THE COURVOISIER PARIS GOLDEN AGE TOUR

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BELLE ÉPOQUE

THE TOAST OF PARIS SINCE 1889
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ‘The Courvoisier Paris Golden Age Tour’, an exclusive journey which will transport you to the heart of the Belle Époque also known as the Paris Golden Age.

During la Belle Époque, the world came to Paris and Paris became the world. You will discover what it was like to be a Parisian at the end of the XIX century and why it was such a key time period for the capital, the world and for Courvoisier.

The Courvoisier story started in Paris in the early 1800s with founders, Louis Gallois and Emmanuel Courvoisier. Based in Bercy, the business flourished and won many prestigious medals. It also won the love of Paris and the respect of Emperor Napoleon III himself, who chose Courvoisier as his sole official cognac supplier.

The Paris Golden Age began in 1880 and ended in 1914 with the First World War, these few decades were named retrospectively, after the two world wars. In comparison to the devastating aftermath, it is remembered for its prosperity. At the time, innovation was everywhere, in the arts, the architecture, fashion, transport, the nightlife – it was in all aspects of life! Paris was a truly modern city and the most cosmopolitan European capital.

The arts flourished, new scientific breakthroughs transformed lives almost daily and technological innovations left the population open-mouthed in awe. Haute couture was invented on Rue de la Paix, cinema was pioneered by the frères Lumière and the finest cuisine was enjoyed in the restaurants of the city. The Belle Époque was an era marked with celebration, there was a sense that anything was possible – confidence, exuberance and ‘joie de vivre’ inspired all areas of life. And as the toast of Paris, Courvoisier was at the heart of it.

The City of Light, La Ville Lumière, truly lived up to its name during the Golden Age. Not only was it the first capital city to be lit by gaslight - no doubt to quell the ever-present risk of riot and revolution that lurked in its labyrinthine narrow streets. It was the centre of creativity and enlightenment. Many iconic buildings were constructed at the time, which, to this day, remain the very symbols of Paris – the Eiffel Tower, the metro, the Moulin Rouge, the Opéra and the Basilica of Sacré Coeur.

Paris became one of the most modern cities of its time – a beacon of light in urban planning – and the stage was set for the ever-increasing population to pursue different preoccupations.

Three universal exhibitions took place during this illustrious period, in 1878, 1889 and 1900, bringing millions of visitors to the capital to see all the latest creations.

The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 was undoubtedly the single most important event as it commemorated the storming of the Bastille 100 years earlier and in so doing launched an era of optimism. Paris dazzled the world, celebrating its scientific, technical and industrial prowess, but also showcasing its art and architecture, its wines and spirits, its history and heroes and the cultures of its colonies.

The Grand Opening of La Tour Eiffel was the greatest celebration of the era and saw a party like no other. Its opening was celebrated with a toast to Paris, Courvoisier was the official drink to this triumphant occasion which went on to win a gold medal at the same exhibition.

While the Eiffel Tower dominated the world’s attention, 1889 was important for another reason too. Louis Renard, the future Courvoisier Master Blender, was born on 15th October this same year. Like Eiffel, he was destined to be one of the most innovative people in his industry. Indeed, like many forward-thinking
businessmen of the period, Louis Renard was the first to truly innovate in the cognac sector; he created the luxury Napoleon quality grade in 1910 at the tender age of 21.

More than ever before, Paris was seen throughout the world as a city of luxury with an opulent and extravagant way of life.
The Palais Garnier was built from 1861 to 1875 for the Paris Opéra. It became known as the Palais Garnier, in recognition of its opulence and its architect, Charles Garnier. It is probably the most famous opera house in the world and a symbol of Paris.

On 30 December 1860, the Second Empire of Emperor Napoleon III officially announced an architectural competition for the design of the new opera house. Applicants were given a month to submit entries. There were two phases to the competition. Charles Garnier (1825–1898), a relatively unknown architect with limited on-hands experience was one of 171 who entered and went on to win over well-known names.

Construction was disrupted by various incidences, including the back up of water from the aquifer, lack of funding, the Franco-Prussian War and the demise of Napoleon III’s Empire.

When it finally launched 15 years later, Fromental Halévy’s *La Juive* was the inaugural production on 5 January 1875. Audiences noted all the ornamental detailing, including bronze sculptures and paintings illustrating musical symbols. Equally compelling, the Grand Staircase, which leads into the multi-level theater, is a show-stopping feature measured by its marble of various hues.

