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## The Montmartre neighborhood

**Walk No. 2:** The Montmartre neighborhood

**Time:** 2 - 3 hours; recommended start time: noon

**What's special:** Covers the highlights of Montmartre but takes you into the neighborhood and through a garden passage you might normally miss.

You can start with a nice hot lunch or salad at a salon de thé to start the walk and observe the activity and later take a beer at a bar with two views.

**Added Note:** Montmartre is also the area for fabrics, tapestries and curtain tiebacks.



Follow my sister-in-law and I on a surprise visit. Our French guide was injured, told us his route; so we "discovered" Montmartre for ourselves.

Start with a nice hot lunch or salad at a salon de thé and later take a beer at a bar with two views, one of Invalides and the other of one of the remaining moulins (mill) that became a dancehall.

Even if you have walked this walk before, it becomes more exciting when you realize the history behind this mound of earth high above Paris.

The history spans the Roman times with its temples honoring Mars and Mercury to the entry of Christianity and its first martyrs such as St. Denis (who is still walking around holding his head in a local park). It continues to the more modern times of the guillotining of the abbess in 1794 during the Terror, and the 1870 civil war and the beginnings of the Paris commune (free town).

Cabaret owners defied the Parisian law designating that no music was allowed in bars. The owners brought in pianos. The butte became an artist colony.

Goudeau's group of artists known as the Hydropathes moved from the Left Bank to Montmartre's le Chat Noir. Picasso, at the age of 19, and other artists and writers made their debut at Bateau-Lavoir.

The Montmartre museum is chock full of information (much of it in English).

A walk of a couple of hours could turn into a day in itself.

### Overview of Montmartre

For a casual overview of the Montmartre area (and since you have your weekly bus ticket so you can jump on and off) take the Montmartre bus that runs between M° Place Pigalle (restaurant Leon) and M° Jules Joffrin (across from the Mairie/city hall).

A bus comes by about every 6 minutes and runs seven days a week.

### Note

Between June and September on Sunday afternoons at 3 p.m. (1500) the City of Paris offers a guided visit of Montmartre secluded, private and wild gardens. The visit is in French, but the opportunity is spectacular!

Our first stop was a salon du thé where the prices are reasonable. Once you ascend any stairs toward Sacré-

Coeur, prices ascend as well.

### Salon du thé

le Petite Charlotte Blondeau, 26 rue des Abbesses, (01.46.06.18.77).

Turning left from M° Abbesses, walk through place des Abbesses, keeping the church on your left. Look for the burgundy colored awnings of a Salon de Thé.

Rue Ravignan, head toward the stairs and Place Emile Goudeau. You'll recognize it by all the trees and the Wallace fountain in the center.

Because of the quality of its light and the rural atmosphere, this area attracted artists from the beginning of the 19th century. No.13 has been replaced because of a 1970 fire, but this is the area (Bateau-Lavoire) became more well known in the 1900s.

It housed the studios of Picasso and Braque, who invented cubism, and many other painters and writers.

More history with photos is in the storefront window at 11bis:

*In 1889 Maillard François constructed on the hillside a strange building designed by the architect Paul Vasseur.*

*At that time the building was called "The Trapper House" because of its strange appearance.*

*The main floor was on rue Ravignan, today called Place Emile Goudeau, with the other three floors facing rue Garreau.*

*Destined to house artists, it was composed of several studios for painters and sculptors. The writers, Max Jacob and André Salmon gave this curious building the name "Bateau-Lavoir". Placed into the supplemental inventory of historic monuments on May 31, 1965, and purchased jointly by the city of Paris and the French governments in order to be restored, a fire destroyed the Bateau-Lavoir on May 12, 1970.*

*Rebuilt in 1978 according to the plans of the architect, Claude Charpentier, it now houses 25 artists, painters and sculptors.*

We continued along rue Ravignan and turned left at the brick house onto Place Jean-Baptiste Clement, walking uphill past the old water tower, which is now yearly meeting place for CCM (a preservationist group of Montmartrois).

On this corner is also a house behind a gate. The house has been transformed from country home to a mental clinic and is now apartments.

### Time for a goûter?

That's slang for the 4 p.m. (1600) snack. The boulangerie, L. Chevalier at Place Jean-Baptiste Clement and rue Norvins will come in handy later as a good place for a reasonably priced sweet.

