Distinctly **modern** architecture began to develop before World War II and became the dominant style for office and large-scale residential buildings after the war. Modern architecture is sometimes referred to as the **international style**, a term coined by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932 in recognition of modern architecture's growing worldwide acceptance. The guiding principles of modern architecture were that the form of a building should be determined by its function and building materials (most often steel, glass and reinforced concrete), and that decorative references to history or tradition should be eliminated. French architect Charles-Edouard Jeannerette (**Le Corbusier**) was one of the best known advocates for modern buildings, which he described as "machines for living."

By the 1980's, a new, slightly more ornamental and harmonious **post-modern** style of architecture became popular in many parts of the world. Architects in Paris never adopted the extremes of ornamentation of post-modern architecture. However, buildings designed in Paris toward the end of the century, sometimes described as **neo-modern**, were not as tall, were somewhat more ornamented, and were generally more respectful of their urban and historical context than their modern predecessors.

Many of these late 20th-century buildings were part of a cultural and architectural renewal program of "**grands projets**" President François Mitterrand sponsored beginning in 1982. The projects included major renovations to the Musée d'Orsay and the Louvre (including construction of the Pyramid), and many new buildings including the Institut du Monde Arabe, the Opéra Bastille, the Grande Arche at La Défense, the Ministry of Finance building in Bercy, the Bibliothèque Nationale-François Mitterrand, and four major projects in La Villette. With these projects, President Mitterrand left his mark on 20th-century Paris in much the same way France's kings and emperors had in previous centuries.

## Growth and Development

In all previous centuries, the population of Paris grew as people migrated in from outlying areas. In the 20th century that trend was reversed. After growing to a high of **2,906,700** in 1920, the population decreased to **2,125,200** in 1999. At the same time, the suburbs grew dramatically. In 1921, the balance between the city and its suburbs was about even. By 1999, only 20% of the region's 10,952,000 residents lived in Paris.



**Transportation** was one of the big stories of 20th - century Paris. The **Paris Métro** opened in July, 1900. By the end of the century, fourteen lines served the city. A regional rail system, the **RER**, was built in the 1960's to serve the suburbs. The **automobile** also became a dominant feature of city life. There were 3800 cars registered in Paris in 1901 and 880,000 by 1995. The **boulevard Périphérique** was completed along the pathway of the previous century's Thiers Wall becoming, in effect, a modern day city wall. The Right Bank expressway was completed in 1967. Construction on a Left Bank expressway reached only a few kilometers before public objections stopped it.



La Défense



Montparnasse



Les Halles

The other big story of 20th-century Paris was not so much development but **redevelopment**. **La Défense**, the biggest and longest running of all of Paris' redevelopment projects, began just outside the city in 1958. It is now Europe's largest commercial business district.

Four redevelopment projects followed La Défense in the 1960's and 1970's: the **Front de Seine**, **Italie 13**, **Maine-Montparnasse** and **Les Halles**. As these projects evolved, a reaction developed against their high rise towers. Work on Italie 13 was stopped in the mid 1970's after the project was partially completed. Work on Les Halles was stopped before anything was even built, leaving a huge hole in the ground for years. After considerable debate, Les Halles finally went ahead in the early 1980's without the tall buildings originally planned there. After the Les Halles project, no major new projects were built in Paris for almost a decade.



La Villette



Bercy

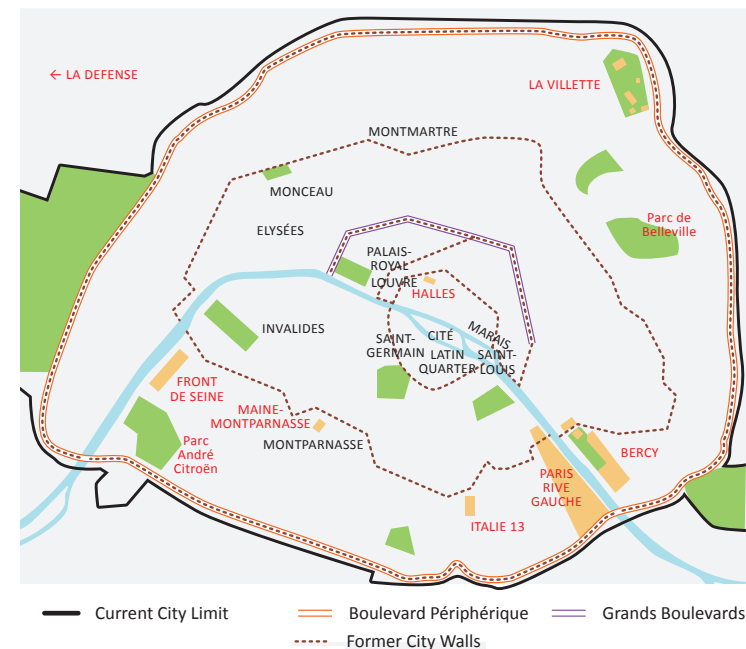


Paris Rive Gauche

In the early 1990's, **La Villette**, a major urban park, culture and entertainment project, was developed on the northeastern edge of the city on the site of former slaughterhouses and wholesale markets. The complex includes a science museum, an exhibition hall, and a music center.

By the mid 1990's, two other redevelopment projects were initiated on the east side with low and mid-rise buildings. The **Bercy** redevelopment project on the Right Bank at the eastern edge of the city, is on the site of 19th-century wine and spirit warehouses. Like La Villette, it was developed around a major urban park. The **Paris Rive Gauche** project began just slightly later across the river on the Left Bank. It consolidates aging industrial sites and rail yards in the districts of Tolbiac, Austerlitz and Massena into a large new residential and commercial neighborhood.

