

Things to Come
Say Cheese
Everything's Great
Le Passe-Muraille
Pet Cemetery
Day Tripping

Euro Sept 9: .804
Euro Aug 9: .808
Rain Days: 9
High Temp: 60°F/16°C
Low Temp: 46°F/8°C
Nat'l Holidays: none

PARIS

n o t e s

OCTOBER 2005

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 8

PAINT THE TOWN

By Ellen McBreen

Three paintings that tell the story of Paris in three episodes: Regency, Revolution and Republic

The history of Paris is often told as a story of rulers, the monuments they built and the wars that knocked them down. In the painted visions of its artists, there is another, subtler version of that history. Before the late nineteenth century, very few Paris painters turned their eye on the actual city itself. They painted their cultural moment instead, capturing the spirit and ideas of their age in much the same way movies or popular novels do today. That's why, when we visit the city's museums today, if we are not always looking at paintings of Paris, we are often looking at paintings about Paris. The gilded frames that hang in the Louvre and Musée d'Orsay are windows into the minds of its past residents. With a little background we can begin to read them, to see how three paintings in particular speak to the preoccupations and desires of Parisians who lived during key episodes in the city's history: Regency, Revolution and Republic.

At first blush nothing could seem further removed from eighteenth-century Paris than the idyllic country setting in Jean-Antoine Watteau's "Pilgrimage to the Island of Cythera" (1717, Louvre, Sully Wing, 2nd Floor, Gallery 36). Eight couples are making their way to a gilded boat that readies for sail. Each pair enacts a stage in the progress of seduction, their bodies forming an undulating ribbon across the surface of Watteau's luminous landscape. At one end, a man in a blue cape strenuously woos his partner, who gazes away at her fan, feigning indifference. Another suitor gently tugs his lover down the hill to the shore. She looks back over her shoulder wistfully. Closer to the boat, the women no longer need to be cajoled. These maidens cling exuberantly to their suitors' arms. The discreet eroticism of this flirtation is underscored by chubby "putti" soaring high above the couples, some of them engaged in suggestive, even risqué, gymnastics.

The scene may have been conjured by Watteau's imagination, but it reflects a real form of elite entertainment enjoyed by the ancien régime. A "fête galante"—an elaborate outdoor

party involving role-playing and theater performances—allowed courtiers to try out new identities and gallant seductions. This party is taking place on the island of Cythera, however, believed to be the sacred birthplace of Aphrodite, the ancient Greek goddess of love. That's why we also see a statue of her, festooned with roses (her signature flower), watching over the couples. Her



son Cupid is here, too. His arrows have been laid to rest, his mission accomplished.

Watteau came to painting by way of eighteenth-century Parisian theater, where this theme of a mythic voyage to Cythera was already very popular, especially in the opera-ballet. It's no accident that his carefully choreographed couples appear to be performing some kind of minuet. A "pilgrimage to Cythera" was also contemporary slang for a trip to the suburb of St-Cloud, where on the extensive grounds of the royal palace there (destroyed in 1870), Parisian lovers enjoyed many a fresh-air Sunday outing. A boat departed for St-Cloud from the present-day Samaritaine department store (recently closed). Because eighteenth-century subversive writers used Cythera as a phoney publication locale, Venus' mythical isle also became synonymous with the underground, libertine press.

That's why, despite the other worldly mood of amorous reverie in Watteau's painting, it was later understood to literally document the de-

generacy of a morally bankrupt elite, a class whose most pressing concern appeared to be how long the party would last. In the aftermath of the 1789 Revolution, Watteau's seemingly apolitical painting looked both reactionary and royal, sparking such an outrage that the Louvre's curator placed it in storage.

Back in 1717, however, Watteau's Cythera was a new kind of painting for a new age. Louis XIV's long absolutist reign had come to a close just two years before. His nephew, Philippe II, was now ruling as Regent for the child-king Louis XV. A well-read, tolerant ruler, Philippe reversed many of his uncle's absolutist policies, ending his wars and closing the worst of the Parisian prisons. Censored books that had once been banned were now in print. Around Philippe's primary residence at the Palais Royal a more relaxed court life set in, once again in Paris after a long Versailles exile.

His Regency's cultural détente blew fresh air into Watteau's vaporous painting, which shows people enjoying themselves informally, not following some strict court ritual. That's also evident in the intermingling of classes. Eighteenth-century peasant blouses and straw hats mix freely with shimmering, aristocratic silks. These textures and delicately colored details are intended to be savored up close, with a relaxed and roving eye. Watteau's intimate painting is more at home in a Parisian "hôtel particulier" than in some grand hallway at Versailles.

In stunning contrast, the massive scale of Jacques-Louis David's "The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons" (1789—over 10 x 13 feet!—Louvre, Denon Wing, 1st Floor, Gallery 75) commands our attention more urgently. Like Watteau, David took his story from the Parisian stage, specifically Voltaire's "Brutus," first performed in 1730. But the two works' similarities end there. In place of pleasure, we have a tragic story told in a style more cerebral than sensual. This suited the stern moral climate of Paris during the last days of the ancien régime.

David transports (continued on page 7)

é I couldn't count the times I have gone to the top of the Eiffel Tower. Any time of day, any season of the year, I like to go there and view every corner of the city. I think about the vast number of historical, scientific, cultural and world-changing events that have taken place below me. But that's so old hat and the view is very limited.

Now, when I want to see Paris from up high I start about ten miles up. All I can see is the squiggling Seine and the outline of the city formed by the Périphérique. I zoom downwards as the five-mile-across circle gets larger and larger. I begin to see major open areas formed by the Tuileries, the Champs de Mars and Luxembourg Gardens. Buildings, in irregular geometric patterns, become recognizable.

Effortlessly, I stop at about 10,000 feet to make out my favorite areas: there's St-Germain-des-Prés, the Marais, the Ile St-Louis. The Eiffel Tower casts a long shadow; the Pompidou Center reveals the only sky-blue roof to be seen. I descend to about a mile up for a closer look. I swoop over to the Place de la République, then to Rue de Miromesnil, across the river to Rue Mouffetard and then back to the Marais, picking out the buildings, even the entryways where I used to live. I shoot out to the 19th arrondissement for a visit to my favorite park, the Buttes Chaumont—I can make out park benches. Then, I make a sentimental visit to the spot where I met my first French girlfriend (so long ago I'm surprised the place still exists).