At the entrance, immense mirrors allow patrons to become a part of the building’s interior décor. The vast and richly decorated foyers set the audience’s stage with pleasing scenes to stroll through during intermission.

Most of the theatre house consists of lavish boxes, replete with tufted velvet seats, ornate gilt columns and rich red walls. Attending an opera or a ballet during the Belle Époque was as much about the parade of silk and jewels on display as taking in the spectacle of the performance.

Take a particular attention to the opulent Foyer de la Danse which was an institution exclusively related to the Paris Opera house. It was the privileged meeting point between subscribers and dancers. Along with their own private boxes, male season ticketholders had purchased access to the Foyer de la Danse, a space built for the purpose of facilitating encounters between the ballerinas and male season ticketholders. It was a sort of gentlemen’s club, a place where mistresses were sought by industrialists and noblemen with enough wealth to advance a girl’s career. Wives and male dancers were not allowed to enter, but pre-performance and during intermission, gentlemen season ticketholders gathered there to sip champagne and linger with the dancers as they limbered at the ballet barre.

The Opéra is also the setting for Gaston Leroux's 1910 novel *The Phantom of the Opera*. Leroux was a frequent visitor and explored the backstage areas and inner sanctums. One tragedy aided in his literary work, and Leroux took poetic license in his novel, when a portion of a chandelier fell and killed one of the opera patrons.
Walking down the rue de la Paix you will arrive to an open square, the Place Vendôme, which is one of the symbols of Parisian luxury.

The original Vendôme Column at the center of the square was erected by Napoleon I to commemorate the battle of Austerlitz; it was torn down in 1871, but subsequently re-erected and remains a prominent feature on the square today. The Place Vendôme has been renowned for its fashionable and deluxe hotels such as the Ritz.

The Ritz is a grand palatial hotel and one of the most prestigious and luxurious hotels in the world; it overlooks the octagonal border of the Place Vendôme at number 15. The hotel was founded by Swiss hotelier, César Ritz, in collaboration with chef Auguste Escoffier in 1898. It was constructed behind the façade of an 18th-century town house and was reportedly the first hotel in Europe to provide a bathroom en suite, a telephone and electricity for each room. It quickly established a reputation for luxury, with clients including royalty, politicians, writers, film stars and singers. Several of its suites are named in honour of famous guests of the hotel, including Coco Chanel and Ernest Hemingway who lived at the hotel for years and one of the bars of the hotel, Bar Hemingway, is devoted to the author. The grandest suite of the hotel, called the Imperial, has been listed by the French government as a national monument in its own right.

Place Vendôme is also the home of famous luxury shops and many dress designers have had their salons in the square. The only two remaining at present are the shirtmaker Charvet, at number 28, whose store has been on the Place since 1877 and the couturier Chéruit, at number 21, reestablished in 2008. One of the most famous designers of the time, Charles Worth - who designed the clothes of the Empress Eugénie during the Second Empire, and turned high fashion into a veritable industry - set up store here on Place Vendôme.

Since 1718, the Ministry of Justice, also known as the "Chancellerie", is located at the Hotel de Bourvallais, numbers 11 and 13.

Anecdote: Virginia Oldoini, Countess di Castiglione the former mistress of Napoleon III, lived in seclusion from the 1870s until the 1890s at 26, Place Vendôme, above Boucheron.

Did you know that Empress Joséphine, Napoleon’s wife, was also a famous elegant and courtesan? She owned even more dresses than Marie-Antoinette and it’s her dresses that were actually the inspiration behind the original Courvoisier VS bottle called the Joséphine bottle.

Fashion has always been strongly linked with Courvoisier. In 1988, famed Art Deco and fashion designer Erte was commissioned to create limited edition Courvoisier bottles containing Grande Champagne cognac dating back to the year of his birth, 1892. Erte's seven unique designs represented various stages of the cognac distillation process.