### 20th Century Paris - Growth and Development



# WALKING TOUR A

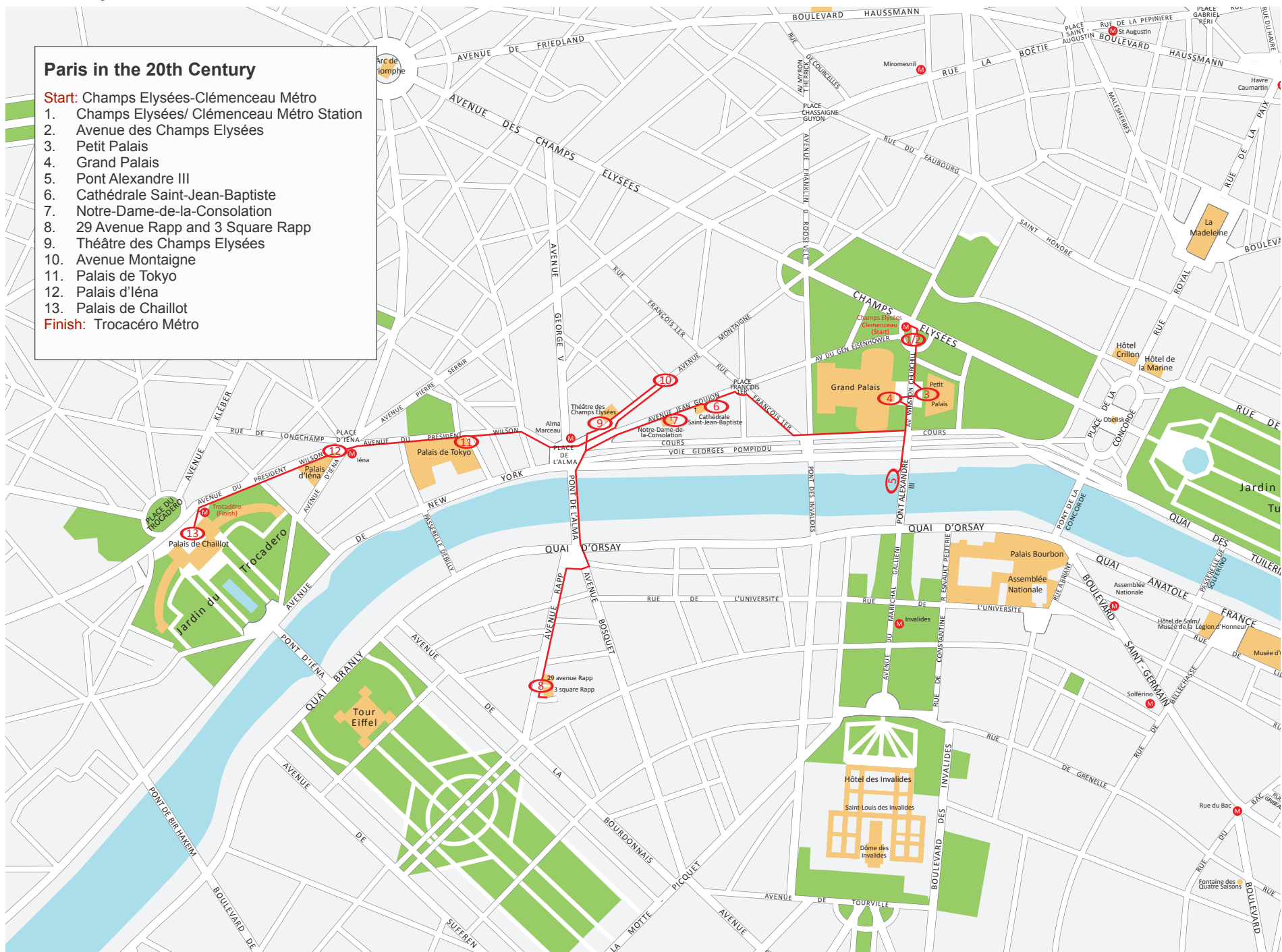
## Route Map

### Paris in the 20th Century

**Start:** Champs Elysées-Clémenceau Métro

1. Champs Elysées/ Clémenceau Métro Station
2. Avenue des Champs Elysées
3. Petit Palais
4. Grand Palais
5. Pont Alexandre III
6. Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste
7. Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation
8. 29 Avenue Rapp and 3 Square Rapp
9. Théâtre des Champs Elysées
10. Avenue Montaigne
11. Palais de Tokyo
12. Palais d'Iéna
13. Palais de Chaillot

**Finish:** Trocadéro Métro





## Logistics

**Time and Distance:** This part of the walking tour is about 3 miles. With stops, it will take about two-and-a-half hours. Allow another hour if you want to visit the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine in the Palais de Chaillot, and even more time if you want to visit either or both of the two art museums on the route. (See below.)

**When to Go:** The best days to take this walk are Wednesday through Saturday. Sunday works too but you'll only be able to window shop along the avenue Montaigne (perhaps better for your budget anyway). A decision about whether to do the walk on Monday or Tuesday depends on whether you want to spend time visiting any museums. The art museums in the Petit Palais and the Palais de Tokyo are closed on Monday. The Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine is closed on Tuesday.

