



Paris at Christmas

Art and music in the *Ville Lumière*

20–27 December 2024 (MK 599)

8 days • £4,160

(including tickets to one performance)

Lecturer: Patrick Bade

The main art museums (Louvre, Musée d'Orsay) as well as lesser-known attractions.

Newly refurbished museums and galleries including the Hôtel de la Marine and the Musée Carnavalet.

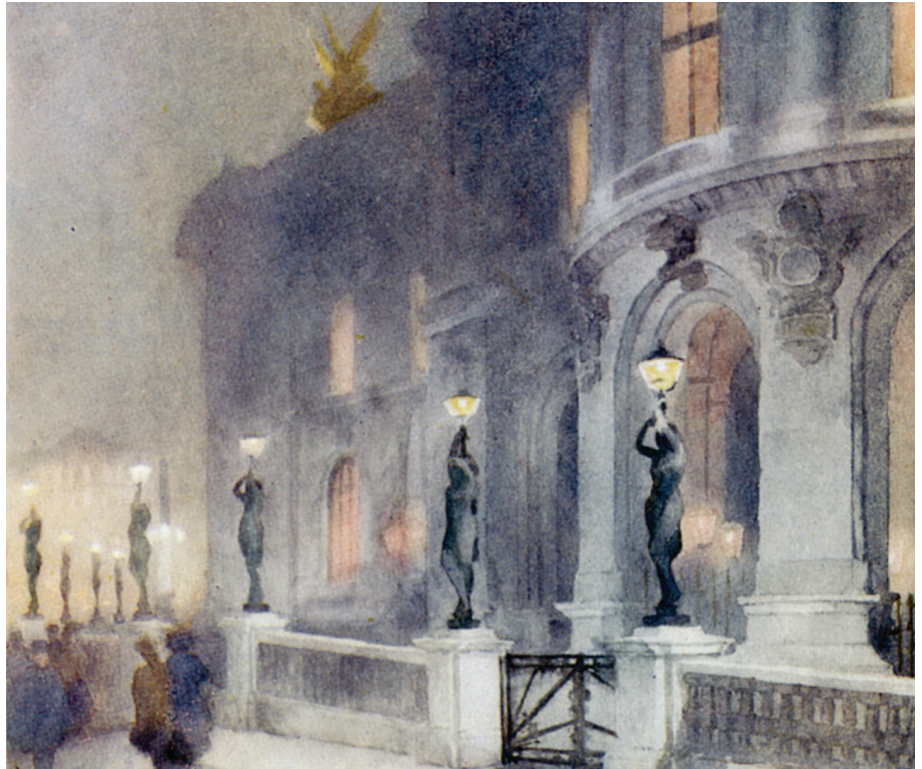
Ballet at the Opéra Bastille on Christmas Day.

Centrally-located 4-star hotel which was an intimate retreat for King Edward VII.

'He who does not visit Paris regularly will never be truly elegant' wrote Honoré de Balzac in 1830 (*Traité de la Vie Élégante*). His assertion goes some way to explain the allure of Paris, even at a time of deep social and political turmoil, manifested in the July Revolution of the same year. Paris, whose streets were soon to be drastically re-envisioned by Baron Haussmann into the boulevards so recognisable today, was unquestionably *the* place to be and be seen. Not unsurprisingly, the dazzle of the *Ville Lumière* and the lifestyle of its inhabitants has endured, and Parisians remain the ultimate arbiters of good taste.

Never does Paris appear more elegant than at Christmas, inevitably conjuring up the festive atmosphere of Act II of Puccini's opera *La Bohème*. Led by Patrick Bade, art historian, *bon viveur* and part-time Paris resident, MRT aims to offer just as much fun, together with a rich cultural feast, in considerably more comfort. What better location than the Hotel Édouard VII, former love nest of Queen Victoria's son and heir, situated on the splendid Avenue de l'Opéra?

We shall be visiting the Musée Carnavalet, museum of the history and culture of Paris, newly reopened after lengthy refurbishment; the sumptuous 18th-century Hôtel de la Marine, the former royal *garde-meuble* and navy headquarters whose apartments and reception rooms have recently opened to the public; and the dream-like Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in a superb hôtel in the Marais. A Christmas Day performance at the Opéra Bastille should be an unforgettable experience.



