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## Chateau Rouge

### Walk No. 5: Out of Africa and into Château Rouge

**Time:** 1 ½ hours; this area does not seem to follow traditional French opening/closing times too closely. They are open almost seven days a week in this area (due to varied nationalities and religions).

**What's special:** Why go to Senegal, visit the Château Rouge/Goutte d'Or area.

Some of the African ladies are wearing their batik fashions, carrying their babies on their back. Some of the African men are wearing shirts in a more subtle batik fabric.

This area around **Metro Château Rouge** probably is not listed in your Paris guidebook; however, from a contemporary point of view, welcome to another side of Paris. From a historical point of view, consider this the Bowery – the new home of the latest wave of Paris' immigrants.

When they shop for their fabrics, the people from Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, etc. are buying from either West Africans or North Africans. When the ladies want a dress made from the fabric, the African men are the tailors in their little shops with doors open to the street.

We are into the triangle of streets Poulet (chicken) and Poissonniers (fishmongers) and Boulevard Barbès - within "la Goutte-d'Or" (the drop of gold) -- perhaps a genealogy chat is called for here!! . . . .

At the **marché Dejean** the Africans shop and buy fruits and vegetables and fish from their native region as well as the exotics from the Antilles.

When they go into a shop for hair products, they buy from the Chinese who run the combined grocery/cosmetic stores.

If someone is shopping for shoes, they might look in the old Kata theatre with its proscenium intact, theatre boxes – now full of shoeboxes – and gilded decorations.

When you eat out, the Senegalese restaurant is nearby or else the Cameroonesse or the Algerian/Senegalese.

When you go shopping in this triangle of streets, you shop for fabric, food, cosmetics, wigs and hairpieces.

We are out of Africa and into Château Rouge - the 18th arrondissement.

We are into the triangle of streets Poulet (chicken) and Poissonniers (fishmongers) and Boulevard Barbès - within "la Goutte-d'Or" (the drop of gold) -- perhaps a genealogy chat is called for here!! . . . .

#### Commerce

In this triangle, the commerce is almost strangled. The fabric, cosmetic and small markets trip over one another for business. But you could say "ça marche" – it works.

Most of the stores are open Tuesday through Sunday between 0900 and 1930.

Just about every two shops in the triangle is a fabric store with African style batik in vivid patterns and colors. But pay attention to the quality.

The fabrics from Holland are the best. The top of the line is Super Wax from Holland (75€-80€ for six yards or 5,5 meters). The second in quality is True Wax -55€ for six yards; Super Basin is 45€, Java - 40€. The fabric origin changes with the Anglaise (English) at 30€; industrial batiks from Hong Kong and China – very cheap are at the lower end. The fabrics are either tergal (French synthetic) or cotton.

([Click here](#) to go to my weights and measures conversion chart).

Château Rouge is an area for food bargains at Marché Dejean: 4 kg (about 8 lb.) chicken 9,90€, 3 kg chicken 8€, 3 kg liver 7,65€, 5 kg short ribs 17€ (a kilo is about two pounds).

For cosmetic surgery without the surgery, Château Rouge is where you shop if you want to lighten your skin from a box for 11,70€.

You want an inexpensive hotel room? It will cost between 24 and 39€.

#### Senegalese Restaurant

A good place to eat with atmosphere is **Restaurant le Nioumre** (Senegal-African). Their specialty is "riz au poisson" (fish and rice).

The ginger juice 2,30€ is very interesting, it has a bite to it – share it just to try it.

For an appetizer, Erik and I split an Accras de Morue 3,20€ spicy.

For the main course he chose Thiebou Dieune (rice and barracuda) 8,50€; I chose the Mafe (lamb, rice and peanut sauce) 8€. Except for the ginger juice, we drank Badoit (naturally bubbly water) for 1,90€. And our dessert was Banane Aलोco (plantains) 3,20€.