**Helpful Hint:** If you're interested in architecture, the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine is a must see museum. It includes three sections, one focused on French architecture (primarily churches) from the Middle Ages through the 18th century, one focused on the 19th and 20th centuries, and a third section with murals and stained glass windows. If you prefer art, you can visit either or both of the City of Paris museums on the walk. The Petit Palais has a collection of paintings and other art works dating from antiquity through the early part of the 20th century; the Palais de Tokyo is devoted entirely to modern art. Both art museums are free so it's easy to take a quick look to decide whether you want to spend more time.

## Start

*Start at the exit from the **Champs Elysées/ Clémenceau Métro** station.*

## Buildings and Monuments



### 1. Champs Elysées/ Clémenceau Métro Station

The **Champs Elysées/Clémenceau Métro** station was one of the first stations built on the first **Paris Métro** line, Line 1. The Métro opened in July 1900, too late for the opening of the 1900 Universal Exposition in April, but still a significant accomplishment. The Paris Métro was the fourth metro built in the world after London, New York and Chicago. It took so long because there had been bickering for decades between the city and state. The state was interested in linking major rail stations, while the city was more interested in serving its core. The city finally prevailed and built its own system with tunnels purposely too small for standard rail cars so the Métro and the railroads could never connect. The numbers of the Métro lines correspond to the order in which they were opened. Lines 1 through 6 were the core of the original system. The newest line, Line 14, opened its first section in 1998. The distinctive art nouveau entrances to the original Métro stations were designed by Hector Guimard in 1900. Sixty of these entrances still exist (although not necessarily in their original locations) and remain perhaps the Métro's most widely recognizable feature.

*Extending west and east from the Métro station is the ....*



### 2. Avenue des Champs Elysées

The **avenue des Champs Elysées** was the heart of 20th-century Paris. Today tourist crowds, chain stores and traffic have taken away some of the avenue's former glory, but it is still a fun place to stroll and people watch. The Champs Elysées dates back to the 1600's when Louis XIV's landscape architect, André Le Nôtre, created a central tree-lined avenue extending through the Tuileries Gardens to what is now the Rond Point des Champs Elysées. The avenue was very popular as a place to stroll and take carriage rides, but had very few buildings until the late 1800's when wealthy neighborhoods shifted west. A major building boom occurred in the early 1900's. Palatial automobile showrooms, grand hotels, first-run movie theaters, cafes and restaurants made the avenue **the** place to be in Paris.



The avenue has had a ceremonial as well as a commercial function throughout much of its history, hosting parades and celebrations such as the annual conclusion of the Tour de France. Most famously, the Allied Forces led by Charles de Gaulle and the Free French held a victory parade along the avenue after the liberation of Paris in 1944. Many of the streets, avenues and plazas around the Champs pay tribute to World War I and II leaders. For example, place Clémenceau is named for France's determined World War I Premier, Georges Clémenceau and contains a statue of World War II hero Charles de Gaulle. You'll find nearby streets named for Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and General Dwight Eisenhower, and a statue of Churchill just south of the Petit Palais.

*From place Clémenceau walk toward the river on avenue Winston Churchill; the Petit Palais will be on your left.*



### 3. Petit Palais

The **Petit Palais** and Grand Palais across the street were the showpieces of the 1900 Universal Exposition. Unlike the temporary halls built for previous expositions, these buildings were built to last. Charles Girault designed the Petit Palais and oversaw the design of the Grand Palais. The dome of the Petit Palais echoes the dome of the Invalides and its neo-Rococo style was inspired by the Grand Trianon at Versailles. While earlier universal exhibitions were celebrations of technology and the industrial arts, the 1900 exposition celebrated the creative arts. The Petit Palais was built specifically to showcase French art. Today the Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris still houses part of the city's art collection. The Petit Palais was built around a semicircular courtyard and garden. The cafe overlooking this courtyard is a delightful place for a snack or lunch. (www.petitpalais.paris; Tu-Su 10-6; free)

*Cross the street to the ....*



### 4. Grand Palais

The **Grand Palais** is distinguished by its enormous metal and glass roof, metal framework, and its rather pompous neo-Baroque facade. At the turn of the century, architects were prepared to use modern materials but still felt the need to cover them with traditional stonework and ornamentation. The winged horses and chariots on each corner of the Palais echo the winged horses on the Pont Alexandre. Today the main part of the Grand Palais houses temporary exhibitions. An extension on the west side, opened for the 1937 International Exposition, houses the Palais de la Découverte, an interactive science museum. (www.grandpalais.paris.fr ; open only for special exhibitions except that the entrance hall is open Jul 15-Sep 5, 10-6)

*Continue along avenue Winston Churchill to the bridge, the Pont Alexandre III.*



### 5. Pont Alexandre III

The **Pont Alexandre III** was designed in conjunction with the Petit Palais and the Grand Palais for the 1900 Universal Exposition. The bridge, named for Tsar Alexandre III, celebrates a French-Russian alliance treaty negotiated in 1892. The Tsar's son, Tsar Nicholas II, laid the first stone. The steel and stone bridge, designed by engineers Jean Resal and Amédée Alby, was the first single-span bridge built across the Seine. Its profile was purposely kept low to avoid blocking views on either side of the river. The bridge is the most decorated in Paris. Gilded bronze winged horses sit atop the huge columns at either end of the bridge. Seventeen different sculptors designed the splendid lamps and decoration along the span.