No, I'm not in a helicopter or flying a hang glider. I'm in a satellite. A Google satellite at www.maps.google.com. Just went there, typed in "Paris, France" and clicked "satellite." I saw Paris like I've never seen her before. Breathtaking.

—Mark Eversman, Editor
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From the Grape Vine

When you think of Paris you usually think of drinking wine rather than making it. But, in the Ile de France (the greater Paris area), there is a bit of a wine-making renaissance going on. In the eighteenth century, there was a lot of wine made in and around Paris, and it was considered high quality. By the end of the century there were over 100,000 acres of vineyards. Over time, however, quality was sacrificed for quantity to keep up with Paris' sky-rocketing population. France's historic blight in the middle of the nineteenth century, urbanization and new railroads that brought in wines from all over France decimated Paris' wine industry. By 1940, there was almost no commercial production. Since then, many a brave vintner has tried to revive the industry. Many failed, but a few managed to make some drinkable wines. Their success led to more new growers jumping in. Today, according to the Association des Vignerons Franciliens Réunis (VFR), there are around 150 legitimate commercial vineyards in the Ile de France. While the wines are not exactly award-winning, a number of them are now accepted as good, inexpensive table wines. The VFR, in existence for five years, has now decided to get more aggressive in promoting Paris-area wineries as tourist destinations (45 million people visit the Ile de France every year). At their website (www.vigneronsfranciliens.com) you can now access a map that shows all of the VFR-affiliated vineyards, and which ones can be visited. (You can also get a paper version of the map from Paris arrondissement town halls.)

Samaritaine Closes

On June 15th, Parisians and Paris visitors alike were shocked—and confused—to find out that Samaritaine, one of the city's great department stores and part of its architectural and cultural landscape, was closed. Just like that, after doing business for 135 years. LVMH (Moët Hennessey Louis Vuitton), the giant French luxury-goods company run by Bernard Arnault, a French Trump, owns Samaritaine (known affectionately as "Samar"). It is the smallest of Paris' five "grands magasins"; the others are BHV, Printemps, Galeries Lafayette and Le Bon Marché (also owned by LVMH). However, Samaritaine is perhaps the most loved of the five, with its superb Art Nouveau/Deco building poised like a cruise liner on the Seine, and its stunning 9th-floor terrace view that launched many a Paris romance. Since the summer, rumors about the fate of the once-great store have been flying. LVMH, which bought the store in 2001 for about \$250 million, said the building was unsafe, a fire trap and in dire need of repairs

and renovation—which would take "six to ten years." The union that represents 1,500 Samaritaine employees said the building's disrepair was an excuse to close the store so that LVMH could fire its well-compensated employees and eventually hire a new, cheaper staff. Another rumor said LVMH's real goal is to reinvent the building as a luxury hotel and boutique shopping emporium—not a particularly bad idea considering the building's prime location overlooking the Seine and the Ile de la Cité.

Things to Come

Starting this month and over the course of the next year, Paris will see a chain of some very impressive openings and reopenings. They will make 2006 a year you'll definitely want to visit Paris. In September, after a twelve-year closure, the grand Grand Palais officially reopened. This massive turn-of-the-century structure was sinking and had to be re-attached to its foundation. Its expansive glass-dome roof was replaced with break-proof glass. Before closing, it was home to almost all of Paris' highest-prestige events, conventions and salons, and now the building is poised to recommence its important cultural function. Across the street (Ave Winston-Churchill, 8th), the Petit Palais, the Grand Palais' sister building, is scheduled for a December reopening. Closed since 2001, this equally impressive structure had become a bit of a white elephant. It housed the City's undervalued art collection and did not have a good layout for exhibitions. Its new interior setup should remedy prior shortcomings and make it a hot new exhibition space. Across the river, the Jean Nouvel-designed Musée du Quai Branly, devoted to primitive arts (what to call its mission is a point of considerable debate, still), is all but finished. It is scheduled for a "spring 2006" opening. This highly anticipated museum should give a needed boost to Paris after it lost the Olympics. The Tuileries' Orangerie, perhaps the renovation most anticipated by American visitors, is now scheduled to reopen in the "beginning of 2006" (the renovation was delayed when a buried ancient wall was discovered). Monet's famous gift to France, an oval panorama of his "Water Lilies," once stuck in the Orangerie's basement, has been opened up to a glass roof. Along with Matisse's, Cézanne's and a host of other important paintings, the new Orangerie promises to be spectacular. But, it appears that a "beginning of 2006" opening might be a bit optimistic. Other "scheduled" reopenings include the renovated Musée des Arts Décoratifs in June, and the entirely rebuilt Paris aquarium (see PN, Sept 05), to be called AquaCiné, in "spring 2006."

• PARIS •
B I T E S
By Rosa Jackson

Turn your back for a few moments on a ripe St-Marcellin and you might find that it has oozed right off the tray



“A meal without cheese is like a beautiful woman who is missing an eye”—this politically incorrect French saying tells you something

about the importance of cheese in a country that claims at least one variety for every day of the year. Yet, as two- or three-course “formules” replace the four-course extravaganza, Paris restaurants are increasingly neglecting the cheese tray. If haute cuisine restaurants still wheel out two or three trolleys laden with whiffy specimens from all over France, most bistros give cheese only a token nod, offering a thin slice or two as an alternative to dessert.

This is understandable given the difficulties of storing cheese—being a living thing (at least in its unpasteurized version), it requires approximately as much love and attention as a small puppy. Turn your back for a few moments on a ripe St-Marcellin and you might find that it has oozed right off the tray. If there is not enough demand for cheese, it’s a poor investment for the restaurant owner—especially when kitchen space is so limited. That’s why so many opt, probably wisely, to serve just one well-chosen Brie or Ste-Maure (ash-coated goat cheese), rather than having to care for several cheeses with different needs.

As a visitor to France, you might justifiably think of the cheese course as an unnecessary extravagance. French cooking rarely goes easy on the butter and cream, so does it make sense to indulge in a few cheeses before dessert? Well, as with so many centuries-old habits, there is logic to it—the enzymes in cheese are thought to aid digestion (cooked cheese, as in fondue and raclette, is much harder to digest). Eat cheese in moderation and you are doing your body a favor—not to mention helping keep this tradition alive.

