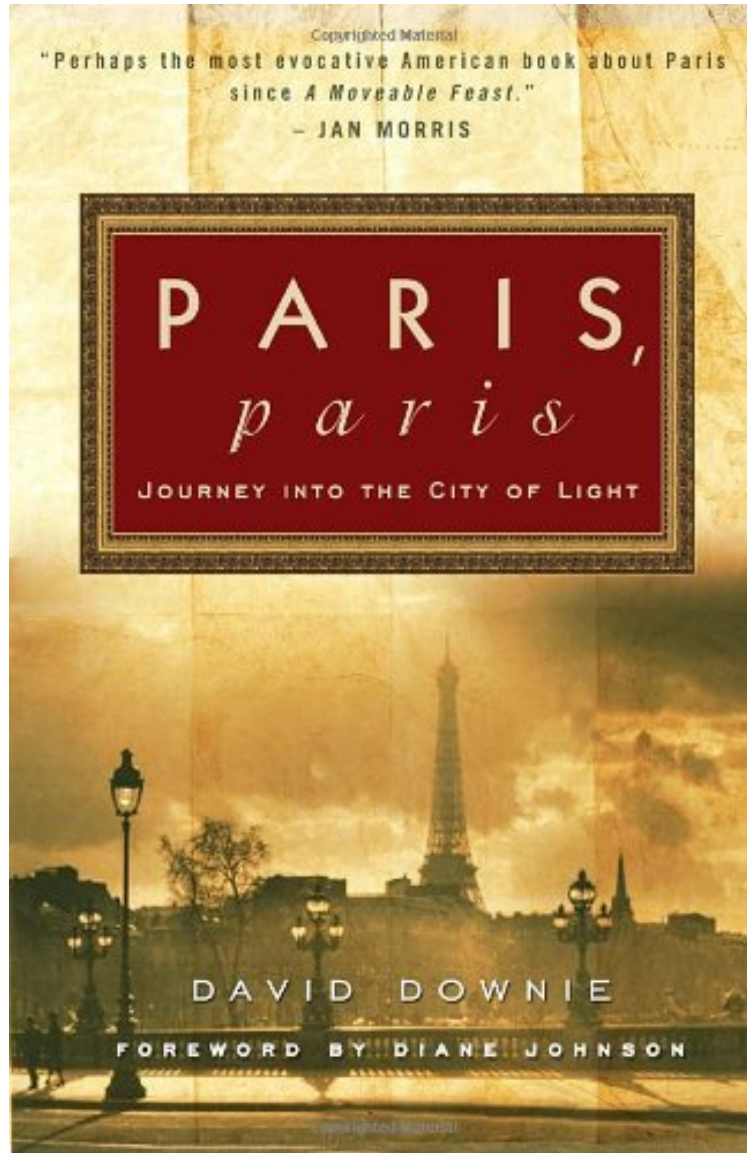


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Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light

David Downie

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#103421 in Books David Downie 2011-04-05 2011-04-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.97 x .61 x 5.171, .66 #File Name: 0307886085320 pagesParis Paris Journey into the City of Light | File size: 27.Mb

David Downie : Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light:

221 of 224 people found the following review helpful. A Journey into Paris, ParisBy Nancy P. WilsonI own a large library of books about France and have probably read almost every major title that features Paris. David Downie's new book Paris, Paris is in a class all its own. It is the most superbly written book on Paris I have read. Downie has a very