*Head west along the river side of the Grand Palais to rue François 1er; turn right; at place François 1er turn left onto rue Jean Goujon where you'll find the Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste on the left.*



### 6. Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste

Very few churches were built in central Paris during the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Catholic church struggled to serve the growing population in the suburbs. Those churches that were built in the central city, such as the two churches you'll see along rue Jean Goujon, were often built due to relatively unique circumstances. The first church you will see, the **Cathédrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste**, is often called the Armenian Church. It was financed by a wealthy Armenian entrepreneur and was built for the Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) Church. Albert-Desiré Guilbert designed it in 1903 in a neo-Romanesque style.

*Continue on rue Jean Goujon to Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation, the next church on the left.*



## 7. Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation

**Notre-Dame-de-la-Consolation** was designed in 1900 by Guilbert in a somewhat over-the-top neo-Baroque style. This church was built on the site of and as a memorial to over 100 people killed in an 1895 fire at a charity bazaar. Most of those who died were wealthy female patrons. It is said the men survived because they beat their way out with their walking sticks.

*Continue on rue Jean Goujon to the place de l'Alma; turn left and cross the river on the Pont de l'Alma; at the end of the bridge angle slightly to the right onto avenue Rapp; 29 avenue Rapp will be on the left.*



## 8. 29 avenue Rapp and 3 Square Rapp

Jules Lavirotte was the best known art nouveau architect in Paris after Hector Guimard. The home at **29 avenue Rapp**, with its asymmetrical facade of flowers intertwined with female figures, is the most exuberant of his creations. He won a municipal prize for best facade for it in 1901. The facade is also notable because it was the first facade where glazed tiles imbedded in the stone and brick were used on such a scale. The ceramicist, Alexandre Biget, was the owner of the building. He collaborated on a number of other art nouveau buildings in Paris, including Hector Guimard's best known project (next to the Paris Métro entrances), the Castel Béranger. One of Lavirotte's earlier buildings, **3 square Rapp** (1900), is just down the street in a courtyard on the left side.

*Retrace your steps back along avenue Rapp and across the bridge to the place de l'Alma; just beyond rue Jean Goujon take avenue Montaigne to the right; you'll find the Théâtre des Champs Élysées almost immediately on the left; the best place to view it is from across the street.*



## 9. Théâtre des Champs Élysées

The **Théâtre des Champs Élysées** (1913) was the first building in Paris to use reinforced concrete construction on a large scale. Its primary designers, brothers Auguste and Gustave Perret, took maximum advantage of the new technology to create a stripped-down classical building with strong rectilinear lines. Externally, the concrete structure is covered by a marble facade, but inside the concrete structure is left exposed. The Perret brothers' use of reinforced concrete in the Théâtre des Champs Élysées affirmed its use in mainstream construction. The dome inside the theater is covered by four paintings depicting the History of Art by Maurice Denis of the early 20th-century Nabi school of painting. The theater was founded as a venue for contemporary music, dance and opera. One of the programs it sponsored during its first year was the Ballet Russe's presentation of the Rite of Spring with music by Igor Stravinsky and choreography by Nijinsky. The program was seen by the audience as so unconventional that it nearly caused a riot. ([www.theatrechampselysees.fr](http://www.theatrechampselysees.fr))

*Continue walking for a few blocks along the avenue Montaigne.*



## 10. Avenue Montaigne

**Avenue Montaigne** is the most fashionable shopping street in Paris. Over the course of the 20th century so many high fashion designers migrated here that it became even more exclusive than Paris' other high fashion street, rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré. French designers such as Dior and Chanel as well as international brands such as Prada and Escada can all be found here. While all the designers are certainly high fashion, not all carry the French "**haute couture**" label. "Haute couture", meaning "high sewing" in French, is a designation protected by French law and can only be used by design houses that meet certain standards. They must design custom fitted clothing, maintain a workshop in Paris with a minimum number of employees, and present their collections twice a year in the Paris design shows. Designers such as Dior and Chanel still retain this designation, while others such as Yves Saint-Laurent now concentrate on top end ready-to-wear fashions.

*Enjoy window shopping along the avenue, then retrace your steps back to the place de l'Alma; head west along avenue du Président Wilson; you'll find the Palais de Tokyo on the left.*





## 11. Palais de Tokyo

The **Palais de Tokyo** and the last stop on this tour, the Palais de Chaillot, were designed for the 1937 International Exposition. The Palais de Tokyo was somewhat removed from the major pavilions. It was designed as a museum of modern art with a stripped-down classical exterior and interior spaces designed to maximize lighting. The city and state collaborated on the creation of the museum but only up to a point. Their collections were housed in two separate wings. Today the east wing still houses the Musée d' Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The state's modern art collection was moved to the Centre Pompidou in the 1970's. The west wing now houses the Centre d'Art Contemporain, an art venue for young artists. ([www.mam.paris.fr](http://www.mam.paris.fr) ; Tu-Su 10-6, free)

*Continue walking on avenue du President Wilson to the place d'Iéna where you will see the Palais d'Iéna/Conseil Économique et Social to the left.*



## 12. Palais d'Iéna

The **Palais d'Iéna** (1937-46, 1960-62, 1993-96), now housing the **Conseil Économique et Social**, was originally designed as a public works museum. It was intended to be part of the 1937 International Exposition but was only partially completed by 1937 and was finished after the war. The French government awarded the contract to design the museum to Auguste Perret, possibly as a sort of "compensation prize." He was an active participant in planning for the 1937 exposition but ultimately was not awarded contracts to design any of the larger exposition buildings. This building is not as well-known as Perret's earlier Théâtre des Champs Élysées although it is in many ways more interesting and elegant. It blends his commitment to reinforced-concrete building technology with his admiration for ancient Greek temples. The huge columns are unusual because they taper in at their bases. Green and pink stones imbedded in the hammered concrete give it an interesting color.