Paris’ most celebrated maître fromager (cheese master), Gérard Poulard, retired last April, ending a chapter in the city’s cheese history. Cheese-o-philes sought out the restaurant Montparnasse 25 to hear Poulard present his 100 or so seasonally changing specimens and wax eloquent about the crinkly crottins and vintage comtés. When I met Poulard before his retirement, I learned that the French cheese ritual is a fairly recent phenomenon: for most of its long, odoriferous history (dating back over 6,000 years), cheese was mostly considered a survival food.

“Louis XIV and Louis XV may have eaten cheese before going hunting, but for them it wasn’t a ritual—cheese was basically for the

poor. Only after World War II did it become festive—don’t forget that Parisians had been reduced to eating rats, pigeons and leaves during the war.”

Poulard credits Pierre Androuët, who opened his celebrated Paris cheese shop in 1909, with fostering a reverential attitude to cheese. “He was the first to promote French cheese internationally and to show that you can talk about cheese in exactly the same way as wine. When I present a cheese, I’m able to identify not only the type of milk (cow’s, goat’s or ewe’s), but the region, village, name of the producer, breed of animal and its diet.”

Following in the footsteps of Androuët, an increasing number of Paris cheese shops are opening cheese bars, which are perhaps the ideal way to sample a number of different cheeses—but that’s another story. In this Bites I’ll focus on Paris bistros that, bucking the current trend towards lighter eating, take great pride in their cheese courses.

At **Astier** in the 11th, the four-course menu has always been de rigueur. Wood-paneled walls, packed-together tables, a serious wine list—everything about this place suggests solidity and permanence. As for the menu, who else does turbot with béarnaise sauce these days, especially as part of a 26E prix fixe? Here it would be unthinkable not to dive into the cheese tray, which is plunked on your table and bears about a dozen of France’s best. In this communal situation, it’s wise to avoid cheese faux-pas: cut round cheeses like a pie and, with any other cheeses, try not to hog the creamy center (everyone should have an equal portion of rind and center). Whether or not to eat the rind is a subject of great debate among maîtres fromagers, so use your own judgment.

Not far from Astier, **Les Fernandises** has long had a unique mission in Paris: to promote Normandy cooking, and particularly its most celebrated cheese. Sadly, it’s not so easy to find a good Camembert these days—I once made a pilgrimage with a group of French foodies to the tiny town of Camembert itself, whose biggest landmark is the Président factory. Once past that, we did track down a couple of dedicated farmers who were willing to part with their straw-colored, nutty tasting wares—it was well worth the three-hour drive from Paris. At Les Fernandises, up to eight Camemberts are aged on the premises with Calvados, walnut liqueur or hay and artfully presented on a wooden board. The only problem is finding room for them after a rustic bistro meal that makes the

most of Normandy’s famed dairy products (think large portions of gratin dauphinois).

Similarly patriotic, but in a more businessy setting near the Champs-Élysées, **Graindorge** promotes the much-maligned cooking of my husband P’s native region, the north. Though P’s home city of Lille is best known for its frites, which frankly pale in comparison to those across the border in Belgium, there are culinary treasures to be found—particularly the cheeses, from mimolette (an orange cheese that’s mild when young and intriguingly crackly when aged) to the outstandingly potent Vieux Lille. You’ll find the finest northern cheeses in this art deco dining room, plus food that shows how elegant the region’s cooking can be.

Winning the prize for most beautiful presentation is the restaurant **Chez Michel**, run by Breton native Thierry Breton (his real name). Here, a small selection of truly perfect cheeses (I remember a creamy goat cheese in particular) arrives on a slate that comes from his father’s farm in Brittany. The beamed dining room in an unexpectedly pretty neighborhood near Gare du Nord feels like a country auberge, and Breton is a particularly gifted game cook—I tasted some succulent boar served in a cast-iron pot.

I couldn’t write an article about cheese without mentioning the city’s wittiest cheese course, at **Le Timbre**. In a bistro the size of a stamp near Montparnasse, Manchester native Chris Wright turns out food reminiscent of much loftier settings, thanks to a chef friend from Le Grand Véfour who trained him in the French classics (Wright was originally a maître d’hôtel and took over the kitchen only after suddenly losing his chef). In the cheese course, cheekily named “le vrai et le faux fromage” and inspired by rugby rivalry, he pairs French and British cheeses “to see if I can catch people out”—he might match a goat’s cheese from the Ardèche with Montgomery’s cheddar, or the blue cheese fourme d’ambert with Colfton & Bassett Stilton. Guess which one is supposed to be “le faux.”

•Astier: 44 Rue Jean-Pierre-Timbaud, 11th. Tel: 1-43-57-16-35.

•Les Fernandises: 19 Rue de la Fontaine-au-Roi, 11th. Tel: 1-48-06-16-96.

•Graindorge: 15 Rue de l’Arc-de-Triomphe, 17th. Tel: 1-47-54-00-28.

•Chez Michel: 10 Rue de Belzunce, 10th. Tel: 1-44-53-06-20.

•Le Timbre: 3 Rue Ste-Beuve, 6th. Tel: 1-45-49-10-40.

EVERYTHING'S GREAT

A chat with Sandra Gustafson about "Great Eats" and "Great Sleeps"

She is arguably the greatest Paris travel-guide writer in history, I thought, sipping an expensive coffee in the Café de Flore, waiting for Sandra Gustafson to arrive. Smiling, the sixty-something writer enters like a leaf riding the wind, a wisp of a woman, elegant, lithe, self-assured. She is the author of "Great Eats Paris" and "Great Sleeps Paris" (formerly known as "Cheap Eats" and "Cheap Sleeps"), and she has Great Eats/Sleeps books for Italy and London. But she cannot be who she is. Impossible. This delicate, almost fragile, woman could not have written a series of books that would require her to eat so many meals, walk so many streets, climb so many stairs, ask so many questions, write so many notes, brave so many buses and subways, sleep in so many lumpy beds and be away from the comforts of home so many nights. First impressions can be deceiving.

Sandra is demure and gentle, which comes through in the way she disarmingly greets you, the lightness of her handshake and the soft tone of her voice. Behind her glowing exterior, however, is a passionate, dedicated—and tough—champion of value travel. Waiters and hotel clerks in literally hundreds of restaurants and hotels would shake if they knew that this veteran patron had the power she does to send them business. But most never know that a mention in one of Sandra's books will result in people showing up in their establishments for years to come.