lively and intelligent style, as well as a deliciously ironic sense of humor. He is also a real journalist in his brave tenacity to "get the story." He takes us to places I would never otherwise have access to because I would be much too timid to make the approach. For instance, to penetrate the inner sancta of fortress-like Ile Saint Louis mansions, he tells how he systematically tested the outer doors and found a few to be always open. He marches right into luxurious courtyards, has a good look around, and describes what he sees in vivid prose. Or when researching the root of the expression "city of light," he heads right to the office of the chief engineer of Paris' municipal lighting department. I found myself very impressed with his approach towards his subject and with his straightforward, unselfconscious way of expressing himself. Downie is an American who has lived in Paris for over twenty years; however I have to imagine that he has gotten to know the city better than most natives. His curiosity leads him to all Paris' corners, not just the obvious showy places we all know and love. He does take us to some of my favorite neighborhoods and shows us details I've never noticed before, but he also points out the off-beat and even really ugly spots from where we can get a different perspective altogether on this rich, multi-layered city. The book has three parts: places, people and phenomena. Every chapter is both entertaining and informative. I ate the book up like a plate of many-colored macarons, savoring every flavor. I highly recommend it to arm chair travelers and committed Parisphiles alike. It's full of history, humor and intelligent insight, with never a dull moment. An evocative black and white image by Alison Harris, Mr. Downie's professional photographer wife and companion in adventure, accompanies each of the 30 chapters to add to the enjoyment. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Literate Guide to Paris By Sturme Archer This is an engaging series of essays about Paris, each structured around a walk through some region of the City of Light. Told from the insider's perspective that comes from an American expat who has lived in Paris for 20 years, you get the best of both: an enjoyable read and an educational experience to help you in your own explorations of Paris. You can read this just as a series of well-written essays told in an entertaining and literate manner about Paris. Downie's style is humorous and irreverent. If you've visited Paris in the past or even if you have no plans to visit Paris, the essays are a wonderful read. Or you can read this as a travelogue to help you make the most of a visit to Paris. Each essay is loosely formed around a walk the author takes through an area of Paris with a topical subject such as a personality or event. The richness of Downie's descriptions and background information will immerse you in the city and make your visit a more rewarding experience. It's a great way to learn about the history and sights of Paris and it serves as inspiration for your own explorations of the City of Light. You can follow Downie's walks, or use them as starting points of your own sojourns. Either way, Downie provides a superb guide to help you understand and appreciate the City as no travel guide can. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So glad I read Paris, Paris before my first trip to the City of Lights By Deborah Ludwig My first trip to Paris was made more enjoyable and interesting because I had purchased and read David Downie's "Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light" as part of my pre-trip planning process. Paris is a very walkable city, and I walked everywhere. As I strolled through the streets, I became an astute observer of everything Parisian--the people, architecture, street life, and caf culture. David's book provided me with interesting and fascinating facts, insights, and history about the Paris landscape and its residents. A few things that I would've noticed, but not given much thought to were: the bornes (cement lumps) and bites (short poles) on the sidewalks to prevent cars from parking there; the bouquinistes ("Paris's quayside booksellers") and their pad-locked chests of books situated along the Seine; the bateliers (freight-boat people) of the Seine who live and work on their vessels; the bike rentals; Parisians and the love for their dogs, to name just a few. Paris, Paris gave me an insider's appreciation and knowledge of their significance, which made for a more enjoyable, richer exploration of the city. David writes about some of the well-known edifices and sites, yet he includes many that most tourists don't discover. In one chapter, he guides the reader with a detailed description of a day-long, six-mile walk along Rue Saint-Martin--"Paris's oldest thoroughfare, the north-south axis the Romans called cardo-maximus"--highlighting along the way interesting buildings, museums, and parks while sharing historical background of each. I did not take this walk but plan to do it on my next visit. David's insider perspective helps the uninitiated to Paris gain an intimate knowledge of this gorgeous city. The author also shares entertaining and touching stories about his and his wife's lives as Parisians, so you get to know the man behind the words. I fell in love with Paris; I knew I would. David's beautifully written book added to that love. I highly recommend "Paris, Paris," not only for planning a trip to Paris, but for anyone who desires to learn more about the fascinating history and relevance of the many monuments, museums, cathedrals, gardens, shops, cemeteries, the people (past and present) and yes, the cafs that are quintessential Paris. Thank you for this work, David.

Beautifully written and refreshingly original makes us see [Paris] in a different light. -- San Francisco Chronicle Book Review Swapping his native San Francisco for the City of Light, travel writer David Downie arrived in Paris in 1986 on a one-way ticket, his head full of romantic notions. Curiosity and the legs of a cross-country runner propelled him daily from an unheated, seventh-floor walk-up garret near the Champs-Élysées to the old Montmartre haunts of the doomed painter Modigliani, the tombs of Pre-Lachaise cemetery, the luxuriant alleys of the Luxembourg Gardens and the aristocratic le Saint-Louis midstream in the Seine. Downie wound up living in the chic Marais district, married to the Paris-born American photographer Alison Harris, an equally incurable walker and chronicler. Ten books and a