*Continue walking on avenue du President Wilson to the place du Trocadéro and the huge ...*



## 13. Palais de Chaillot

The **Palais de Chaillot** was designed as the entrance to the 1937 International Exposition. This exposition was a rather strange event. It was meant to celebrate the world's democracies, many of which were not very strong at the time. Nationalist right-wing forces led by General Francisco Franco, were fighting to overthrow Spain's shaky left-wing republican government in the Spanish Civil War. France and Great Britain had already failed to respond effectively to several of Hitler's early military moves. Different pavilions in the exposition sent very different messages. The Spanish Republic's pavilion included Pablo Picasso's "Guernica," intended to bring the world's attention to the bombing of innocent civilians in the Basque town of Guernica by German warplanes at the behest of General Franco. At the same time, huge pavilions representing the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union faced each other at the base of the Palais de Chaillot. The German pavilion was topped by an eagle and swastika. A huge statue of a working man and woman holding a hammer and sickle sat on top of the Soviet pavilion. The Palais de Chaillot was constructed on the foundations of the Palais du Trocadéro which was built for the 1878 Universal Exposition. The architects



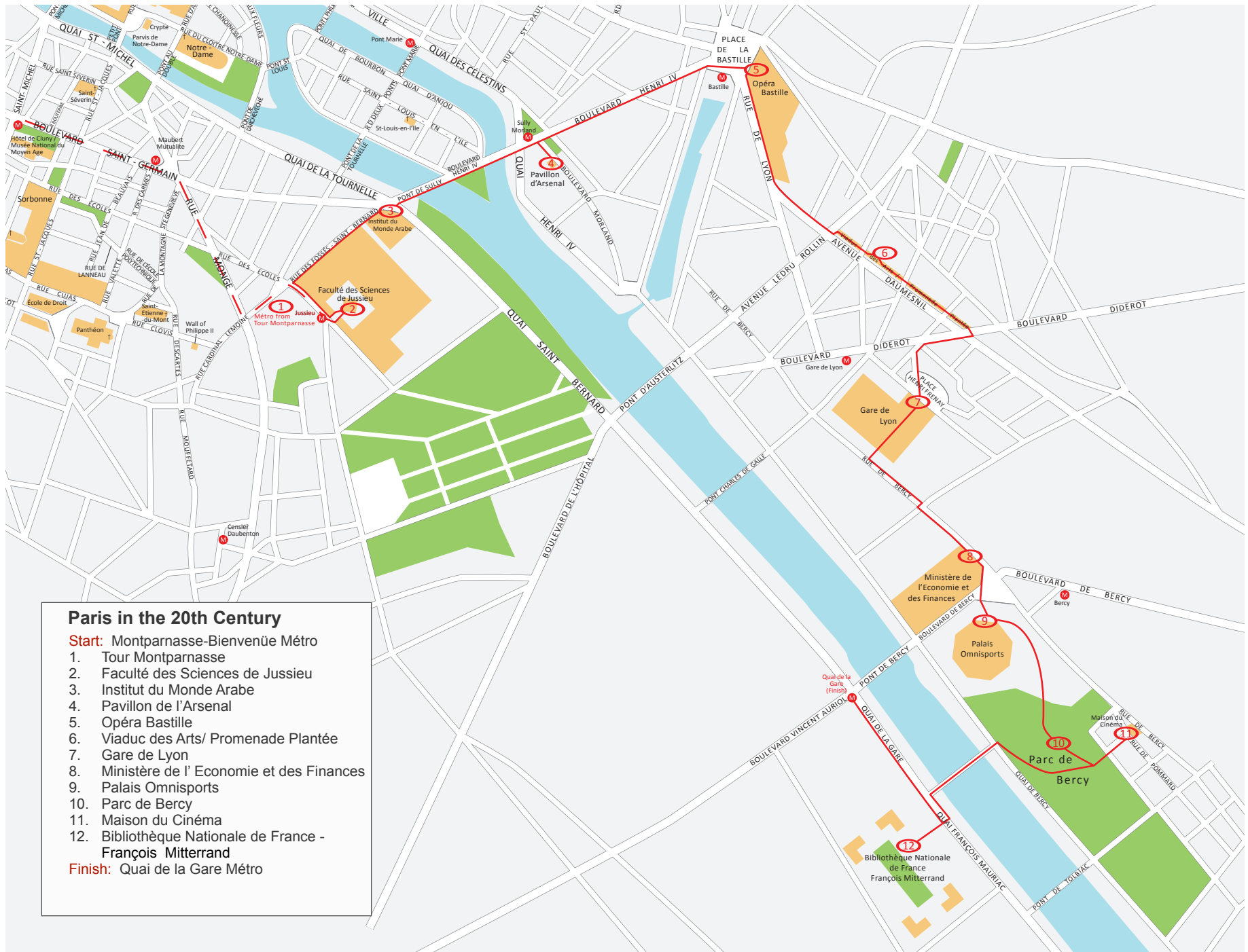
took down the minarets, auditorium and rotunda of the old structure, separated the two curved lateral wings and opened up a stunning view of the Eiffel Tower and the Champs-de-Mars across the river. The lateral wings were also lengthened and covered in stripped-down classical facades. Ironically, given that as noted earlier the exposition was meant to celebrate the world's democracies, the facades are eerily similar to Russian and German totalitarian state architecture. The Palais now holds three museums: a maritime museum, an ethnography museum, and the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine. For anyone with an interest in architecture this museum is a great place to visit. It traces France's architectural history through photos, life-sized plaster casts, and thematic exhibitions. ([www.citechaillot.fr](http://www.citechaillot.fr) ; Mo, We, Fr-Su 11-7, Th 11-9, 8 €)