In this age of Internet blather, hotel and restaurant reviews are now being generated by inexperienced occasional visitors who contribute to faceless and unspecialized websites as a hobby. Sandra stands apart—way apart. She's the real deal. She loves what she does and couldn't be happier with how things have turned out.

Having sold over 400,000 books in her time (and still selling, briskly), this San Diego resident fondly reminisces about the beginning of the Cheap Eats/Cheap Sleeps series. "The books began more than twenty-five years ago when I was living and working in Paris at what was then the American College. I had no money and had to work two other jobs to make ends barely meet. I lived in a tiny apartment on Ile St-Louis with a kitchen in a mini-closet. I had no time to cook. So, I ate out a lot. Of course, the meals had to be cheap. Soon, people began asking me where they should eat, and one thing led to another. I printed a one-page list of "Cheap Eats Paris." I subsequently married and moved to Washington, DC. A friend, who was a literary agent, suggested I expand this list into a book. I just laughed. I lived in a thirteen-room house with two stepchildren, two dogs and a husband, had a full-time teaching position and

no help. Finally, I put together a small booklet that the literary agent sold by direct mail at \$3 per copy. It really caught on when a syndicated travel writer, Judith Morgan, got a hold of it and because one of her favorite restaurants, Lescure, was written up, decided to devote a column to it. Overnight we had orders in the hundreds. My husband and I left for his next diplomatic assignments in Prague for two years, followed by three years in Singapore. During this time, I added "Cheap Sleeps Paris." The marriage did not do as well as the book sales, and after Singapore, I returned to San Diego. Both books are now in their tenth edition."

No one should get the idea that new editions are just the same old book with a new cover. Each edition is as painstakingly researched as



SANDRA BUSBY

the last. "Advance preparation for a major revision trip usually takes two months, plus from six to eight months of actually being on site. I do not rely on questionnaires, telephone contacts, website information, stringers or any other type of second-hand assistance. I do it all myself. I am dedicated, I work hard, and I stand behind each address I include. My readers know I have been there, and I wouldn't think of letting them down. For every revision I revisit all addresses in the last book, plus countless new addresses that may or may not make the cut. When checking a new restaurant, I try to see it in action at both lunch and dinner. I do not tell the restaurant who I am, and I always pay my own tab because I want to receive the same food and service my readers can expect. For the hotels, my assessment starts at the curb. If the flowers are dead, the paint is peeling and the hotel windows are dirty, I don't even bother. I know I won't like it."

All the cities into which Sandra has extended the Great Eats/Sleeps brand are near and dear to her, but it is Paris she considers most special. "Paris will always be special because this is where the books began, and over the years it has be-

come my second home. That is not to say it is always easy to live and work here, but the challenge, the diversity, the memories, life-changing moments and the wonderful people I have met thanks to my books have all changed my life in a dramatically positive way. I simply cannot imagine my life without writing my books, especially those about Paris." And while Paris has changed dramatically in the twenty-five years she's been making her extended sojourns, it is still as magical a place for her that it always has been. "I think it is better. Maybe because I now know the city so well, feel comfortable there and never tire of the beauty. My life would not be complete without my Parisian connection, which seems to strengthen on every visit."

Paris may still be magical in Sandra's eyes, but the world of inexpensive hotels and restaurants has changed much. "There are fewer Great Sleeps. Many of the old places have been renovated and turned into three- and four-star boutique hotels. Of the remaining inexpensive hotels many are in blue-collar locations that are out of the usual tourist mainstream. The trade-off is they can offer guests a peek at real Parisian life. As for restaurants, the Great Eats locations, whether they are simple corner bistros or Michelin-star restaurants, are definitely best at lunch, when prix-fixe menus offer excellent value for your money. Mama and Papa restaurants are dwindling away, at least in the central parts of Paris. Food costs, rents and just plain hard work have taken a tremendous toll on this Paris cooking institution. Wine bars have become somewhat of a growth industry, providing affordable places for a quick meal and a glass or two of interesting wine. Another interesting trend is the exodus of young chefs from many of the most famous Parisian restaurants. These young talents are opening simple venues in outskirt neighborhoods where the rent is lower and the staff doesn't mind doing double duty. The payoff is the creative meals that in the more tourist-trodden areas would cost at least double."

I felt I would be remiss without asking one last question that I knew readers wanted me to ask: What hotel and restaurant are your very favorites? Sandra cringed at this question. "It's just too hard to answer," she said. But, I persisted. "This is almost impossible to answer! I like every entry in all of my books. However, if you insist ... I would eat at L'Oulette (15 Place Lachambeaudie, 12th. Tel: 1-40-02-02-12) and sleep in a suite at the Hôtel Duc de St-Simon (14 Rue de St-Simon, 7th. Tel: 1-42-22-07-52)." It's clear this was painful for her to answer. Each hotel and restaurant in the books is indeed special to her. Each is a hard-fought find that she stands behind with great pride, and she hopes that you will enjoy them too.

—By Mark Eversman

• "Great Eats Paris" and "Great Sleeps Paris," by Sandra Gustafson (Chronicle Books). Site: www.greateatsandsleeps.com.

Le Passe-Muraille

By Mary McAuliffe

In a small square near the top of Montmartre is one of the oddest sculptures you could ever hope to find. It's actually a portion of a sculpture—a man's head, upper torso and right leg—mounted on a stone wall, and looking for all the world as if the man were emerging from the wall.

Well, that's exactly the idea, for the sculpture is a portrait of the writer Marcel Aymé, in the guise of one of his most beloved characters, "Le Passe-Muraille," or the "Passer Through Walls" (a short story written in 1943).

Unlike most other successful French writers, Aymé (1902-67) was not born into a family where intellect and education were especially valued. The son of a blacksmith, Aymé as a young man went through a number of disappointing careers before most fortunately discovering that he could write. Leaving behind his native Franche-Comté for Paris, he happily settled into Montmartre, where he was soon making a living with his satirical yet enchantingly surreal novels and short stories, of which "Le Passe-Muraille" is perhaps the most famous.

Le Passe-Muraille's hero, a mousy little bureaucrat named Dutilleul, lives his dull little life in a corner of Montmartre until one evening he discovers quite by accident that he possesses the power to pass unhindered through walls. Unsettled by this discovery, he goes to see a doctor, who gives him some strange powder. Dutilleul promptly places the stuff in a drawer and forgets about it.

