FORTRESSES AND FAITH:

Paris in the Middle Ages

This walking tour focuses primarily on Middle Ages Paris, but it begins at the beginning, in the place where Paris originated on the **Ile de la Cité**. The walk ends atop Mount Sainte-Geneviève on the Left Bank. In between, the tour winds through the narrow medieval streets of the **Ancient Cloister Quarter** on the Ile de la Cité and the **Latin Quarter** on the Left Bank. It includes **Notre-Dame,** the **Conciergerie** and **Sainte-Chapelle**, three of the the city's most famous Gothic buildings. The walk also encompasses some less well known but no less interesting places including the church of **Saint-Séverin** and the **Hôtel de Cluny,** the former Paris residence of the wealthy abbots of Cluny. It's now a wonderful Middle Ages museum. Stops at the **Sorbonne,** at the charmingly eclectic church of **Saint-Etienne-du-Mont** and at a remnant of Philippe II's medieval **city wall** round out the picture of Paris in the Middle Ages.

Start: Petit Pont (Métro: Saint-Michel)

Finish: Medieval City Wall (Métro: Cardinal Lemoine)

Distance: 2 miles

Time: 4 - 5 hours

Best Days: Wednesday - Monday

HISTORY
Politics and Economics

At the beginning of the Middle Ages (around 500 AD) the area known to the Romans as Gaul and known today as France, was a dangerous, ungoverned place. The Romans had retreated as they were defeated by Germanic tribes invading from the east. The place where Paris stands today was little more than a **river crossing.** By the end of the Middle Ages (about 1500 AD), French kings, loosely descended from tribal leaders of the early Germanic invaders, had managed to unify and control most of the country. And Paris had become France's **political, intellectual, and religious capital.**

Clovis I (486-511) is generally recognized as the first king of France. He was the leader of the Franks, a Germanic tribe that settled late in the 5th century in what is now France. Clovis defeated the last of the Romans, established his capital in Paris, and expanded his control over the territory around it. He also converted to Christianity.

Charlemagne

Early successors to Clovis were not an impressive lot. They often maintained only a tenuous hold over the feudal lords surrounding them and frequently held less territory. It was common during the Middle Ages to add descriptive names to the kings' given names. Most of the kings of this early era had names like "The Stammerer", "The Simple", "The Stubborn", "The Do Nothing", "The Mad", and "The Posthumous." One of the few exceptions was **Charles I, "The Great",** known as **Charlemagne** (751-814). He created a large but short lived Empire centered in France and extending into parts of what are now Spain, Italy, and Germany.

The reign of **Louis VI, "The Fat"** (1108-37) was an important turning point in French history, and more significant than his name might suggest. Politically, Louis VI was able to subdue most of the feudal lords of France. Economically, Paris thrived under his stewardship. Culturally, his reign ushered in what some have called a Middle Ages Renaissance, marked by the growth of cities and a resurgence of interest in culture.

Louis VI's son squandered most of his political and economic inheritance, but his grandson, **Philippe II, "Augustus"** (1180-1223) managed to regain territory lost to England and to strengthen his domestic power. He made Paris the center of medieval civilization, extending the city wall, building churches, encouraging commerce, creating a market at Les Halles, and approving a charter for the University of Paris**.**

Louis IX, "Saint-Louis" (1226-1270), was known for his religious piety (some say neuroticism) and charity, as well as for his intolerance and anti-Semitism. He built Sainte-Chapelle for his daily devotions and to house his religious relics.

Philippe IV "The Fair" (1285-1314) rebuilt the French legal structure. He also weakened the power of the Pope by securing the selection of a Frenchman as Pope Clement V and orchestrating a move of the papacy to Avignon on the then border of France. The papacy remained in Avignon for 73 years, a time known as the **"Babylonian Captivity"**. When the papacy returned to Rome, two popes — one French and one Italian — were elected by rival factions of cardinals. What came to be known as the **"Great Schism"** lasted for another 30 years until a church council finally resolved the situation.