## Finish

*The **Trocadéro Métro** station is right in front of the Palais de Chaillot; you can end your tour here for the day or connect to Walking Tour B by taking Line 2 (direction Nation) to the Montparnasse-Bienvenue Métro station.*

# WALKING TOUR B

## Route Map





## Logistics

**Time and Distance:** This tour starts with a stop at the Tour Montparnasse, followed by a Métro ride from the Tour Montparnasse to the Jussieu campus of the University of Paris and a 3.5 mile walking tour. Plan on 3-4 hours for the walk depending on how much time you spend viewing the exhibition at the Pavillon de l'Arsenal, browsing in shops along the Viaduc des Arts or relaxing in the Parc de Bercy.

**When to Go:** The Tour Montparnasse is open daily. Avoid Mondays since two of the buildings you'll want to visit, the Pavillon de l'Arsenal and the Institut du Monde Arabe, are closed then. There are pluses and minuses to doing the walk on a Sunday. The Viaduc des Arts shops won't be open, but you can still enjoy the Promenade Plantée, and the Parc de Bercy will be more lively on Sunday than it is on a weekday.

**Helpful Hint:** Even if you don't do the rest of this walk, consider a visit to the Tour Montparnasse. From the observation deck, the cityscape of Paris is spread out before you. With the help of signs at frequent intervals, you can spot the city's major buildings, monuments, and redevelopment projects and appreciate their scale and relationship to each other. It's a great introduction to the city, or a fun reprise after a week or so of touring.

## Start

*After exiting from the **Montparnasse-Bienvenue Métro** station, walk along the rue de l'Arrivée to the northwest corner of the Tour Montparnasse; walk up the steps under the awnings marked Tout Paris à 360, buy a ticket, and take the elevator to the top. If you happen to emerge from another exit, follow signs to Montparnasse 56.*

## Buildings and Monuments



### 1. Tour Montparnasse

The **Tour Montparnasse** (1970-73) was built as part of the Maine-Montparnasse redevelopment project. Its height (690 feet) was facilitated by new building regulations in the late sixties that allowed more height and volume in the context of an overall "plot ratio." At the time it was built, the tower was the tallest building in Europe. It is still the tallest building within the Paris city limits. (The Tour Eiffel is taller but it's considered a "structure" not a building.) As work began on the Tour Montparnasse, Parisians eagerly awaited its completion, believing — as the press and their President Georges Pompidou told them — that it would be a "symbol of modernity." By the time the building was finished, most people hated it. Its extreme height, proximity to the central city, and rather jarring presence right in the midst of some of the city's most traditional and well loved views were all strikes against it. Many people still say the best thing about the view from the top is that you don't have to look at the tower itself. The building started a backlash against modern architecture, a backlash that got even worse when another major modern building, the Centre Pompidou, appeared several years later on the other side of town. Looking slightly northeast it's easy to spot the Pompidou and to see why people didn't like it. Even from a distance, its design and



scale look totally out of context relative to the buildings around it. Designed by Englishman Richard Rogers and Italian Renzo Piano, the Pompidou was built to house the state's modern art collection. The galleries were placed in the interior of the building and the mechanical systems were placed on the exterior, fully visible through the glass facade and all the more in view because they were color coded. When it was first built, Parisians referred to the building as an "oil refinery." Together the Pompidou and the Tour Montparnasse delayed the development of other modern buildings Paris for a decade. They also prompted new building regulations limiting the height of future buildings in the city center and subjecting designs to stringent controls and reviews to insure their harmony with neighboring buildings. (www.tourmontparnasse56.com ; daily Apr-Sep 9:30 AM - 11:30 PM, Oct-Mar Su-Th 9:30 AM - 10:30 PM, Fr-Sa 9:30 AM - 11 PM, 11 €)

*Take the Métro from the Tour Montparnasse to the Jussieu campus. Catch the 4 line (direction Porte de Clignancourt) in the Montparnasse-Bienvenue station under the tower; change at the Odéon station to the 10 line (direction Gare d'Austerlitz); get off at the Jussieu station; cross the street and walk toward the tower into the courtyard at the center of the ....*



### 2. Faculté des Sciences de Jussieu

The **Faculté des Sciences de Jussieu** was designed a decade before the Tour Montparnasse and the Centre Pompidou. It wasn't very well received either, but since it's a bit more isolated it didn't create quite the furor the other two buildings did. The plan for the campus was conceived by Edouard Albert in 1962 and completed in 1971. It included L-shaped buildings arranged around rectangular courtyards and a 278-foot tower all resting on a huge marble paved platform. Critics say the resulting Jussieu campus is an inhuman, monotonous, windswept complex of mediocre buildings with a nondescript tower that detracts from the Paris skyline. Like it or not, it provides a good point of reference for many the buildings you'll see later on this walk. These buildings were built later than the Jussieu campus and later than the Tour Montparnasse and Centre Pompidou as well. Their architects tried to overcome some of the problems of early modern architecture. You can be the judge of whether they succeeded.