Courvoisier’s next fashion partnership saw English designer Vivienne Westwood creating a unique jacket – inspired by 18th Century court dresses – for Courvoisier XO. Only 150 limited edition bottles were released.
Rue Royale - The Paris of Gastronomy

During the Belle Époque, many prestigious restaurants flourished. They included Fouquet’s and the Pavillon de l’Élysée, the Tour d’Argent, Prunier on rue Duphot, Drouant Lucas Carton at the Madeleine and Weber on rue Royale. The most famous restaurant of the period, Maxim’s, which you can see on the rue Royale also opened its doors. Just as they did during the Belle Époque, Courvoisier still works with chefs around the world to create the most beautiful pairing and tasting experiences worldwide. These highlight the talent of the chefs and the unique flavours of Courvoisier’s cognacs.

Step into Maxim’s and be sure to ask for a Courvoisier Champagne Cocktail.

The fantastic aromas of Courvoisier cognacs pair perfectly with delicate flavours of certain foods. For example, XO is a rich and full-bodied cognac but it’s also exceptionally smooth, meaning that as a style it works better with desserts – it works well with the delicacies served by famous ‘salons de thé’ of the Belle Époque (and still served today!) such as the delicious Ladurée macarons or the iconic Mont-Blanc, a pastry which combines meringue, light whipped cream and chestnut paste vermicelli and which made Angelina since its creation in 1903.

At the time, for those with more modest budgets, there was the Bouillon, a type of restaurant pioneered by a butcher named Duval in 1867. It served simple and inexpensive food and was popular with students and visitors. One from this period, Chartier, near the Grands Boulevards, still exists.

A new type of restaurant, called a brasserie, appeared in Paris during this time as well. The name originally meant a place that brewed beer, but it evolved into a café where young women in their national costumes served drinks of those countries, including beer, ale, chianti, and vodka. By 1890, there were 42 brasseries on Paris’ left bank, with names including the brasserie des Amours, the brasserie de la Vestale, the brasserie des Belles Marocaines, and the brasserie des Excentriques Polonais (brasserie of the eccentric Poles).

Place de la Concorde - The Hôtel de Crillon

When you arrive on the Place de la Concorde on the right hand-side you’ll find another emblem of the Belle Époque. The Hôtel de Crillon in Paris is a historic luxury hotel opened in 1909 in a building dating to 1758.

In 1758, King Louis XV commissioned celebrated architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel to design two facades to be constructed on Place de la Concorde in Paris. In his innovative use of architecture, materials and technological prowess, Gabriel broke away from the prevailing Ancient Roman and Greek influence to create a gem of French architecture. Gabriel’s exemplary design was widely admired and imitated, providing inspiration for the White House in Washington and other monuments worldwide. The palace contained within these facades today provides the sumptuous setting of Hôtel de Crillon.

The new look hotel reopened its doors in 1909 and was reinvented as an emblem of the Belle Époque. The sculptures, woodwork and tapestries introduced at this time exemplified the finest in traditional French craftsmanship. Displaying technical innovation of remarkable ingenuity, this pioneering monument of the golden age would establish a new trend for international architecture. Building on its role as ambassador of French art de vivre, Hôtel de Crillon was set to become a mecca for dignitaries from the four corners of the globe.
**Champs-Élysées and The Arc de Triomphe**

As you walk towards the ‘quais’ you have full view of the Champs Élysées and The Arc de Triomphe on the Place de l'Étoile one of the most famous monuments in Paris.

The building honours those who fought and died for France in the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars. Beneath its vault lies the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier from World War I.

The Champs Élysées and the boulevards next to them, were created during Haussmann's renovation of Paris. This renovation was a vast program commissioned by Emperor Napoléon III. It included the demolition of crowded and unhealthy medieval neighbourhoods, the building of wide avenues, parks and squares, the annexation of the suburbs surrounding Paris, and the construction of new sewers, fountains and aqueducts.

Even if it wasn’t well received (especially by intellectuals of the time such as Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire) the street plan and distinctive appearance of the centre of Paris today is largely the result of Haussmann's renovation. In the Golden Age, Paris was ahead of its time, an hygienic city and with wide avenues it allowed car traffic.

With Haussmann, the new buildings are much deeper and larger. In 1902 the maximum height for a building was 52 meters. With the incorporation of the elevator, the most desirable apartments are no longer situated on the lowest floors but on the highest ones, with luxurious balconies offering a magnificent city views. At the Belle Époque, the avenue was home to cows and dairies where revelers could go for fresh milk in the morning!