Jean II

Quarrels over Philippe IV's succession led to a protracted struggle between England and France, the **Hundred Years War** (1337-1453). For years, the English archers with long bows prevailed over the French cavalry at numerous battles (Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt). King **Jean II, "The Good"** (1350-1364) was even taken as a prisoner to England. One bright light during this period seems to have been **Charles V, "The Wise"** (1364-1380) who managed to regain most of the territory his predecessors had lost to England.

Jeanne d'Arc

After Charles V, things deteriorated again until **Jeanne d'Arc (**Joan of Arc**)** finally came to the rescue. Her presence inspired French troops to achieve a victory over the English at Orleans in 1429. She then led France's young king, **Charles VII, "The Victorious"** (1422-61) to a coronation in Reims, where French kings were traditionally crowned. Two years later, Jeanne d'Arc was burned at the stake after being captured and turned over to the English. The Hundred Years War continued for another twenty years until France finally expelled the English from all of the country except Calais, which England held for another hundred years.

The agriculture-based **manorial system** in the countryside was the dominant economic reality of medieval times. But during the late Middle Ages, commerce and manufacturing revived, trade increased and city life grew. This revival was spurred in part by new agricultural practices that helped increase the supply of food, freeing up some people to pursue non-agricultural activities. Economic life in the cities was dominated by **guilds** and by a growing **bourgeois** class of rich merchants.

Religion and Philosophy

The **Catholic church** was the center of intellectual and spiritual life, and the dominant institution in medieval society.

Crusades and pilgrimages were a major feature of life in the Middle Ages. Energetic popes inspired faithful Christians to undertake eight (largely unsuccessful) crusades between 1095 and 1291. Two French kings were major participants in these expeditions. Philippe II led a force in the Third Crusade, and Louis IX participated in the Seventh and Eighth Crusades. A major pilgrimage route extended from northern France through Paris, and on to Santiago de Compostela in Spain where pilgrims journeyed to pay homage to the relics of Saint-Jacques (Saint James).

Monasteries were very important during this time, preserving classical learning and spreading Christianity. The Benedictine order, founded around 530, was the leading monastic order for over 500 years. In the 11th and 12th centuries, new orders arose including the Cistercians, the Franciscans, and the Dominicans.

As city life revived in the late Middle Ages, bishops and city clergy generally gained more and more power in the church hierarchy. They built huge **cathedrals** and many large churches as their power and influence grew. The **University of Paris** was founded in 1215 as an outgrowth of the theology school at Notre-Dame. Its most famous college, the **Sorbonne,** was established in 1253. Many famous scholars studied and taught in Paris including **Thomas Aquinas**. While residing in Paris he completed his famous *Summa of Theology*, a compendium attempting to bring together all existing knowledge on over 600 topics.

Architecture

Medieval architecture was a reflection of the times. The basic character of the cityscape was defensive and vertical, offering protection from worldly dangers and hope of heavenly salvation. Medieval buildings were constructed in the **Romanesque** style from about the middle of the 11th century to the middle of the 12th century when the **Gothic** style started to predominate. Since it took so long to build most large buildings (sometimes centuries), many have a mix of styles.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés

Romanesque buildings were inspired by ancient Roman architecture (hence the name). The rectangular shape of Romanesque churches was based on the building plans of the Roman basilicas (law courts) early Christians adapted and used as churches. Key features of the Romanesque style include **thick walls** with very **few windows**, **round arches**, and **barrel vaults** (semicircular ceilings). Besides being very **dark**, most Romanesque churches had very **little decoration**. A few very old churches in Paris, such as **Saint-Germain-des-Prés,** still retain a few Romanesque features.

Saint-Denis

Gothic architecture originated just outside Paris in **Saint-Denis** where the first Gothic-style church was constructed starting in 1140. Its originators called the style "French" or "modern." The term Gothic was coined later by the Italians who used it as a term of derision to describe the style developed by northern European people (such as the Goths) whom they viewed as barbarians. There are three key features of Gothic architecture. **Pointed arches** bear weight better than round arches. **Flying buttresses**, series of linked columns, help take the weight away from the walls and transfer it to the ground. And **ribs** help to structurally reinforce ceilings and create what are called ribbed vaults. Together, these three elements allowed builders to make **thinner and higher walls** and to insert more and larger windows into them.

