

5 Unsung Attractions of Paris

You know what the guidebooks tell you when you visit Paris – you must see The Louvre, The Eiffel Tower, The Arc de Triomphe... and yet there are many of us who need something a little less clichéd to see. For people who fit that description, I've made this list of 5 more obscure – but just as memorable – things to do having booked a hotel in France's city of culture.

Catacombs of Paris

This one isn't for the faint of heart, but offers a fascinating, if macabre, trip through history. Not one for a family holiday in France – the catacombs were created in the 18th century when the local cemeteries became overcrowded and disease due to improper burial was on the increase. This section of abandoned quarry became used, and now the centuries old piles of human bone that make up the catacombs are quite the tourist attraction. Although this may sound plain disturbing as a tourist draw, it's actually been the scene of many events throughout the city's history – including the deaths of monarchists at the hands of communards in 1871 and members of the French Resistance using the tunnels secretly during the Second World War. On top of this, the sinister nature of the construction has given it a good representation in popular culture, being referred to in literature by authors such as Umberto Eco, Edgar Allan Poe and Victor Hugo.

Musée du Quai Branly

While The Louvre is undoubtedly the most famous art gallery in Paris, the Musée du Quai Branly offers a more niche proposition: focusing on indigenous art, culture and civilisation from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Only opened 2 years ago, the museum has absorbed the collections of Musée national des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie and the ethnographic department of the Musée de l'Homme to contain 267,000 objects – of which 3,500 are on display. This is a fascinating day out for those who have exhausted The Louvre's offerings on their luxury holiday in France.

The Marais

If you wanted to be tempted into spending all your France holiday money in one go, the Marais is a good bet. It's a chic shopping area where charming boutiques of original clothing, accessories and home wares cohabit with intriguing artists' galleries. It's very easy to spend a whole day – and a whole lot of cash – here, so be sure to put aside the time it deserves.

Hotel de Sully

Despite the name, this isn't actually a hotel in France, but a "petit hotel" stately home. The reason it makes this list? Because of its wonderful hidden gardens! One of Paris' best guarded secrets and a brilliant way to spend a romantic afternoon with a partner, the 17th century grounds boast ivy covered walls, historic buildings and a violinist playing live classical music. If you're in a couple, it's a must – if you're on your own or taking a family holiday in France, you may be better served elsewhere.

Canal St Martin

One of the greatest pleasures in Paris is watching the world go by, but as you'll have plenty of opportunities to do this in cafes and restaurants in your luxury holiday in France, this is something a little different. The Canal St Martin is a delightfully tranquil place to spend a Sunday when the quays are traffic free and pedestrianised. It's a splendid place to people watch, and many of the old warehouses have been bought by up and coming artists – no surprise, as any who spend some time here may find the creative muse grabbing them.

A hotel in France's glamorous capital needn't mean the traditional sights. All of these offer a unique insight into the city's culture, history and lifestyle and provide a splendid way to spend a luxury holiday in France.

About the Author

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