**Anecdote:** At the time, we used to say « les bourgeois montent aux étages » (meaning that « the bourgeois - upper class - go upstairs »)

The Champs-Élysées, which means "Elysian Fields" has been dubbed ‘the most beautiful avenue in the world’. The avenue has been devoted to both luxury and pleasure since the 19th century.

**Anecdote:** The Marquise de La Paiva built a lavish mansion. She was an extravagant courtesan who married several wealthy husbands and was the mistress of many wealthy men. In the building, which you can visit, there’s a bathtub with 3 taps: one for hot water, one for cold water and various other liquids such as milk or champagne!

The Lido was founded at the Belle Époque; it was originally a pool dubbed "Paris Beach". Its name refers to the Lido beach in Venice it was only transformed into a cabaret in the 1930s.

This avenue is still used for the celebrations today, from the military parade on Bastille Day to the New Year’s Eve firework display – it’s synonymous with the glamour of the Belle Époque.

On the corner of the Champs Élysées and the avenue Georges V you can also find the star-studded *Fouquet's*. This traditional restaurant has embodied the spirit of the French "high class brasserie" since 1899. Le Fouquet’s is the ultimate Belle Époque venue for a celebration and today, like it always has been, Fouquet’s is home to Parisian high society and show business. Step into the bar of this historical venue and enjoy a Courvoisier cocktail.
Here you really are at the center of what was the Paris during the Belle Époque and you can get a feel for the grandeur of these buildings created especially for the three **Expositions Universelles**.

The Universal Exposition of 1889 celebrated the centenary of the beginning of the French Revolution - one of the structures was a replica of the Bastille! It took place on the Champ de Mars, the hill of Chaillot, and along the Seine on the Quai d'Orsay which we just drove on. The Exposition welcomed 23 million visitors over 6 months – 7 times the population of Paris at the time!

The most memorable feature was the Eiffel Tower, which served as the gateway to the Exposition. The Eiffel Tower remained the world's tallest structure until 1930, other popular exhibits included the first musical fountain, lit with coloured electric lights, changing in time to music. Buffalo Bill and sharpshooter Annie Oakley drew large crowds to their Wild West Show at the Exposition.

11 years later, the Universal Exposition of 1900 took place from 15 April until 12 November to celebrate the turn of the century. Its sites included the Champ de Mars, Chaillot, the Grand Palais and the Petit Palais. Beside the Eiffel Tour, it featured the world's largest ferris wheel, the Grande Roue de Paris, one hundred metres high, carrying sixteen hundred passengers in forty cars.

Inside the exhibit hall, Rudolph Diesel demonstrated his new engine, and the first escalator was on display. The metropolitan exhibited its first line (Vincennes to Porte Maillot – or the actual line 1).

The emergent cinema was another other key attraction as the Frères Lumière had started to project films since 1895. The importance of this innovation meant that 18 locations were dedicated to the cinema at the exhibition (the Lumière had a giant screen measuring 21 x 16 m height).

Though it was a great popular success, attracting an estimated forty-eight million visitors, the 1900 exposition lost money, and was the last exposition in Paris on such a grand scale.

You may recognise this iconic landmark for its magnificent glass domed roof. This exceptional architectural blend of steel, stone and glass is the **Grand Palais**. It was built in 1900 for the Exhibition Universelle and dedicated “by the French Republic to the glory of French art”.

**Anecdote**: Did you know that the Grand Palais contained more iron than the Eiffel Tower? The architects who erected the Grand Palais in 1900 have hidden the edifice structure with stones.

The building was the work of three different architects and was overseen by famed French architect Charles Girault, who then designed the Petit Palais – which is now called the Museum of Fine Arts of Paris. The building combines Classical and Art Nouveau and reflects the movement's taste for ornate decoration through its...
stone facades. The glass vault with its structure made of iron and light steel framing was innovative at the time and with a surface area of 13,500m, the Grand Palais is the largest glassed-roof space in Europe.

The grand inauguration took place 1 May 1900, and from the very beginning the palace was the site of different kinds of shows in addition to the intended art exhibitions. Each year, 2.5 million visitors attend the Grand Palais exhibitions, which include the works of Picasso, Velasquez, Jean Paul Gaultier and Niki de Saint Phalle. The couture fashion house Chanel annually hosts elaborated and magnificent fashion shows in the palace beautiful surroundings.