Sainte-Chapelle

As a result, Gothic churches are much **taller and lighter** than their Romanesque predecessors with many **stained glass windows** including round **rose windows** at the front of the church and often at either end of the transept. Gothic churches are also **more decorated** than Romanesque churches. They have **sculpture**-decorated facades and interiors, **gargoyles** as drain spouts, and elaborate window **tracery**.

Hôtel de Sens

In addition to churches, there are a few surviving secular Gothic buildings in and around Paris including palaces and "**hôtels**". Hôtels in this context are not, as the name might suggest, lodgings for tourists. The term "hôtel particulier" is a uniquely Parisian term for what we would call a mansion or urban villa. Hôtels originated in Paris as residences and fortresses for the very rich. In the Middle Ages they had lots of defensive features including exterior, often **crenellated walls** (walls with notches on top) to protect interior buildings, huge **wooden gates**, and many **towers and turrets**.

Growth and Development

During the Middle Ages, as France became more unified, Paris grew from a small settlement on the banks of the Seine to the capital of and largest city in France. At the time Clovis I made his capital in Paris, the population was around **20,000**. It reached a high of about 200,000 before the Black Death in the mid-1300's decimated much of the population and reduced the size of the city back to less than 100,000. By 1500, the population had grown to around **200,000** again.

Paris was protected by two successive sets of **city walls,** built first by Philippe II between 1190 and 1210 and extended to the north by Charles V in 1365. Over time "faubourgs" (suburbs) developed beyond the walls. The city limits from this time are still reflected in major street names which change where the streets once passed through the city gates (ie. rue Saint-Honoré becomes rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré).

Middle Ages Paris - Growth and Development

Ile de la Cité

Geography was the main determinant of growth and development patterns. The **Ile de la Cité** was developed first because it was on solid bedrock as opposed to the mud flats on the surrounding river banks. There were 15 churches on the Ile de la Cité by the 14th century. The king was also located there in the Palais de la Cité (now partially surviving as the Conciergerie).
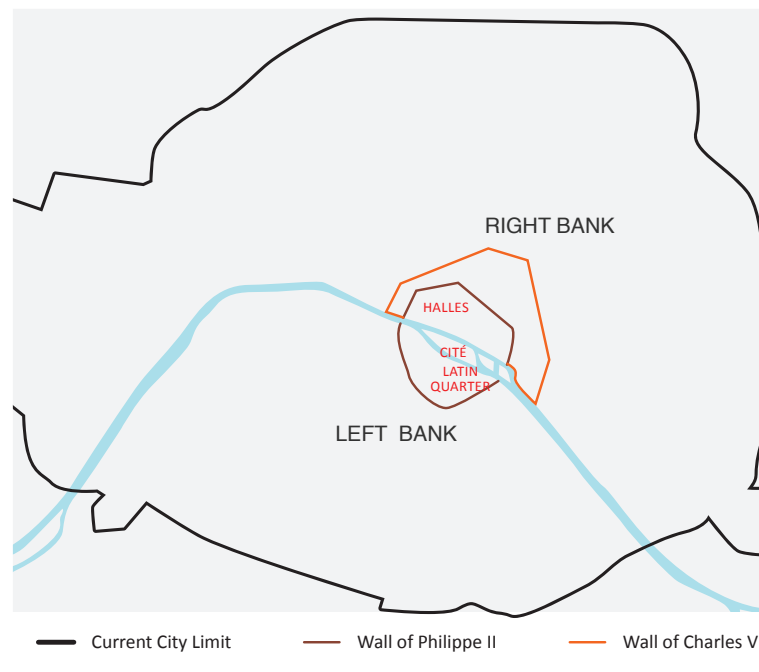