But his new powers transform his life. Badgered mercilessly by his boss, the previously timid Dutilleul repeatedly sticks his head through the office wall and terrifies the fellow. After several days of this, the boss is carted off to the loony bin.

Delivered from this office tyranny, Dutilleul now realizes that he seeks adventure, and soon he is launched on a life of crime, leading the Paris police on a merry chase. Under the pseudonym of Garou-Garou, he be-

comes an overnight celebrity, the hero of Paris.

And then he meets a woman. This beautiful blonde is married to a jealous tyrant who keeps her locked up at night (when he makes his own nocturnal rounds). You can guess the rest. Dutilleul and the blonde fall in love and carry on their affair behind locked



walls, which Dutilleul has no trouble negotiating. One fateful night, however, he accidentally takes the long-forgotten powder, in the mistaken belief that he is downing some aspirin.

The results are devastating. The powder begins to work just as Dutilleul is exiting his true love's abode, and he is caught there, frozen forever inside the thick wall. Some nights, says Aymé, you can even hear him, a muffled voice that seems to come from beyond the grave. Those who pass by think it's just the wind, but it's Dutilleul, lamenting the end of his glorious career, and regretting his all-too-brief love affair.

Adding to this oh-so-French ending, Aymé has Dutilleul's artist friend come to the wall on certain nights, to console the poor prisoner with a song. These notes, as Aymé says, take wing and "penetrate to the very heart of the stone, like drops of moonlight."

Well, no wonder the French love the story. Aymé wrote many others during the course of his long and successful career, but this is the one that was turned into a hit French musical, courtesy of composer Michel Legrand (the show, renamed "Amour," also ran briefly on Broadway). And it is in the guise of Dutilleul that Aymé—himself a modest and unpretentious man—appears in the heart of his beloved Montmartre.

•Le Passe-Muraille: Place Marcel-Aymé, 18th. Corner of Allée des Brouillards and Rue Norvins.

▲ PARIS VISITS ▼

Pet Cemetery

By Marcelline Dormont

Nestled between a busy ring road and the Seine River in the north-western Paris suburb of Asnières-sur-Seine is a small sanctum of green tranquility dedicated to the lasting peace of thousands of pets. It is the Cimetière des Chiens et Autres Animaux Domestiques, France's celebrated 106-year-old pet cemetery.

Often called the Père Lachaise Cemetery of animals, it is home to celebrities and unknowns remembered by an eclectic collection of headstones. Rin Tin Tin is buried here; so is Drac, royal canine and "faithful companion in tragic hours and exile" of Queen Elisabeth of Greece, Princess of Romania. Camille Saint-Saëns' dogs also found a resting place here.

Behind a grand Art Nouveau portal, the graves of some 3,000 pets form a colorful, kitschy patchwork of potted flowers and mementos stretched out under century-old chestnut trees. There are tennis balls, porcelain animals, chewable toys and photographs of mugging pooches and overfed tabbies. Dogs and cats make up the majority of burial plots, but three horses are buried here, along with a hen, a sheep, a fennec, rabbits, monkeys, birds and at one time a circus lioness.

The bond between man and pet is symbolized by an impressive cenotaph erected at the cemetery's entrance in memory of a Saint Bernard named Barry. It represents Barry ascending the path to the Grand Saint Bernard Hospice in the Alps with a child on his back. "He saved 40 people but was killed by the 41st," the inscription reads. In reality, Barry died from natural causes in 1815 and was stuffed and mounted at the Museum of Natural History in Berne, Switzerland, where he is still on exhibit today.

Other service dogs are remembered here. A craggy, rock-shaped monument topped with the statue of a German shepherd honors the first dogs to serve in the Paris police. Six of them are buried underneath the monument. A mutt name Mémère, mascot of a WWI regiment of infantry

chasseurs, is immortalized in a sculptured tête-à-tête with an infantryman, wreathed by a French tricolor sash.

Hollywood K9 Rin Tin Tin is remembered by a square slab of black granite with a gold-leafed inscription that reads: "Rin Tin Tin, great star of the cinema." Rin Tin Tin was born in eastern France in 1918



and reburied at the cemetery by his owner, Lee Duncan, as a gesture of honor to Rinty's native country. But perhaps even more poignant are the epitaphs to the thousands of unknown pets. Seventy-two years separate the deaths of two dogs, Emma (1900) and Liang (1972), but both epitaphs ("To my dear Emma, faithful companion and only friend of my wandering and sorrowful life," and "To Liang, faithful heart; disappointed by humans but never by my dog") reveal the same acute sense of loss.

The cemetery was founded in 1899 by two Belle Epoque figures: lawyer and animal welfare advocate Georges Harmois and actress-turned-feminist-journalist Marguerite Durand, after Paris passed a law requiring dead animals to be buried one yard deep and 100 yards from any habitation. The cemetery soon became an exotic promenade destination for Parisians. A common grave was provided at a minimal fee for pet owners who could not afford a plot. By 1986, however, erosion threatened to sink the cemetery into the Seine, and the financially strapped institution was forced to close. Rumors that the land might be sold to developers for a riverfront apartment complex led to a campaign to save the cemetery. In 1987, the cemetery became a national heritage landmark and was bought by the City of Asnières-sur-Seine.

•Cimetière des Chiens et Autres Animaux Domestiques: 4 Pont de Clichy, Asnières-sur-Seine. Open: March-Oct, 10am-7pm; Nov-Feb, 10am-5pm. Metro: Line 13, Gabriel Peri-Asnières/Génévilliers.

DAY TRIPPING

A short list of the many ways to spend the day outside the city

Forget Versailles. Dozens of destinations, ranging from the romantic to the downright dazzling, lie within easy reach of Paris, all happily free of the inconveniences of mass tourism, long ticket lines and crowds. Much as I love Paris, I enjoy getting away every now and then to explore the riches that surround it, and the following is a sampling of tried-and-true destinations for the discriminating day tripper. They include several splendid châteaux, two great art museums, a charming river town and a literary site; all are about an hour from Paris and easily accessible by public transit.