Once you turn right on rue Norvins, look up into the buildings and you will see a curious white and blue sign placed by Automobile Club of l'Isle de France on Impasse du Tertre:

*"Automobilists ralentissez. Attention aux petit Poulbots."*

The small Poulbots were the young boys who hung out on the streets of Montmartre and lived in vacant lots. On the impasse you will see a restaurant with flowers and examples of paintings by the artist Francisque Poulbot. Poulbot's apartment is located at 13 ave Junot.

### Note

Beurre et sucre crêpes on rue Norvins. Music is provided

### Important stop

Montmartre's tourist office is located on the corner of rue Norvins and Place de Tertre. Buy the multilingual map of Montmartre. If your French is good and your interest is high, buy also "Bienvenue à Montmartre". These items cost about \$1 each.

We are now going to travel around the block.

Turning the corner and walking along Place de Tertre to another view over Paris,

you will notice the Montmartre tourist office. Stop in and buy the Montmartre map. The explanations of sites along the way are in various languages.

At the end of the street is 1, Place de Calvaire. The house has green doors in the Art Nouveau style and two signs, both listing the name of a different painter who lived and died in the house.

Passing the house you will enter rue Poulbot that takes us back to rue Norvins. Turn left and right on to rue des

Saules.

Now we are going to head for the vineyard on rue des Saules.

For orientation at the intersection of rue des Saules and rue Saint-Vincent, you have something on four corners: au Lapin Agile, St. Vincent's cemetery, a shaded, corner plaza and the vineyard.

The vineyard dates from about 1931. Before that it was a vacant lot where "the Poulbots" lived and played.

This cabaret is open from 9p.m. until 2 a.m. every night except Monday.

#### Diversion no.4

Cimetière Saint-Vincent. Entry on 6, rue Lucien Gaulard.

If you have diverted, return to rue des Saules.

Heading back uphill between the plaza and vineyard, rue des Saules has two cross streets: Abreuvoir and Cortot.

The tour continues to the right on rue de l'Abreuvoir".

#### Diversion No.5

Musée de Montmartre, rue Cortot, (most explanations in English, worth the visit).

Turning right as you leave the museum, cross rue des Saules on to rue de l'Abreuvoir.

At no. 4 rue de l'Abreuvoir look up at the sundial, one of Paris' 109 sundials.

Continue toward the end of the street and Place Dalida. Dalida was a singer and actress who died by her own hand. Behind the fence is a chateau/mansion, now apartments.

Walk around the mansion (Allée des Brouillards) and up the stairs to Square Suzanne Buisson, who was a deported leader in the Socialist movement during WWII.

The headless statue of Saint-Denis watches over the boule court here (game played with two silver metal balls).

Leaving the park turn right onto ave. Junot. Stop at the gate by the theatre, Ciné 13, and see if you recognize any of the residents listed there. French director, Claude Lelouch runs Ciné 13 on the corner.

#### Note

Ave. Junot was originally scheduled to extend all of the way to Sacré-Cœur. The Montmartre preservationists vigorously fought this extension; thus ave. Junot ends at Rue Norvins.

A good way to reach rue Lepic and the bar with a view is to walk ave. Junot avenue and pass No.13, (look up to see mosaics of Poulbots children) turn left at the lamppost and walk through a narrow passage with no name.

#### Cute street

Just a few feet more on the left is Villa Léandre. Sneak a peak and return to the passage with no name.

On the left is the "boulodrome". Tucked behind the stone wall, the only remnant of the Maquis, are boule players. Walking down the passage past the rock in the middle "rock of the witch – roche de la socière" and you reach the stairs to rue Lepic, turn left outside the gate.

#### bar/restaurant with a view

Coin de Rue, rue Lepic

My sister-in-law and I knew we were close to the famous Moulin de la Galette, but couldn't find it. We sat down outside the bar for a beer across the street from a historical marker, looked up and spotted the windmill.

In the spring and summer, the windmill is behind the trees. The second windmill, whose motor is original and works, is located further down rue Lepic at the former "Moulin de la Galette" now a restaurant under another name.

For orientation, the street parallel to Lepic is Junot where you saw the theatre, Cine 13, and the residence with the familiar names.

After your beer continue rue Lepic and return to Place Jean-Baptiste Clément and the boulangerie/bakery for your "heure du gouter".