**Nioumre** has simple Blue checkered tablecloths décor and a very welcoming *patron*. The simple interior has bench seats covered in Arab-motif fabric, illustrated African village scenes and ceiling fans.

I returned a month later, and was still delighted with le Nioumre. In fact, on my return, I was more relaxed and wanting to talk to the man on the street (really the man in the mosque, the man in the shop, the tailor).

Across from le Nioumre is a simple mosque behind white concrete painted walls.

I walked past the mosque, on rue Myrha, returned to gape, left, and returned again. This time Mr. Diakité (jakatay) invited me in.

Even though I was wearing a skirt to the knees that one man frowned upon, I did happen to have a scarf around my shoulders. Mr. Diakité suggested I put it on my head and take my shoes off my feet. And he proceeded to give me a tour of the mosque and asked me to sign the guestbook.

While walking the side streets, I finally stopped in one of the shops with an open door, fabric hanging in the window, and the sewing machine whirring inside. The happy, bespectacled man was busy working on a lined dress talking away to one of his buddies.

He told me that the design ideas come from magazines and pattern books. He also told me that the women are tailors as well; I only saw the men.

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#### **History of la Goutte-d'Or and the Chateau Rouge areas**

The West Africans have come from sub-Sahara, Senegal and Cameroon and other northwest African countries with ties to France.

The North Africans are from the Maghreb (a region in northwest Africa consisting of Morocco and Algeria and Tunisia – but also Libya and Mauritania). The Asians are here, islanders from the Antilles and Jamaica; and those whose roots are in India have settled or work in this area.

Although this is a small part of Paris, when I step back and look, it is so vast. Symbolically it covers so many nationalities – it is the face of French colonialism. But its history goes back to the mid-nineteenth century and Paris' gentrification.

In the latter part of the 1800s workers came from the French provinces to build Haussemann's\* Paris. They lived in the village of la Chapelle that became part of the 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement.

The area expanded when leftovers from the Haussemann buildings were used to build inexpensive housing

The immigration exodus into this area continued in the beginning of the twentieth century with the Belgians and Poles; followed by the Italians and Spanish and the continuous stream of French from the countryside.

In the 1920s, the Kabyles – the Berber Algerians – arrived (at that time, Algeria was still a department of France – not a colony).

The Algerians arrived after WWII to rebuild the war torn parts of Paris.

Eventually, the resistance movement that led to the Algerian war was formed in the cafés of the neighborhood.

It seems that this wave would begin a continual tide of immigrants from the French colonies.

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#### **Language**

Languages in "la Goutte-d'Or" area are as varied as the fabrics and places of worship. If you are a merchant in this quarter, it helps to be multilingual. The common language for all of the residents is French, the popular African language is Niger.

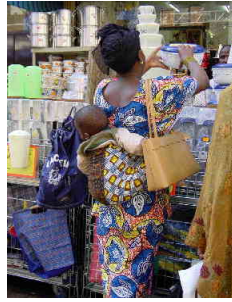
However, if you are from the Kabyl-Algeria, Berber is your native language, as well as classic Arabic.

The Chinese have their regional languages and dialects, but Mandarin allows them to be widely understood here (it's the same thing for the Chinatowns of Paris).

The West Africans (Senegal, Cameroon, Mali and the others) have their native tongues and dialects.

It is hard to imagine, but it makes me wonder, what group will arrive and survive in this area next when the Africans follow the previous order and meld into the rest of the city and its changing appearance.

\*Baron Georges Haussmann was a French administrator. During his term as Seine Prefect (1853-1870) he directed the massive transformation of Paris' neighborhoods, streets, and buildings.



Marché Dejean



**Société Wax Joli Afrique**  
30, rue Poulet 75018 Paris  
01 42 58 98 96



**Restaurant le Nioumre Sénégal-Africain**  
7 rue des Poissonniers 75018 Paris  
Metro: Chateau-Rouge or Barbès  
Telephone 01 42 51 24 94  
Closed Monday