Place de
l'Hôtel de Ville

Commerce developed on the **Right Bank** (north side of the river) because the river was wider there. Goods were unloaded at what is now the **place de l'Hôtel de Ville** and the Right Bank developed around this area. Docks and quays were built along the river banks to facilitate unloading. A major market was established a few blocks from the river at **Les Halles** and a number of important enterprises — cabinet makers, butchers, bankers — were located in the area. Some street names today still reflect where these businesses were located.
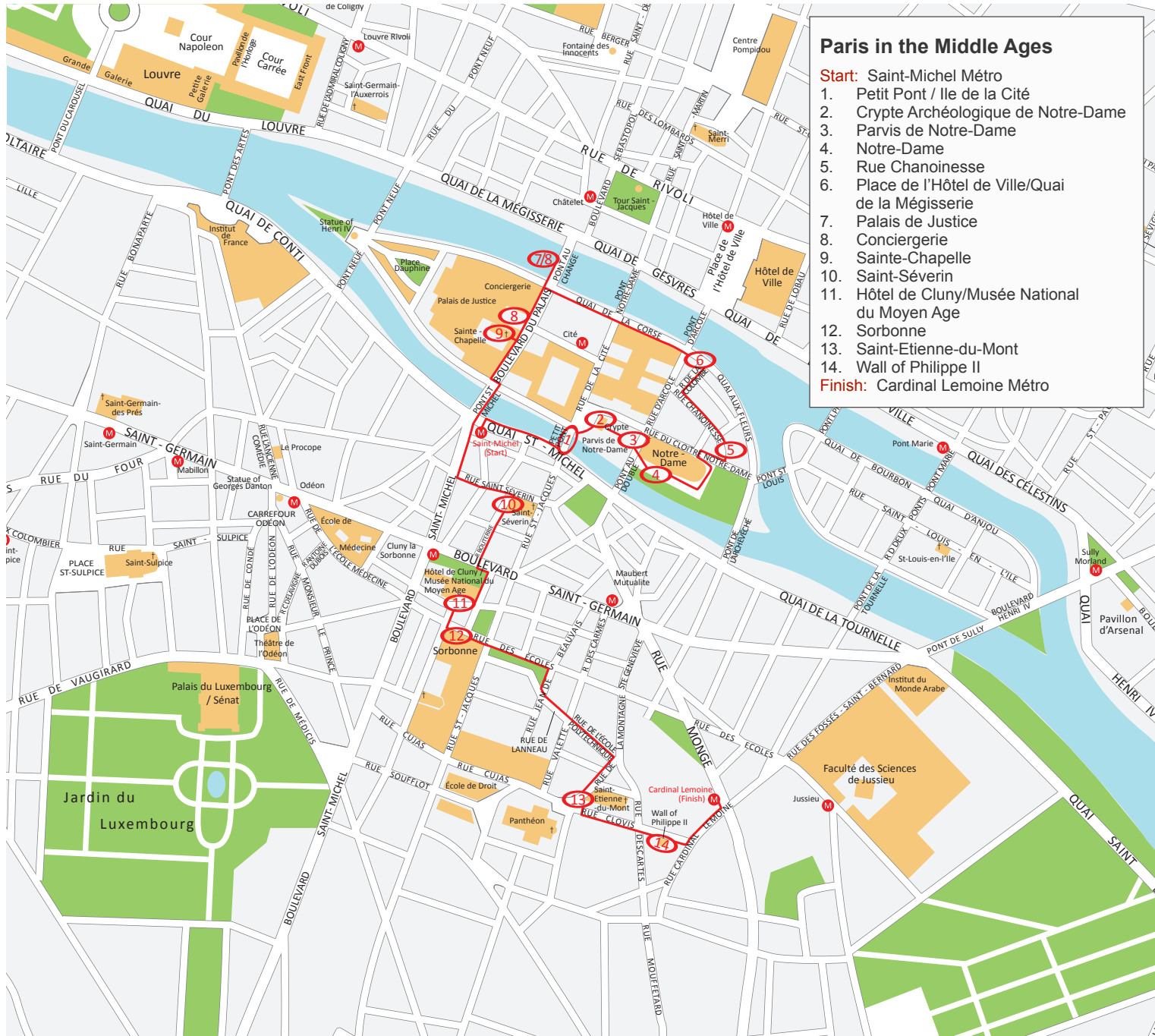

Université de Paris

The **Université de Paris** was established on the **Left Bank** in 1215. The area surrounding the university came to be known as the **Latin Quarter** because students, who were from many different countries, studied and communicated with each other and their teachers in Latin.