You are now on your own for the diversions and Montmartre bus rides....

**Diversion No. 6** Montmartre is the area for fabrics, tapestries and curtain tiebacks. At the foot of Sacré Cœur, turn left on either Place St. Pierre or rue Ronsgard to find three well-known, multi-story fabric stores: Dreyfus, le marché St. Pierre; Moline and Reine.

For a gem of a shop with well-priced tapestries and fringed curtain tie backs, go to the shop at the corner of rue d'Orsel and rue de Steinkerque: "Au Bouton St. Pierre".

**Diversion No. 7** The block of rue d'Orsel, des Trois Frères and rue Yvonne le Tac is a good estimate as to where the lower abbey of Montmartre, demolished in 1794 during "the Terror", was located.

### Historical markers around Montmartre



#### Le Bateau-Lavoir

"We will all return to Bateau-Lavoir, we were all really happiest there...." Until his died, Picasso looked back nostalgically to the rural Montmartre of his youth, with its farms, vineyards and picturesque cabarets. He came to the Montmartre when he was 19 and in 1904 where he lived in an artist's studio and painted one of his last works of the blue and the rose periods that were inspired his lover, Fernande Olivier as well as "Demoiselles d'Avignon" (1907), the prelude to cubism.

Best known as the Trapper House, this residence was a piano factory, and around 1889 was divided into artists' studios and renamed Bateau-Lavoir by Max Jacob. The piano factory with its vast wooden barracks, its maze of ship-like corridors, and its small stairways was reduced to ashes on May 12, 1970.



#### La mire du Nord

As early as 1670, the Academy of Science has undertaken to measure the length of the meridian of Paris expressed in old French linear measures and degrees from Dunkerque to Barcelona.

On the 14th of August 1675, the priest Jean Picard, director of this project between Paris and Amiens, buried a wooden pillar and named it "the meridian post". Taken up once again by the Cassini's, this activity established the basis for a map of France. The post was eventually replaced by the construction of a stone pyramid, three metres high, mounted by a fleur de lys (flower of the lily).

The exact inscription read: "The year 1736, this obelisk was raised by order of the king to serve as an alignment of the meridian of Paris from its north side. Its axis is at measurement 2,931 and 2 feet from the



#### southern face of the Observatory." La Folie Sandrin, rue Norvins

In 1774 Mr. Sandrin acquired a terrain of between 200 and 500 square metres (arpent is an old measurement) in the heart of Montmartre. He constructed a luxurious country house full of charm. A wine merchant who bought the house in 1795, and in 1806 Doctor Prost transformed it into a clinique for the mentally ill following the teachings of Pinel (recognized as the founder of modern psychiatric medicine).

These teachings broke with the tradition chaining the mentally ill in asylums. The followers of Pinel experimented with innovative treatments: "The human approach is sometimes more effective than drastic methods. One has to be nice and vigilante and not alienate the patient, who needs to achieve confidence and function at his/her state of being."

This method was successful in no time including among its clientele writers and artists suffering from fatigue and depression. In 1820, Doctor Esprit Blanch took over this celebrated establishment. Along with his wife, the couple was animated with the same philanthropic sentiments and tried to make their clinic as homey as possible for their residents.

The clinic's most famous resident after 1841, Gérard de Nerval, wrote, "Here began for me what I would call the expansion of my feelings from the deceptions of real life."



#### (The term "folie" can mean crazy or describe the façade of a home.) Au Lapin Agile

Around 1860, the "Cabaret of the Assassins" offered Parisians lots to see from its welcoming terrace as well as shade from the acacia tree and its clairet wine. In 1886 a former dancer turned it into a small hotel/restaurant. Among those who frequented the establishment was Alphonse Allais, Caran D'Ache our André Gill. Gill decorated the front with a comical rabbit, bouncing on two hind legs holding a saucepan. Soon everyone took to calling the establishment "Lapin à Gill" (Rabbit by Gill) and soon was shortened to "Lapin Agile" and even went further with "au Lapin Agile". Purchased in 1902 by Aristotle Bruant, he left it to his managers Berthe and Frédéric, celebrated for their generosity and hospitality to those low on funds, Picasso, Modigliani, Utrillo...