If it's castles you're craving, try **Chantilly**, a Loire Valley lookalike just thirty miles north of Paris. This turreted, moated fantasy is so filled with art treasures it's considered second only to the Louvre for its paintings. Set like a gem in Le Nôtre's vast gardens and surrounded by one of the largest forests on the Paris outskirts, it consists of two beautifully furnished châteaux, one sixteenth- and one nineteenth-century. Don't miss the Monkey Salons, two rococo rooms decorated with eighteenth-century paintings showing monkeys in various human activities including hunting, taking baths and playing cards. Horse lovers will enjoy the palatial stables of the **Musée Vivant du Cheval**, housing thoroughbreds and ponies as well as a museum; legend says its builder was convinced he would be reincarnated as a horse and wanted only the best for his life-after-death accommodations. Dressage exhibitions are given several times a day.

•Château de Chantilly/Musée Condé: Take SNCF Grandes Lignes from Gare du Nord to Chantilly-Gouvieux (thirty minutes), and the bus marked Senlis for a free ride to the château. Closed Tue. Entrance: 8E. Site: www.chateaudechantilly.com. Musée Vivant du Cheval: Entrance: 8.50E. Site: www.musee-vivant-du-cheval.fr.

Closer to Paris, **Alexandre Dumas' Château de Monte-Cristo** makes a great literary pilgrimage. In the flush days following publication of "The Three Musketeers," the author splurged on this dream house set on a hill above the Seine near St-Germain-en-Laye. The small château is filled with Dumas memorabilia; upstairs, the Moorish salon has lacy white filigree walls and a colorful mosaic floor, the work of a pair of artisans Dumas brought back from Tunisia. The garden, once loud with the sounds of monkeys and peacocks, holds a Gothic pavilion called the Château d'If, the author's private refuge for siestas, seductions and, occasionally, writing.

•Château de Monte-Cristo: Take RER A1 to St-Germain-en-Laye (thirty minutes), then bus

No. 10 to "Les Lampes." Walk downhill, turn right into Ave Kennedy, then right again into châteaux grounds. Closed Mon. Entrance: 7E.

To see sumptuous interiors as they looked in the seventeenth century, visit **Vaux-le-Vicomte** (shown), thirty miles southeast of Paris. Built by Nicolas Fouquet, Finance Minister to Louis XIV, this is the château where three artists—architect Le Vau, decorator Le Brun and landscape designer Le Nôtre—first worked their magic together. When it was completed, Fouquet showed off his masterpiece with a fabulous housewarming party: the king and his court were served a sumptuous dinner (on solid gold plate at the head table); entertainment included a "comédie-ballet" by Molière and water jousts on the



VAUX-LE-VICOMTE©ANDRE CHASTEL

Grand Canal; and the fête finished with a fireworks display. But Louis was not amused. Suspecting Fouquet of embezzlement (and jealous at being upstaged?) he clapped him in prison and hired the three artists to create Versailles. Today the château has been gloriously restored and, to my mind, is more beautiful than Versailles—just as splendid, but on a more human scale. In Le Nôtre's gardens, formal flowerbeds that had been planned but never planted in Fouquet's time are now in bloom; the Chambre du Roi is a newly refurbished baroque masterpiece, and a collection of magnificent seventeenth-century tapestries now embellishes one of the first-floor salons.

•Vaux-le-Vicomte: Take SNCF Grandes Lignes from Gare de Lyon to Melun (twenty-five minutes), then a short taxi ride. Closed Nov 13-March. Entrance: 12E. Site: www.vaux-le-vicomte.com.

Traveling further back in time, head for **Provins**, an atmospheric medieval town with walls to rival Carcassonne's. Rising out of the flat Brie plain fifty miles southeast of Paris, Provins, once home to the Counts of Champagne and the great medieval trade fairs, knew three centuries of

glory before its fourteenth-century decline. Today its towers, half-timbered buildings and ruined churches give it a rare, other-worldly appeal. Selected by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, it has many buildings open to the public, including vaulted "salles basses," thirteenth-century storehouse/shops that are partly underground; the Grange aux Dimes, a three-level commercial building housing a display on Provins at the time of the medieval trade fairs; and several architecturally interesting churches. Through early November, there's also a falconry demonstration on weekends.

•Provins: Take SNCF Banlieue from Gare de l'Est to Provins (hour and fifteen minutes). Individual buildings and events have separate admission fees. Site: www.provins.net.

For a glimpse of a Gallic water world, catch the RER to **Conflans-Ste-Honorine**, a pretty river port where barges moor three and four abreast. Located where the Oise meets the Seine ("conflans" derives from "confluent"), the town is a base for families who live and work on barges. This is where they come between jobs; the town is a clearinghouse for information and employment offers for the river workers. A museum, the Musée de la Batellerie, traces the history of river transport with paintings, drawings, maps and scale models. The church barge, a former coal carrier rebaptized the "Je Sers" (I serve), is permanently moored and usually open to visitors, and an attractive riverside promenade is great for sunny afternoon strolls.

•Conflans-Ste-Honorine: Take RER A3, direction Cergy, to Conflans-Fin-d'Oise (thirty-five minutes). Musée de la Batellerie: 3 Place Gévelot. Closed Tue. Entrance: 4.10E. Site: www.mairie-conflans-sainte-honorine.fr.

Although **Lille**, once one of Flanders' great medieval wool towns, lies 138 miles north of Paris, the TGV can whisk you to the heart of this lively city in just an hour. Start at the tourist office on the Place Rihour, where you'll find maps and guidebooks, then wander through Vieux Lille, a warren of cobbled lanes and charming red brick houses clustered around the Place Rihour, Place du Général-de-Gaulle and Place du Théâtre. Spend some time in the recently renovated Musée des Beaux-Arts admiring the wide-ranging collection, which includes masterworks by Donatello and Goya. When hunger strikes, sample Flemish specialties like waterzoï (chicken stew) and carbonnade (beef braised in beer) or, for a simpler option, stop at one of the many brasseries for a traditional meal of mussels, frites and a mug of potent local beer before heading to the station and your comfortable TGV ride back to Paris.

•Lille: TGV from Gare du Nord to Lille-Flandres (one hour). Musée des Beaux-Arts: Place de la République. Closed Tue. Entrance: 4.60E. Site: www.mairie-lille.fr/lilletouristique.