Paris, Palais Garnier, watercolour by Y. Markino, publ. 1908.

Itinerary

Day 1. Travel by Eurostar at c. 10.30am from London St Pancras to Paris, and continue by coach to our hotel on the Avenue de l'Opéra. In the afternoon, a short stroll to the sumptuous Palais Garnier opera house for a guided tour.

Day 2. The Marais is a lovely district which is home to several outstanding museums. The Musée Carnavalet, with myriad collections devoted to the history of Paris, re-opened in 2021 after radical refurbishment, and the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature displays an eclectic collection in a fine *ancien régime* mansion.

Day 3. Morning visit to the Musée Gustave Moreau, dedicated to the 19th-century Symbolist painter and designed by the artist himself in his home and studio. The nearby Musée de la Vie Romantique contains exhibits on George Sand and other notable writers and artists of the Romantic era. Afternoon programme to be confirmed, depending on exhibition schedules.

Day 4. Morning visit to the Louvre, which for the range and quality of its collections remains the greatest art museum in the world. Some free time in the afternoon to pursue your own interests. Optional evening performance at the Palais Garnier: *The Rake's Progress* (Stravinsky), Susanna Mälkki (conductor), The Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus, Ben Bliss (Tom Rakewell), Iain Paterson (Nick Shadow), Clive Bayley (Trulove), Golda Schultz (Ann Trulove), Justina Gringytė (Mother Goose), Jamie Barton (Baba the Turk), Rupert Charlesworth (Sellem), Vartan Gabrielian (Keeper of the madhouse).

Day 5. The Musée de l'Orangerie holds the celebrated circular paintings of water lilies by Monet as well as the magnificent Walter Guillaume collection. A temporary exhibition displays masterpieces from Berlin's Berggruen Collection, including works by Picasso, Klee, Matisse and Giacometti. The 18th-century Hôtel de la Marine is one of the finest neoclassical buildings in Paris. Originally the royal *garde-meuble* that managed the furnishing of royal properties, its apartments

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continued

and reception rooms have opened for visitors in 2021 following a major refurbishment.

Day 6, Christmas Day. Opulent turn-of-the-century home of a banking family, the Musée Jacquemart-André features many Italian Renaissance items among its varied collections. Christmas meal followed by an evening ballet performance at the Opéra Bastille: *Paquita* (Delvedez/Minkus), Mikhail Agrest (conductor), Pierre Lacotte (choreographer), Valentine Colasante (*Paquita*), Guillaume Diop (*Lucien d'Hervilly*).

Day 7. The Musée d'Orsay is home to the world's finest collection of Impressionism, and also to the contemporaneous academic tradition of painting and sculpture. You have tickets for the major exhibition devoted to Gustave Caillebotte. Some free time in the afternoon precedes our final dinner.

Day 8. Take the Eurostar to London St Pancras, where arrival is scheduled for c. 1.30pm.

Lecturer

Patrick Bade. Historian and writer with wide-ranging art-historical and musical interests. Educated at University College London and the Courtauld Institute, he was senior lecturer at Christies Education for many years. He has also worked for the Art Fund, Royal Opera House, National Gallery, Victoria & Albert Museum and spoken on Radio 3 and 4 and Classic FM Radio. He has published extensively on 19th- and early 20th-century painting (Ingres, Courbet, Degas, Renoir, Rops, Mucha, Lautrec, Tamara de Lempicka etc) and on historical vocal recordings. His books include *Music Wars: 1937–1945*, an account of how music was used in World War II.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £4,160 or £3,890 without Eurostar. **Single occupancy:** £4,960 or £4,690 without Eurostar.

Included: return rail travel (Standard Premier) by Eurostar from London to Paris; private coach for transfers; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 5 dinners and 1 lunch with wine, coffee, water; tickets to 1 ballet performance; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Édouard VII, Paris (hoteledouard7-paris.com): comfortable 4-star hotel, located on the Avenue de l'Opéra, a short walk from the Louvre and the Palais Garnier. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? A fair amount of walking is necessary to reach the venues, as well as standing around in museums. There are some late nights but starts are leisurely. You need to be able to lift your luggage on and off the train and wheel it within stations.

Group size: between 10 and 19 participants.