quarter-century later, he still spends several hours every day rambling through Paris, and writing about the city he loves. An irreverent, witty romp featuring thirty-one short prose sketches of people, places and daily life, *Paris, Paris: Journey into the City of Light* ranges from the glamorous to the least-known corners and characters of the world's favorite city. Photographs by Alison Harris. I loved his collection of essays and anyone who's visited Paris in the past, or plans to visit in the future, will be equally charmed as well. David Lebovitz, author of *The Sweet Life in Paris* [A] quirky, personal, independent view of the city, its history and its people. Mavis Gallant Gives fresh poetic insight into the city a voyage into the bends and recesses, the jagged edges, the secret interiors [of Paris]. Departures

Like the guide who leads us through *The Hermitage* and its history in Sokurov's *Russian Ark*, David Downie is the master of educated curiosity. With him we discover Paris, a seemingly public city that is, in fact, full of secrets: great lives, lives wasted on the bizarre; forgotten artisans; lost graves (lost till now); the papillons nocturnes; and the poinonneur des Lilas. I have walked some of the city's streets with him, and reading this book is just as tactile an experience. Michael Ondaatje beautifully written and refreshingly original. Curious and attentive to detail, Downie is appreciative yet unflinching in describing his adopted home makes us see [Paris] in a different light. David Armstrong, *San Francisco Chronicle* Book The delightful and insightful essays in *Paris, Paris* meld history, atmosphere and observations on Paris places, Paris people and Paris phenomena. John Marshall, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *Chicago Tribune* Downie is a saunterer, wandering down the narrow ancient streets of the le de la Cit, picnicking in storied graveyards like Pre-Lachaise, observing a seduction at Jardin du Luxembourg with a birder's patience. captures the sort of people and places missed by those jetting from starred bistros to hotels with showers. Dan Rubin, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* gives fresh poetic insight into the city a voyage into the bends and recesses, the jagged edges, the secret interiors [of Paris]. Dory Kornfeld, *Departures* David Downie's prose illuminates Paris with an unequalled poignancy and passion. He understands and evokes the soul and the substance of the city with a critic's intelligence and a lover's heart. He makes me want to live in Paris again. Don George, Contributing Editor, *National Geographic Traveler* Perhaps the most evocative American book about Paris since *A Moveable Feast*. Jan Morris [A] quirky, personal, independent view of the city, its history and its people. Residents will recognize a place they can vouch for and not the clichés so frequently conjured up to match the legends. Visitors and newcomers are bound to find Paris, Paris reliable company as they discover the city's beauties and pleasures and its problems too. Mavis Gallant Downie brilliantly upholds the American expat tradition of portraying the City of Light with an original and endearing touch. John Flinn, Travel Editor, *San Francisco Sunday Chronicle* If there is one book I'd read before heading to the City of Light, Paris, Paris is it. Downie, a longtime Paris resident and roamer, writes with knowledge and verve, pinning down the funny and the sublime as he captures on his canvas the quirks, foibles and follies, and the peculiar mystery of the people and places, that make up this wonderful city. Harriet Welty-Rochefort, author of *French Toast and French Fried* All visitors to Paris who want their eyes opened and their knowledge widened should buy David Downie's irresistible collection of Paris essays. Take the book with you on walks and be astonished at his sense of detail and place; read it in bed or over a glass of wine in a café, and be introduced to a Paris few know. The text is immaculately complemented by Alison Harris beautiful and evocative photographs. Anton Gill, author of *Il Gigante and Peggy Guggenheim, a biography* "I loved his collection of essays and anyone who's visited Paris in the past, or plans to visit in the future, will be equally charmed as well." --David Lebovitz, author of *The Sweet Life in Paris* When good Americans die, Oscar Wilde wrote, they go to Paris. Don't wait that long. David Downie's new book reflects the city and its light with such power that its title says it twice. Paris, Paris shimmers with wit and mesmerizes with wisdom. With splendid photographs by Alison Harris, it is as the French would say un must. Mort Rosenblum [Downie] is not a superficial examination of Paris but rather a deep understanding and appreciation for all that is quirky, unique or enchanting about the city: those everyday folk who bring Paris to life. One of the most entertaining and interesting books written about Paris that we have found. Diane Ohanian, *FranceOnYourOwn.com* "Paris, Paris, presents the places, people, and phenomena of the city with unequalled intelligence and passion [...] an enchanting valentine to an ageless love." --Don George, *Trip Lit* for *National Geographic.com* Compelling... a rapturous, history-rich love poem --Pauline Frommer, *Toronto Star* "Suitable for serious Francophiles and curious spectators alike, this book paints Paris from a delightful, fresh perspective." --Andrea Rappaport, *Sacramento Book* From the Publisher In his introduction, David Downie provides a tantalizing foretaste of this engaging, critically acclaimed book. "Paris is the kind of city butterfly catchers have trouble netting, tacking down and studying," he assures readers. "Like all great cities and yet unlike any other, Paris is alive and fluttering, it changes with the light, buffeted by Seine-basin breezes. This place called Paris is at once the city of literature and film, an imagined land, a distant view through shifting, misty lenses, the leftover tang of Jean-Paul Sartre's cigarettes clinging to the mirrored walls of a Saint-Germain-des-Pres café, and the city where I and over two million others pay taxes, re-heel shoes, and shop for cabbages or cleaning fluids." Packed with detail, Downie's essays "evoke the soul and the substance of the city with a critic's intelligence and a lover's heart" (Donald George, *Global Travel Editor, Lonely Planet*). Celebrated travel writer Jan Morris seems to agree, calling *Paris, Paris* "Perhaps the most evocative American book about Paris since *A Moveable Feast*." Readers expecting the usual puffery will be