Both le Grand Palais and the Petit Palais are situated in the Jardin des Champs-Élysées which forms the lower part of the famous Parisian avenue.

The flowing architecture of the Grand Palais has inspired the bottle design of premium Cognac Courvoisier Extravagance. This cognac is only available in Travel Retail and is a rare, complex and exquisite blend made from grapes harvested exclusively in just two regions: Grande Champagne and Petite Champagne.
LES INVALIDES & NAPOLEON

TRAVELLING ON RUE SAINT DOMINIQUE PAST LES INVALIDES

Now you are in front of a key building which has a golden dome and is called Les Invalides. It is a complex of buildings containing museums and monuments, all relating to the military history of France. Most notably the building hosts the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821).

During the Belle Époque, tourists were visiting Les Invalides to see the museum and Napoleon’s tomb but also because the area was one of the ‘beaux quartiers’ (beautiful areas) of Paris. Aristocrats of the time who needed to prove their wealth could also be spotted walking around Les Invalides wearing extravagant outfits.

Anecdote: The ‘Bottin Mondain’ (the elite’s who’s who) was first published in 1903. The directory regrouped the names and addresses of Parisian aristocrats, celebrities and politician figures of the time. The first Bottin Mondain contained 12,000 names of Parisian families, selected for the prestige of their name, function or social rank.

Famous names included: Jean Jaurès, Aristide Briand, poet and dandy Robert de Montesquiou, Collette, Edgar Degas, Claude Debussy, Jean Poiret. Most modern names include Christian Dior, François Mitterand, Victoire de Castellane. Families such as Taittinger, Pol Roger, Peugeot, Michelin, Toulouse Lautrec (de) are also in the Bottin.

Napoleon was initially buried on Saint Helena Island, but King Louis-Philippe arranged for his remains to be brought to France. In fact, many members of Napoleon’s family are also buried there. Legend has it that Napoleon chose several casks of Courvoisier cognac as his one granted item of luxury, a treat much appreciated by the English officers on board HMS Northumberland during their 67-day voyage. They named it ‘The Brandy of Napoleon’.

Napoleon originally wished to be buried in the Basilica of Saint-Denis where all the kings and queens of France are. But not wanting to offend the royalists and opponents of the emperor, King Louis-Philippe chooses to bury him at Les Invalides, a place of military symbolic and not royal. So it pays homage to Napoleon Bonaparte as a major general of the Army and not as a sovereign!

Talking about Napoleon, the emperor has a very important part in the Courvoisier story. Louis Renard, who was Courvoisier’s Master Blender, sealed the brand’s place as a luxury and innovative cognac by creating the Napoleon grade in 1910. It honoured their long association with both Napoleon I, who visited them in Bercy in 1811, and Napoleon III, who awarded them the title of sole Official Suppliers to the Imperial Court. This unique Napoleon grade, equal to XO in terms of minimum age, seemed the most fitting and opulent way to mark the end of the Paris Golden Age.

Anecdote: Les Invalides was founded by Louis XIV (also known as the Sun King) to home former soldiers. (Part of the building is still used today as a military hospital by retired Army members). Strict discipline was applied (no smoking, going out without permission, no food in the dorms, etc.), and offenders were sentenced to eat at “the table of water drinkers” (so no wine or spirits!)
ARCHITECTURE & ART NOUVEAU

TRAVELLING ON AVENUE RAPP

During the Belle Époque, apartments are lighter, have nicer views and are less noisy perfect for celebration! The tradition of the ‘Visite’ was one of the key trends of the time. You would visit, friends, colleagues and acquaintances at their home – to enjoy coffee and delicious cognac! Wealthy Parisian women had a specific day to receive ‘visites’ which took place during 3pm and 6 pm.

Large dinner parties were also the norm were ‘Madame’ ensured that everything was perfect from the food and drink to the conversation. It was a tradition that when ‘Madame est servie’ (Madam is served) was declared, men would take women’s arm to guide them to the dining table. Honorary guests were placed on the right of the hostesses.

We are now approaching a great example of a style of the period.

During this era, the facades of buildings also changed. From the strict symmetry, bow windows appeared and eclectic facades became popular, mixing various styles together. These facades started to become highly decorated with floral patterns in a style referred to as Art Nouveau.

‘Art Nouveau’ or the ‘new art’, was derived from Siegfried Bing’s L’Art Nouveau gallery, which opened in Paris in 1895 providing cutting edge art and home furnishings to an international clientele.