—By Vivian Thomas

us to the home of Junius Brutus, First Consul of Rome, who had rid the republic of its last king, Tarquin. Shrouded in metaphorical darkness, Brutus turns his back on the horrible sight of his two dead sons, executed for their involvement in a treasonous plot to restore the very monarchy Brutus had brought down. David believed that painting should ask its viewers tough ethical questions. Is Brutus above humanity, for his personal sacrifice to the republic, or below it, for allowing his own sons to be killed?

The painting received rave reviews at the Louvre's annual Salon, opening just weeks within the 1789 storming of the Bastille. In the months that followed, its main theme—of measuring the interests of a society against those of an individual—was no longer a remote concern for ancient Roman leaders. Parisians subsequently adopted David's Brutus as a heroic anti-royalist, the kind of dutiful father to the nation that France needed. It is doubtful, however, that David's original client for the painting, the king himself, saw Brutus the same way. It was one of Louis XVI's last acquisitions before the entire royal collection was seized by the new government.

David's technique was by far the most Revolutionary aspect of his painting. He developed an austere neoclassical style that could be grasped immediately by the throngs visiting the Salon, held in the Louvre's still-crowded Salon Carré. The grace and delicacy of Watteau might be lost in this shuffle, but David's crisp lines guaranteed his painting maximum visibility. His figures' pantomime of gestures—Brutus' tight clutch on the letter revealing his sons' treachery versus his wife's mournfully extended arm—magnifies their emotional conflict across the space of a noisy gallery (the effect still works in 2005). David wanted his paintings to speak directly to a motley Parisian public. It was, arguably, an audience that painters were thinking about for the very first time in history.

Parisian women were soon emulating Roman fashion, wearing the same corset-free looser shifts with high-waisted belts as the women in Brutus. David's nearby "Portrait of Madame Récamier" (1800) is an excellent example of this Parisian fashion "à l'antique." Brutus helped launch a taste for Roman-inspired furniture, too. Jacob Frères began their careers by creating historical replicas for David to paint (he was a stickler for accurate interiors in his paintings). Later, they would produce similar Empire-style furniture for Napoleon I.

David was not just setting fashion and decorating trends in Paris, however. He played an active role in the new government. As elected Deputy to the Convention, he voted for the execution of his former royal patron. Since his radical ideas had failed to win him many friends at the Royal Academy of Painting, when the new government put him in charge of it, he had it abolished. He organized more egalitarian Salons open to submission from all artists. David was also given the job of glorifying Revolutionary martyrs in paint, and organizing government-

sponsored pageants—like the Festival of the Supreme Being in 1794—which transformed Paris into a stage set of patriotic spectacle.

All of this Revolutionary handiwork got him into serious trouble during the post-Terror crackdown. David was arrested and briefly imprisoned at the Palais du Luxembourg. While in his prison room, he painted a self-portrait, which the Louvre now owns as well. Although promising to follow principles rather than men from now on in, David began painting for Napoleon in 1798, just a year shy of the coup d'état that would make him, like Brutus, First Consul of France. The work that now draws David's biggest crowds at the Louvre is his "Coronation," a marvelous piece of Napoleonic propaganda that signals both the end of David's radical challenges to his audience and the return of absolutist power to Paris.

One can imagine why later generations of Parisian artists might want to steer clear of politics and power, and focus more on the act of painting itself. By Auguste Renoir's time, the Impressionists weren't interested in reaching the Parisian public—"le peuple"—as David had tried to do. Paris was now a teeming metropolis with many different publics, each with their own idea of what French art should look like. Renoir's "Bal du Moulin de la Galette" (1876) was shown in what we might now call an "alternative art space" because his work was banished from the mainstream Salon (David's egalitarian policies didn't last too long).

Today, there's usually a crowd in front of Renoir's painting at the Musée d'Orsay (Level 5, Gallery 32), but in 1877 most Parisians weren't ready to accept that contemporary scenes from their daily life were worthy enough for something as lasting and high-minded as fine art. Renoir felt differently. He painted his boyhood friends, sipping their grenadine, on a scale normally reserved for heroes. Instead of to a Roman interior, we are transported to a recognizable locale in Paris, the Moulin de la Galette guinguette at the foot of the Montmartre mill that gave it its name.

Although the merrymakers are relaxed, the painting itself is a complex piece of craft, a large composition with several figures moving under changing conditions of light, filtered through the courtyard's acacia trees. While David used light to help tell his story (Brutus in darkness, his wife and daughters in the harsh light of reality), for Renoir light is the story. And in place of David's clearly outlined figures, Renoir's softly fuse with one another and their surroundings.

The impression of ease and spontaneity this new technique created was hard won. It took Renoir over a summer, working in his nearby atelier on Rue Cortot, to finish the painting. His friends later claimed that Renoir painted the whole thing right there at the Moulin de la Galette, but in view of its large dimensions that's unlikely. Plus, he also had a fair amount of editing to do back at the studio. During Renoir's time, Montmartre was outside the official city limits, so it was an especially freewheeling, some might say seedy, place. The Moulin de la Galette

in particular was not exactly respectable, which was precisely its attraction for bourgeois Parisians who went up there to "slum" on the weekends. Besides struggling artists, it was frequented by pimps, prostitutes and local toughs. Renoir's idealized vision hints at none of that. He's more interested in the pleasurable surfaces of things, not their complicated substances.

When the painting was exhibited in 1877 Paris was not as peaceful as Renoir's painting would have us believe. In an effort to revive the monarchy that year, President MacMahon dismissed his Republican-minded Prime Minister and put a monarchist in charge. He then dissolved the parliament. His constitutional coup d'état, known as "le seize Mai" after the date on which it happened, nearly brought the rocky Third Republic down for good, just seven years into its existence. Renoir remained focused on light and color throughout. "For me, a picture should be something likeable, joyous and pretty—yes, pretty," he said. "There are enough ugly things in life for us not to add to them."

Like Renoir himself, the urbane figures in his painting are turning away, taking a day off from the ugly hassles of modern life. This form of escapist leisure for the masses was born in Renoir's Paris. But most of it was taking place in new glitzy attractions on the boulevards. By 1877 the Moulin de la Galette was the last remaining guinguette in Paris. Visitors to the Orsay tend to get nostalgic over Renoir's painting now, but there was already a good deal of nostalgia—for the simple life that once was—when it was painted.

