

Touring Paris and Its African History

Few cities in the world have played such an important part in the lives of their inhabitants and even fewer in the lives of visitors, be they tourists or temporary residents. One of these cities is Paris. The French capital has gotten its fame throughout centuries and earned a place in the heart of many, people who carried its charm and fragments of rich culture wherever the road took them afterwards.



No particular group can claim Paris for themselves, simply because the – now known as – City of Lights opened its gates to everyone, regardless of their social standing and ethnicity. Through the *mélange* of its residents, Paris sheltered those who couldn't find another home; it kept them close, nurtured their intellects and shaped their characters. Among those that love the most important cradle of culture in Europe, we find African-Americans, men and women who came to the old continent to find a sanctuary and a chance of a normal life.

Black Paris Tours is there to show tourists, be they from the U.S. or anywhere else in the world, what the city did for African-Americans and, just as important, what its adopted children gave in return. Visitors can learn just how devoid of prejudice the residents were in a time in which ethnic minorities received an unfair treatment on the American continent. Ahead of its time, but with clear values, Paris judged its guests by their deeds and allowed them to thrive unhindered.



We'll find the same notions in the words of Ricki Stevenson, a former talk show host, reporter and news anchor from Oakland, California. Ricki Stevenson was the one who founded Black Paris Tours because, as she put it, she dreamed of living there, but also because she saw a performance from Josephine Baker when she was just a child.

The tour itself starts from the beginnings of African-American history in the French Capital. After orientation, one that takes place on the Champ Elysees, travelers follow their guide towards the Arc de

Triomphe, a monument charged with significance as many U.S. soldiers marched beneath it.

From there, tourists will board a bus, stopping at concert halls in which jazz music was performed by the likes of Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong. At Parc Monceau, tourists can learn about many other African-Americans that called Paris home, even if for a short while, people like Dubois, Bessie Coleman and Henry O. Tanner.



Other stops include viewing the monument dedicated to the abolition of slave trade in France, the statue of Alexandre Dumas (one of the most prolific French writers), the church of Saint Augustine, one of the few doctors of the Catholic Church and the only one of African descent. In Place Concorde, travelers can admire the African Obelisk. The tour ends with a taste of African cuisine among residents from Senegal.

Paris is chock full of tourist destinations, though most are well known and heard of by people who have never even set foot in France. Black Paris Tours' attempt at something different, a more niche look at the City of Lights might be welcomed by those who want to try something different.

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