Art Nouveau adapted the flowing lines of nature and borrowed from exotic sources such as Japanese woodprints. Extremely sensuous, at times even openly erotic, the style celebrated the human (usually female) form in advertisements, lamps, sculpture, jewellery and even furniture.

LAVIROTTE BUILDING

Here you’ll see an example of Art Nouveau, the forward-thinking design style which appeared later in the Paris Golden Age.

Built in 1901, the Lavirotte building is one of nine exuberant Parisian works of art by renowned architect Jules Lavirotte.

Lavirotte studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Lyon and in Paris and rose to fame for his eccentric and lavish Art Nouveau style.

Inspired by the natural world and characterised by its fluid, harmonious, undulating lines and form, the Art Nouveau style was first shown to a wider audience at the Exposition Universelle.

Artists of all genres embraced the idea that design could be a part of all objects, no matter how functional, so it lived beyond the canvas – and was seen everywhere from René Lalique’s naturalistic jewelry to architect Hector Guimard’s Paris Metro station entrances. Maxim’s, a famous restaurant in Paris that has been serving Courvoisier for years, is also decorated in this early Art Nouveau splendor.

This building has seven levels and four axes all irregular to purposely destroy the symmetry and to create movement. You’ll notice the irregular and asymmetrical architecture of the façade and excessive ornamentation of the front door. Lavirotte’s idea was to give an unbalanced impression.
If you walk around the corner to Square Rapp here you will see another fine example of how Art Nouveau has brought a new lease of life and fantasy to classical architecture, advocating an anti-academic style. It is a style brimming with imagination.

As you can see from this side as well, the building is a real catalogue of patterns: flowers, animals, motives, people... everything that you would have imagined on a façade. The structures were also very modern and including iron frames and reinforced concrete – which were revolutionary new building materials at the time.

Despite causing outrage in Paris at the time, Lavirotte won the annual contest for the most beautiful façade in Paris in 1901.

If you turnaround, we have the magnificent La Tour Eiffel in clear sight. As I mentioned earlier, the grand opening of La Tour Eiffel was the ultimate celebration of this time and, even to this day, it’s the most iconic of all French landmarks and, of course, Courvoisier was right at the heart of this great celebration.

EIFFEL TOWER

La Tour Eiffel was built in 1889, especially for the Exposition Universelle, when the French government hosted a design contest, inviting engineers and architects to “study the possibility of erecting an iron tower with a base of 125 meters square and 300 meters high.”

The winner was a design entered by engineers Gustave Eiffel, Maurice Koechlin, Emile Nouguier and architect Stephen Sauvestre. Praised as “an original masterpiece of work in metal”, it was actually intended as a temporary build. La Tour Eiffel, however, is now the most-visited paid-entry monument in the world and attracts more than seven million people each year.

La Tour Eiffel was built in two years, two months and five days, and at 312m or 1023 feet was the tallest structure in the world at the time. It was painted in a reddish brown colour, romantically called Barbados Bronze, which was applied in progressively lighter shades from bottom to top to make it look even taller.

It was opened on 31st March 1889, when Gustave Eiffel climbed the 1,710 steps of the Tower.

Eiffel and the guests at the celebration, who were some of the most famous in the world, enjoyed a luxury banquet and the finest Courvoisier. Indeed Courvoisier appeared on the menu at the inauguration of the Eiffel Tower in 1889 and as a result it became the celebratory drink of choice during this innovative and progressive period. That night, 10,000 gaslights were lit and hung all over the tower, adding to the magic. Now 20,000 light bulbs adorn the Eiffel Tower illuminating the city at night.

As you glance at the original photo and take a look up at the present day La Tour Eiffel, here are a few little known facts of La Tour Eiffel!
Despite not intending to be permanent, La Tour Eiffel was nearly demolished in 1909, but was saved because it was repurposed as a giant radio antenna.

To the residents of Barcelona this may have been a disappointment as the original tower was actually intended for the city of Barcelona! Yes, the tower was meant to be standing above La Sagrada Familia.

You may have seen replicas of the Eiffel Tower around the world – there are some 30 of them – but rest assured this is definitely the real one! I may have also mentioned that La Tour Eiffel is exactly 1023 feet high. This is a slight lie. The height of the Tower varies by 5.9 inches depending on the temperature. Today it is currently 3.2 inches higher than usual!