Eventually Renoir became a successful, even wealthy painter in his old age. He and his Impressionist friends were the first generation of artists who managed to do this from the bohemian margins, without ascending the traditional hierarchy of the Parisian art world. Unlike Watteau and David, for example, Renoir did not have lengthy academic training. He went to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (what the Royal Academy became after the Revolution), but he didn't stay for long. Copying plaster casts of antique sculpture bored him; he was anxious to start painting outdoors. While this new path for the arts may represent a triumph of innovation over tradition (no more Greeks and Romans!) Renoir was looking to the past, specifically to Watteau. His Bal is an Impressionist update of the "fête galante" theme, with its animated couples acting out the stages of seduction, drawing us back into the space of the picture. Renoir rediscovers Watteau's mythic Island of Cythera right here in his own city. Future generations of Parisian artists will continue to keep the past greats in mind, too, but the good ones will always try to capture what defines their moment.

Note: Ellen McBreen is director of Paris Muse, which offers private tours of Paris art museums. This article is adapted from Paris Muse's latest offering, "The History of Paris in Paintings at the Louvre." Tel: 6-73-77-33-52. E-mail: info@parismuse.com. Site: www.parismuse.com.

PICK OF THE MONTH

DaDa

This retrospective is dedicated to one of the most curious, influential movements of the twentieth century: Dadaism, 1916-1924. Works by fifty international artists show the gleeful impertinence with which they attacked all the accepted conventions of the art world. This is a treat. •Centre Pompidou. Until Jan 9. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

ON THIS MONTH

Kupka

Frantisek Kupka (1871-1957), Czech painter, engraver, book illustrator and draughtsman, is shown here as a forerunner of symbolist and abstract art. •Musée d'Art et Histoire du Judaïsme. Until Jan 8. Site: www.mahj.org.

Jacques-Louis David, 1748-1825

Delacroix called him the "father of modern painting"—this retrospective shows why. •Musée Jacquemart-André. Until Jan 31. Site: www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com.

Camille Claudel

Sculptures by Camille Claudel (1864-1943), Rodin's cast-off mistress, are presented here. All the passion of her despair is in these works. •Musée Marmottan-Monet. Until Jan 31. Site: www.marmottan.com.

Picasso

The Picasso Museum is celebrating its twentieth anniversary with a fine display of 210 rarely shown graphic works by Picasso. •Musée Picasso. Until Jan 9. Site: www.musee-picasso.fr.

The "Pleated" Liberation of Women

"Big Bang" is fun, even for visitors uninterested in haute couture. For this is a question not only of design but of engineering: how does one elegantly drape a female figure, with minimum weight and expense of material, and still produce an exquisite, unstructured silhouette? The Japanese designer Issey Miyake and his "Pleats Please," along with Arman, Fontana and Ingo Maurer, are presented here. •Pompidou Center. Until Feb 28. Site: www.centrepompidou.fr.

Youthful Dreams

One hundred young artists from twenty-three countries were invited to the Fondation Cartier. They present paintings, videos, "performances," photos, sculptures, designs and music to show their vision of the world. •Fondation Cartier. Until Oct 30. Site: www.fondation.cartier.fr.

A Tasty Promenade

When the Romans invaded Paris, what did they eat and drink? How was the food produced? How did the eating habits of the conquered Gauls change? All this, and more, is explained in this delightful expo. •Crypte Archéologique, Parvis de Notre Dame de Paris. Until Oct 30. Site: www.paris.fr.

Tennis

"25 Years of Contemporary Art at Roland-Garros": paintings, lithographs, engravings, collages, sculptures and water-colors dedicated to the art of tennis by Miró, Tàpies, Arman, Alechinsky, Adami, et al. •Musée de Roland-Garros. Until Dec 31. Site: www.rolandgarros.com.

Wine

"At the Time of the Guinguettes"; i.e., when the open-air café-dance-halls along the Seine attracted the poor people excluded from affluent Belle-Epoque Paris. Numerous painters (Renoir, et al.), writers, photographers and filmmakers have always been attracted to this milieu. This is their story. •Musée du Vin. Until Nov 30. Site: www.museedevinparis.com.

Seduction

Organized in conjunction with the Belgian and Dutch natural history museums, this interactive expo explains the mating habits of over 100 animal species, from snails to humans. •Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. Until Jan. Site: www.mnhn.fr/parades.

Russian Art: Searching for an Identity

Here is nineteenth-century Russian art—Répine, Kramskoi, Savitsky et al.—presented in all its glory. •Musée d'Orsay. Until Jan 8. Site: www.musee-orsay.fr.

Girodet (1767-1824)

"Politically unclassifiable, sexually enigmatic, a

romantic hero, a truly prodigious talent": such were the comments made about Anne-Louis Girodet in the early 1800s. Now we can judge for ourselves the Baroque structure and rich chiaroscuro of his strangely seductive paintings. •Louvre. Sept 22-Jan 2. Site: www.louvre.fr.

Klint, Schiele, Moser, Kokoschi

"Vienna, 1900": Viennese treats from the masters of the curious and erotic. •Grand Palais. Oct 5-Jan 2. Site: www.rmn.fr.

FIAC

The 32nd "Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain": 200 modern and contemporary art galleries from around the world present their goodies—some abhorrent, some quite simply superb. This internationally renowned event has something for every taste. •Porte de Versailles. Oct 6-10. Site: www.fiacparis.com.

Melancholia

"Génie et Folie en Occident": extraordinary and strange things as seen (or imagined) and interpreted by artists. •Grand Palais. Oct 13-Jan 16. Site: www.rmn.fr.

COMING SOON

The Golden Age of Science

From the seventh to the fifteenth centuries, when most of Europe was plunged into the gloom of the "Dark Ages," scholars from Andalusia to Central Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, Persia and India pursued their scientific studies in Arabic. Divided into three themes—the sky and the world; the living world and man in his environment; and science and art—this exemplary expo presents the discoveries of that fertile period. •Institut du Monde Arabe. Oct 25-March 1. Site: www.imarabe.org.

The Phillips Collection

Renoir, Matisse, Van Gogh, Bonnard, Gauguin, Nicolas de Staël and Picasso: sixty splendid examples of French painting and sculpture from the Duncan Phillips collection. This will be crowded, so book advance tickets at the website. •Musée du Luxembourg. Nov 30-March 26. Site: www.museeduluxembourg.fr.

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