disappointed. As noted author John Baxter points out, "Lifting the curtain (in some cases before the people inside expect it) is very much what this book is about. The chic Place de Vosges, for instance. What's it really like to live in those 17th century hotels, particulars and to look down on the cafes under the colonnade where movie stars take coffee and fashion models prowl? Well, for some, not much fun, since many tenants inherited their homes generations back, and can't or won't renovate. Persuading one to invite him in, Downie describes being led from floor to sagging floor by the pavilions unwashed, unshaved, ornery owner, who scowled out of the broken windowpanes and cursed his inheritance. You think it's beautiful, he shouted over and over, you like the view? I hate it here. I hate it!" Happily Downie's abiding love for the French capital wins out, despite the occasional tongue-in-cheek jab. "[He] lives in Paris, like wine in a glass," comments prize-winning short story writer Mavis Gallant, who has called Paris home since 1950. "Paris, Paris is his quirky, personal, independent view of the city, its history and its people. Residents will recognize a place they can vouch for and not the clichés so frequently conjured up to match the legends. Visitors and newcomers are bound to find Paris, Paris reliable company as they discover the city's beauties and pleasures and its problems too." Paris, Paris is that rare object nowadays: a book of literate travel essays illustrated with striking BW photographs. Known for her photography work in the books of Sophia Loren, Marcella Hazan, Anne Willan and many other celebrities and cooks, Alison Harris is also a passionate chronicler in BW of Paris streets. As Diane Johnson sees it, "Paris must be the most photographed place in the world, from Doisneau to Cartier-Bresson. These beautiful studies by Alison Harris extend that literature with a powerful formal talent. Her camera's loving dissection of details that the busy traveler might not notice for himself, makes of this book a splendid object in itself, a sort of bibliophilic gem." From the Author I hope these quirky, independent, skeptical, irreverent essays avoid the trap of the traveling curmudgeon. "Perhaps because I came to Paris expecting no favors, with few illusions, and a generous dose of curiosity," I write in my introduction, "I have yet to feel the betrayal some visitors and transitory residents distill into vague resentment. Paris has no monopoly on grumpy waiters, horizontal pollution, or enraged drivers, nor, in my experience, do the elusive, mythical Parisians focus their supposed disdain on any one nationality. I've been privileged to hunt for Paris in many places, with many people, including the occasional Parisian, for nearly twenty years, and these essays are part of my catch. My vision of the city still blurs from Paris to Paris in my daily pursuit of fluttering wings. Happily, I don't want to pin them down and anyway, Paris always manages to fly away." I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed researching and writing them, a labor of love that took me nearly 10 years.