Even the donkey, Lolo, had its hour of glory at the 1910 Independent Salon under the pseudonym of Boronali; a transparent anagram of Aliboron (the author of "Sunset on the Adriatic" thanks to his tail being dipped into different pots of paint colors).

Inspired by this myth/hoax, Dorgelès, edited a declaration to progressive thinkers: To go to extremes as an artist is a strength as opposed to being blinded by genius. (This might relate to a political/French moment.)




#### La maison de Rose de Rosimond


Claude de la Rose (Rosimond), born in 1645 was a writer who chose to follow in the footsteps of Molière performing for the king; like Molière, he died on the stage during a performance of the "Malade imaginaire" (The Imaginary Illness). Since 1680 this house had been a country house surrounded by five parcels of prime farmland. In the 19th century, the house was developed into artists quarters. August Renoir rented two rooms and the barn here. Léon Bloy, Raoul Dufy, Suzanne Valadon, André Utter and Maurice Utrillo, among other, took up residence here in ensuing years.

The house was so dilapidated in 1952 that it was threatened with demolition. The Historical and Archeological Society of Old Montmartre saved the oldest house on Butte Montmartre and transformed it into a museum in

1961.  **Le Château des Brouillards**

In spite of its legend, this large home built in 1772 was not destined to be lived in by the writer, Lefranc de Pompignan, but a lawyer in the Parliament of Paris. The origin of the mansion's poetic name no doubt comes from the mist created by the water running into the livestock's drinking trough on rue de l'Abreuvoir and coming into contact with the cool air. In 1854, Gérard de Nerval imagined it as a peaceful oasis: "What impresses me the most in this shaded oasis is that it is what is left of the vineyard in memory of Saint-Denis...."

"The drinking at the trough became animated in the evenings when the horses and dogs bathed and drank ...an admirable place of quiet retreat on their own time ..." wrote L'Illustration.  **La Légende de Saint-Denis**

demolition, this "mansion in the mist" was restored between 1922 and 1926.  **La Légende de Saint-Denis**

During the the Merovingian period, an oral tradition began in the Paris region about the first bishop and missionary sent here by Pope Clement. Martyred for his faith, Saint Dennis was decapitated in 273 (in at least four different places in Paris) along with the priest, Father Rustique, and the archdeacon Eleuthère.

In 475, his memory was still being honored so Saint Geneviève thought it easier for the people if she built a basilica over his tomb. All of the many miracles could be performed at one spot: The blind would see, the paralyzed would walk, and the demons would be driven from the possessed.

In 840, the abbey Hildruin told a story that became a legend about the decapitation that promised to be a great success and did not cease to be expanded upon: The saint picked up his head and carried it to the fountain (in

the park).  **Le Moulin de la Galette**

The old wind mill "Blute-fin" is a monument with a heroic legend. In 1814 during the siege of Paris by the Cosacks, the last of the four Debray brothers in a long line of millers since 1621, broke up and nailed down the "wings" of his mill. Under the restoration, his son transformed the building into a dancehall, decorated principally green garden trellises.

The atmosphere here was relaxed and the clientele became more popular than at other establishments as evidenced by Renoir's 1876 painting "Le bal du Moulin de la Galette". After various near misses, the old

"Blute-fin" was saved in 1979.  **Mairie de XVIIIe arrondissement**

Already in 1882 the city of Paris was preoccupied with thoughts of replacing the old city of hall of Montmartre located Place of the Abbesses since 1836. The préfet of the Seine, Eugène Poubelle, bought the property called Sainte-Euphrasie, in 1885. It was renamed Jules Joffrin in 1895. Time moved on and Marcelin-emmanuel Varcollier (1829-1895) took office.

The former student and collaborator of Baltard had been the official architect of the city since 1883. In 1888 he seduced the jury by his original design. Around the grand hall, the center is covered in glass; the municipal offices projecting away from the center are in the form of a trapezoid; the library, a ballroom and two marriage chambers are located on the first floor. The eclectic façade joins the support columns in the Renaissance style with the Louis XV pediments. The porch consists of five arches decorated by the statues of Liberty and Brotherhood by Gustave Crauk. The interior of the ballroom is decorated in sculpted wood, highlighted in gold and the ceiling is full of stars, the work of the architect, Claës. The inauguration of the new city hall of the 18th district took place on July 17, 1892.