*Exit the courtyard the way you entered; turn right then right again onto rue des Fossés-Saint-Bernard. Just before you reach the river, you'll find the Institut du Monde Arabe on the right.*



### 3. Institut du Monde Arabe

The **Institut du Monde Arabe** (1981-1987) designed by Jean Nouvel, was commissioned by the French government and about twenty Arab countries to promote understanding of Arab cultures. It was one of the first modern buildings constructed in Paris after the building hiatus that occurred following the controversies surrounding the Tour Montparnasse and the Centre Pompidou. Although planning for the building began during the Presidency of Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand adopted the project and included it in the "grands projets" he announced in 1982. It is the smallest and one of the best received of those projects. The building design places much more emphasis on harmony with its urban context than the designs of its modern predecessors. The height of the building is relatively low. The north facade curves to fit the shape of the Seine while the south facade is more linear in keeping with the Jussieu campus adjacent to it.

The decoration on the south facade brings together modern technology and traditional Arab motifs. The 240 etched aluminum screens are reminiscent of decoratively carved wooden window coverings used to control sun in traditional Arab buildings. Each screen has twenty-one electronically controlled irises which open and close like camera lenses in response to the amount of sun falling on photo cells in the screens. Inside the building, in addition to a museum and a library, there is a rooftop terrace with a great view of the river and Notre Dame. You'll also find a restaurant, which is a bit expensive for a full meal but fine for drinks or a snack, and a cafeteria which is open for lunch from 12-3. ([www.imarabe.org](http://www.imarabe.org) ; Tu-Su 10-6, closed Mo; 7.70 €, no charge to take the elevator to the terrace)

*Cross the river on the Pont de Sully; continue on boulevard Henri IV and turn right onto boulevard Morland. The Pavillon de l'Arsenal will be on the right.*



### 4. Pavillon de l'Arsenal

The shell of this building is a 19th-century industrial warehouse. Inside you'll find a thoroughly modern exhibition space created in 1988 and redesigned in 2003. The excellent permanent exhibition at the **Pavillon de l'Arsenal**, titled "Paris, a guided tour," focuses on Paris architecture and urban development — past, present and future. It includes signs (in English as well as French), maps, photos, and slideshows. Of particular interest are the sections explaining how the city walls have defined and shaped the urban environment. Temporary exhibitions focus on different sections of the city or on particular buildings or redevelopment projects. ([www.pavillon-arsenal.com](http://www.pavillon-arsenal.com); Tu-Sa 10:30-6, Su 11-7, closed Mo; free)

*Return to boulevard Henri IV; turn right and walk to the place de la Bastille; the Opéra will be part way across the plaza to the right.*



### 5. Opéra Bastille

In contrast to the Institut du Monde Arabe, the **Opéra Bastille** (1982-1989) was one of the least well received of Mitterrand's "grands projets." It was supposed to provide modern facilities in a larger 2,700 seat venue for the Paris Opéra and to make opera more accessible to the "masses" in the spirit of the surrounding place de la Bastille and poorer east side of Paris. In this same spirit, the opening of the building was set to coincide with the bicentennial of the French Revolution. The building was designed by Canadian-Uruguayan Carlos Ott. The curved facade he designed facing the place de la Bastille is generally considered to be too large and dominant relative to the scale of other buildings on the plaza, while the black granite entrance portal is seen as too small relative to the scale of the rest of the building. Initially there were even more serious problems with the outside of the building. The stone cladding kept falling off. While this problem has been addressed, the building is still in need of constant repair. ([www.operadeparis.fr](http://www.operadeparis.fr))

*As you face the Opéra, rue de Lyon will be to your right; follow it until you reach a fork; keep to the left onto avenue Daumesnil; after you cross avenue Ledru Rollin, you'll find the Viaduc des Arts on the left with steps leading to the Promenade Plantée above it.*





## 6. Viaduc des Arts and Promenade Plantée

The **Viaduc des Arts** and **Promenade Plantée** above it extend for a little over two miles from the place de la Bastille to the Jardin de Reuilly in Bercy. The Paris Strasbourg Railway built the viaduct in 1859 to carry trains from the place de la Bastille to the eastern suburbs. In the early 1970's, the new RER "A" commuter train made the railway redundant. The train station was demolished to make way for the Opéra Bastille and the viaduct was abandoned. A debate ensued during most of the 1980's over whether to tear down the viaduct or convert it to a public promenade above and shops below. The project was designed by architect Patrick Berger and landscape designer Paul Mathieux and completed between 1989 and 1992. Today you can view the rooftops of surrounding buildings from the lovely garden promenade. The vaults below, housing a variety of businesses related to the arts, such as cabinet makers and musical instrument makers, are also interesting to explore. ([www.viaducdesarts.fr](http://www.viaducdesarts.fr))

*Walk along the Viaduc or the Promenade until you reach the boulevard Diderot; take a right and follow the boulevard Diderot until you see the plaza in front of the ....*



## 7. Gare de Lyon

The **Gare de Lyon** (1895-1902), opened just after the turn of the 20th century. A replacement for an earlier outdated station, it serves the south of France including Lyon, Marseille and the French Riviera. It was designed by Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée Company architect Marius Toudoire with a colorful, sculpture decorated facade similar to Côte d'Azur luxury hotels of the time. The clock tower is reminiscent of Big Ben in London. Inside, the train platforms are neither as dramatic nor as well integrated with the building as those in earlier 19th-century stations. The most interesting interior feature is a fancy, neo-Baroque style restaurant — the Train Bleu — overlooking the train platforms. The station is an excellent reminder, in contrast with the other buildings on this part of the tour, of how dramatically architectural styles changed during the course of the 20th century.