**Anecdote:** The first stairs competition was organised in 1905. Its first winner Mr Forestier climbed the 700 steps in 3 minutes and 12 seconds – he won a bike as a prize!
The Belle Époque was an exciting time for fashion with the birth of haute couture (high fashion) in Paris. As you can imagine Parisian women were extremely elegant, they wore exotic feathers and furs – these were more prominent during this era than ever before.

Paris was the centre of fashion and by 1900, there were more than 20 haute couture houses in Paris, mainly on rue de la Paix, around Place Vendôme (luxury jewellers Boucheron and Cartier opened stores there), and a few on the nearby Grands Boulevards. They attracted a vastly wealthy cosmopolitan clientele.

Paul Poiret and The House of Worth were well-known designers of the time along with Jeanne Paquin – in fact, the monumental doorway to the Exposition Universelle was decorated with the figure of a Parisian woman dressed by Jeanne Paquin!

Fashion trends for men and women

A Parisian woman’s attire was fluid, and made of soft and light fabrics in pastels or light tones. Women could wear up to three outfits a day! (An indoor dress, one for the afternoon and one for the evening).

Afternoon dresses were long with high, often laced, collars and with sleeves going below the elbow. As a contrast, evening gowns were luxurious, low cut and short sleeved. One of the essential accessories of the time was the hat which was very large - to protect women from the sun – and heavily decorated with feathers, fake fruits, flowers etc. The hat was replaced in the evening by pieces of jewellery inserted into an elaborate hair style.

The emergence of outdoor activities, such as cycling, introduced the concept of tailor-made sports outfits. Indeed cycling was extremely popular at the time - Le Tour de France was created in 1903 – with more than 1 million bikes in Paris, replacing horses.

The time also saw a drastic change of image in terms of supermodels; the preference of curvy women with pale skin, was replaced with an appreciation of thinner women with tanned skin.

Men’s fashion was in a continuity of the Dandy look which appeared at the beginning of 1800. Men’s outfits were slim and dark. The three piece suit was ‘de rigueur’ often in black, grey, brown or blue and composed of a trouser, jacket and waistcoat. The social classes could be easily deciphered by the accessories they wore – such as gold-chained clocks, sculpted walking sticks and premium gloves – and also the quality of their fabrics. Hair was worn very short and the moustache was also very trendy.

During the Belle Époque, the business of fashion was also largely influenced by the growth of department stores. This helped create a larger market for luxury goods, such as perfumes, watches and jewellery. The world’s first modern department store, Le Bon Marché, was originally a small variety store with a staff of twelve when it was taken over by Aristide Boucicaut in 1852.

He built an enormous new building near the site of the original shop on the left bank with an iron structure designed with the help of the engineering firm of Gustave Eiffel.

Indeed, the birth of Le Bon Marché, meaning ‘the good market’ or ‘the good deal’ marked a whole new business concept culture: fixed prices, lower margins, home delivery, item exchange, mail order, promotional periods and sales, private concerts, a reading room for husbands the time wives do their shopping.

The success of Le Bon Marché inspired many competitors; the Grands Magasins du Louvre opened in 1855, it reached 2,400 employees in 1882. The Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville (BHV) opened in 1857, and moved in a larger
store in 1866. Printemps was founded in 1865 by a former department head of Le Bon Marché; La Samaritaine was opened in 1870 and Galeries Lafayette by Alphonse Kahn in 1895.

Many innovations came from the development of the department store. The perfumer François Coty (1874-1934) began making scents in 1904, and rose to success by selling through department stores. He discovered the importance of elegant bottles in marketing perfume, and commissioned Baccarat and René Lalique to design bottles in the Art Nouveau style. He also invented the fragrance set, a box of perfume, powder soap, cream and cosmetics with the same scent.

The transformation of a simple stall into one single “department store” created a whole new culture of commerce and revolutionised the commercial model that we recognise around the world today.

Courvoisier has worked with both luxury brands Lalique and Baccarat commissioning them to create beautiful carafes for some of its most exclusive cognacs. To celebrate the millennium, Lalique created with Courvoisier - L’Esprit de Courvoisier - a limited edition of only 2,000 bottles.

