

THE NUMBER OF VISITORS AT FRENCH MONUMENTS IS ON THE RISE



Visitors are back to France. According to a report published by the French National Monuments Center, the number of visitors is up by 10% since the beginning of the year.

The spotlight is shining once more on the great Parisian monuments as well as monuments throughout France. The National Monuments Center (CMN), which manages close to 100 historic buildings throughout the country, compiled an assessment at the end of August which concluded that: **after terrible performance in 2016, visitation has increased by 10% since January and increased by 8% during the summer.**

These figures confirm the resumption of tourism in France's capital, but also the attachment that the French people have to their cultural heritage.

Suffering a 24% decline in popularity last year, the "Arc de Triomphe" has regained its attractiveness. From January to August, it welcomed some 1.12 million visitors, 26% more than during the previous year. The "Sainte-Chapelle" witnessed a surge of 20% in the number of visitors and the "Panthéon", down 10% in 2016, recorded a 20% increase in visitation. The towers of "Notre-Dame" (+8%) and the "Conciergerie" (+10%) experienced the same positive trend.

"We are very happy to be leaving behind 2016's bad performance results," Philippe Bélaival, President of the CMN commented. In Paris of course and at "Mont-Saint-Michel", which increased by 7%, visitation numbers are echoing recently published tourism data which seems to confirm the return of foreign tourism to the capital. Of course, these results are following a year of strong decline, nevertheless there was no certainty that the situation would improve: the threat of terrorism has not gone away, and it was conceivable that the downturn may have continued longer."

The CMN's assessment also revealed other - not insignificant - reasons for being satisfied. No fewer than 6.7 million visitors have already frequented one of the French monuments managed by the CMN since January. Results which should allow the 2017's performance to approach that of 2014, a record-breaking year of 9.5 million visits.

Moreover, famous Parisian sites are not the only ones to be performing very well. The recently restored "Azay-le-Rideau" castle ("Indre-et-Loire") has witnessed an 18% increase in its visitation rate. The "Angers" castle ("Maine-et-Loire") had an increase of 15% and the "La Rochelle" towers ("Charente-Maritime") had a 9% increase. **Lastly, the abbey of "Montmajour" ("Bouches-du-Rhône") is doing extremely well thanks to its exhibition of photographs of the actress Audrey Tautou** as part of the "Rencontres photographiques d'Arles": +114% during the summer months!

"This proves that when there is investment, dynamic teams and successful events, visitors will come to all of the French monuments," Philippe Bélaival said. "I believe that this also demonstrates to what extent cultural heritage remains a driving force behind tourism activity in our country."

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