*Find rue de Bercy on the south side of the station; take a left and walk to the boulevard de Bercy where you will see the huge Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances on the right.*



## 8. Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances

The **Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances** (1989) became one of Mitterrand's "grands projets" primarily because a building was needed to hold the finance ministries displaced by a much more significant project, the Grand Louvre renovation project. French architects Paul Chemetov and Borja Huidobro faced a number of challenges including how to incorporate two older buildings, and how to disguise the size and bulk of the structure. Their solution was to construct a long building perpendicular to the Seine bridging over an adjacent roadway and projecting out into the river. It is not clear that this design succeeded very well in disguising the building's massive size, and it has not been very well received. Opponents criticize its fortress-like presence and "neo-Stalinist" style. Mitterrand himself is said to have called it a giant "toll booth." Others call it the "Ministry of Fear," a reference possibly to the design but perhaps simply to the thought of close to 5,000 finance bureaucrats housed together inside one of France's most powerful ministries.

*The grass-covered building just across boulevard de Bercy from the Ministère de l'Economie is the ....*



## 9. Palais Omnisports

The **Palais Omnisports** (1980-84) was conceived at the time Paris was bidding (unsuccessfully) to host the 1992 Olympics. Designed by Michal Andrault, its huge amphitheater can seat up to 17,000 people for concerts or musicals, or it can be configured in many different ways to accommodate a swimming pool or twenty-four kinds of sports events. The amphitheater is sunken to reduce the building's bulk and the pyramid-shaped exterior is covered in grass to help mitigate the harshness of the concrete building materials and to integrate the structure with the adjacent park. The steel framework over the building includes a system to seed, water and cut the grass.

*The next stop on this tour, the Parc de Bercy, is just to the east of the Palais Omnisports.*



## 10. Parc de Bercy

The **Parc de Bercy** (1993-1997) was one of four major new parks added in Paris in the last two decades of the 20th century. The others were the Parc de la Villette (1987), the Parc de Belleville (1988), and the Parc André Citroën (1993). The Parc de Bercy is particularly interesting because the designers did a nice job of incorporating old winding streets, cobblestone paths, and rail tracks used to take wine from barges on the Seine to storehouses in Bercy. The park is divided into three sections. The first part is an open grassy area where people are actually allowed to sit and play (unusual in Paris parks). The middle section is a carefully organized French garden with square beds containing vegetables, fruit trees, roses and a vineyard. The last part of the park is a romantic English-style garden with rolling hills, large trees, a canal, a small lake and Japanese-style bridges over roads beneath the park. A raised embankment on the park's south side shields it from the sights and sounds of the adjacent roadway and supports an elevated pathway with nice views of the Seine and surrounding areas.

*The Maison du Cinéma is on the north side of the park.*



## 11. Maison du Cinéma

The **Maison du Cinéma** was designed by American architect Frank O. Gehry. It was originally designed to house the American Center, founded to further French and American understanding. The center closed in 1996 due to financial problems and the film center opened in 2000. The street facade of the building, with horizontal rows of windows and stone facing, tries to blend with the streetscape. The facade facing the park is another story. It is a typical Gehry design with bold, oddly shaped, flat, curved and angled overlapping surfaces centered around a steep curved zinc roof. The building is not generally considered to be as successful as some of Gehry's other works such as the Disney Center in Los Angeles and the Bilbao Museum in Spain. Its attempts to be both contextual and spectacular seem at times to compete too much with each other. But the building is still very interesting and well worth a look.

*Cross back through the park toward the river; climb up the steps to the top of the embankment where you'll find a pedestrian bridge leading to the ....*



## 12. Bibliothèque Nationale de France - François Mitterrand

The **Bibliothèque Nationale de France - François Mitterrand** (1993-97) is sometimes referred to by Parisians as the TGB (très grande bibliothèque). It is part of the Tolbiac quarter within the Paris Rive Gauche redevelopment project and is the last, largest and most expensive of Mitterrand's "grands projets." It was built to solve a longstanding overcrowding problem in the original Bibliothèque Nationale. The project was designed by a young French architect, Dominique Perrault, with an underground platform, a sunken garden, and four L-shaped 24-story towers that are supposed to look like open books. Each of the towers is named: Law, Letters, Numbers and Time. Unfortunately, although the building looks somewhat interesting from afar, on closer inspection it becomes a rather uninviting wasteland surrounded by steep steps on three sides made of an exotic but uninteresting hardwood.



At the top of the steps you reach an unwelcoming windswept platform and then have to go down again to the entrance. There were a number of technical problems with the library's design, not the least of which was that the sun beating through the glass walls would have caused an unintentional "book burning." This problem has been fixed with some insulation and shutters. When designers realized that termites attracted to trees in the garden might also invade the books inside the library, the garden had to be sealed off. And the library's much heralded computer control systems did not work well and are still being fixed. ([www.bnf.fr](http://www.bnf.fr); reception area Mo 2-7, Tu-Sa 9-7, Su 1-7)

## Finish

*From the library as you face the river, walk left on the quai François Mauriac which becomes quai de la Gare. The **Quai de la Gare Métro station** will be at boulevard Vincent Auriol.*