The bottle of L’Essence de Courvoisier, which is produced every year in very small quantities, has been created by Baccarat. It is presented in a unique teardrop-shaped, suspended decanter bottle, demonstrating Baccarat’s craftsmanship, with the crystal stopper representing a ring which Napoléon offered to 10 of his best officers.
SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRES

Saint-Germain-des-Prés is the area where artists and especially writers joined themselves to exchange all sorts and forms of art expressions.

At the time, literature underwent a major transformation. Literary realism and naturalism achieved new heights. Among the most famous French realists or naturalists authors are Guy de Maupassant and Émile Zola. Realism gradually developed into modernism, which emerged in the 1890s and came to dominate European literature during the Belle Époque's final years and throughout the interwar years.

The Modernist classic 'In Search of Lost Time' was written by Marcel Proust in 1909. Famous French novelist, Colette, shocked France with the publication of the sexually frank Claudine novel series, and other works. André Gide, Anatole France, Alain-Fournier, Paul Bourget are among France's most popular fiction writers of the era.

Among poets, the symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire remained at the forefront. The Decadent movement fascinated Parisians, intrigued by Paul Verlaine and above all Arthur Rimbaud, who became the archetypal 'enfant terrible' (terrible child) of France. Rimbaud's Illuminations was published in 1886, and subsequently his other works were also published, influencing surrealists and modernists during the Belle Époque and after.

Rimbaud's poems were the first works of free verse seen by the French public. Guillaume Apollinaire's poetry introduced themes and imagery from modern life to readers. Cosmopolis: A Literary Review had a far-reaching impact on European writers and ran editions in London, Paris, Saint Petersburg, and Berlin.

A FEW THINGS TO SEE WHILE YOU’RE THERE…

The Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés

It is the oldest church in Paris. Originally built in the sixth century, it was long part of an important Benedictine abbey. There are several interesting tombs in the chapels of the church, including those of philosopher René Descartes and John II Casimir Vasa, who was King of Poland in the seventeenth century until he became the Abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

Square on the left and go in front of the statue of Apollinaire

Here there is an interesting sculpture by Picasso who lived during the Belle Époque. The Paris municipal council wanted to put up a monument to Guillaume Apollinaire, the French poet who was also Picasso’s friend. Picasso was insistent that he create the small monument. As the more conservative people on the Council that didn’t particularly care for his art disliked his first attempt. Negotiations went back and forth and finally, Picasso was so disgusted by the whole affair that he gave the council a sculpture of the head of Dora Maar – his muse - to be used as the monument.

Anecdote: Napoleon often visited the district while younger. He was drinking coffee at the Café Procope, and when he did not have enough money to pay, he would leave his hat in pledge. It is also in the neighborhood that was invented the terrible guillotine.
Art at La Belle Époque

Nearby in the 7e arrondissement, the star attraction is the Musée d'Orsay, home to a world-class collection of Impressionist paintings in a converted Belle Époque railway station on the Seine.

The Musée d'Orsay. The building was designed by an architect named Victor Laloux in 1900 and was originally used as a train station. In the Second World War it was then used as a mailing centre for sending packages to prisoners; these same prisoners were welcomed there on their return home, after the Liberation.

The museum houses a huge collection of work, spanning 1848 to 1914. It is home to the works by Delacroix, Monet, Renoir, Gauguin, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec.

The innovation of the Golden Age inspired artists to head off in different directions, moving away from formal portraiture and dark realist scenes, preferring instead to evoke more emotion and capture more movement with a new style of brushstroke that became known as ‘impressionism’.

The top floor of the Musée d’Orsay is still devoted to this style – and you’ll find Art Nouveau, decorative art, sculpture, Post and Neoimpressionism art, and Naturalism on the middle floors.

Impressionism was lighter, brighter and more vibrant and like the Paris population in the Golden Age, who had taken to promenading outdoors in the many new public parks built by Napoleon III, the impressionists often painted outside. All these artists, like Edouard Manet, Camille Pissaro, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and Renoir, were either born in Paris or came to Paris to study at the École des Beaux Arts, which we just walked past.

We hope this unique tour has given you a glimpse into the Paris Golden Age, a great time of celebration where anything was possible. Now please join us inside Fouquet’s for a Courvoisier cocktail in true Belle Époque style!

Now you can select and book a Courvoisier experience in one of the many venues which serve the cognac.