Paris in the Middle Ages

Start: Saint-Michel Métro
1. Petit Pont / Ile de la Cité
2. Crypte Archéologique de Notre-Dame
3. Parvis de Notre-Dame
4. Notre-Dame
5. Rue Chanoinesse
6. Place de l'Hôtel de Ville/Quai de la Mégisserie
7. Palais de Justice
8. Conciergerie
9. Sainte-Chapelle
10. Saint-Séverin
11. Hôtel de Cluny/Musée National du Moyen Age
12. Sorbonne
13. Saint-Etienne-du-Mont
14. Wall of Philippe II

Finish: Cardinal Lemoine Métro

Logistics

Time and Distance: This is a relatively short walk, only about **2 miles**, but there are lots of places to spend time. Visits to Notre-Dame, the Conciergerie, and Sainte-Chapelle can easily take two hours or more. Somewhat shorter visits to the Crypte Archéologique, Saint-Séverin, the Musée National du Moyen Age (Middle Ages Museum) in the Hôtel de Cluny, and Saint-Etienne-du-Mont will take at least another hour and a half. That's why this walking tour can easily take **4-5 hours.**

When to Go: The best days to take this walk are Wednesday through Monday because the Middle Ages museum (well worth a visit) is closed on Tuesday. Saint-Etienne-du-Mont opens at noon on Monday and is closed between 12:15 PM and 2:30 PM on Saturday and Sunday. Time your visit there accordingly — the interior of the church is well worth seeing. Generally, it's better to do the first part of this walk in the morning before the major sights get too crowded.

Helpful Hint: Consider buying a Paris Museum Pass for this walking tour. Admissions to all of the sights on this walk will cost 32 euros. That's the price of a two day Pass. If you visit a couple of other sites the day before or after this walk, you'll save money **and** you won't have to stand in ticket lines. You will still have to stand in some lines to pass through security, but avoiding ticket lines is a major time saver on this particular walk. You can buy the Pass online before you leave home or at the tobacco shop at 5 rue du Palais on the Ile de la Cité.(www.parismuseumpass.com)

Start

*From the **Saint-Michel Métro** station, as you face the river, turn right and walk along the river to the Petit Pont, the first stop on this walking tour.*

Buildings and Monuments

1. Petit Pont/Ile de la Cité

Paris originated on the **Ile de la Cité** at the intersection of the Seine River and its main north-south crossing at the **Petit Pon**t and Grand Pont (now the Pont Notre-Dame). The spot where the Petit Pont stands today is the narrowest point in the river, an obvious place for a major north-south crossing. The Parisii, a Celtic-Gaulic tribe, settled on the Ile de la Cité around the 3rd century BC. They were part of a larger Gaulic civilization that at its height encompassed most of what is now France and part of Spain. Their civilization lasted for nearly 300 years until they were conquered by the Romans in 52 BC.

As you head from the bridge onto the Ile de la Cité you'll see steps on your right heading into the Crypte Archéologique.

2. Crypte Archéologique de Notre-Dame

The **Crypte Archéologique** under the plaza in front of Notre-Dame contains remnants of the Roman civilization that succeeded the Gauls. Among other things, the Crypte contains pieces of the **Roman wall** built to protect the inhabitants of Paris who retreated to the island for protection as the Roman empire declined and Paris was ravaged by Germanic invasions. The wall was constructed of debris taken from Roman buildings and monuments the invaders had destroyed in the main Roman town center on the Left Bank. Immediately in front of the Crypte, rue de la Cité and its extensions north along rue Saint-Martin and south along rue Saint-Jacques were once part of the old Roman "cardo", one of two main north-south roads through Paris during Roman times.
(www.notredamedeparis.fr/Les-Tours-et-la-Crypte; Tu-Su 10-6, 4 €)

As you emerge from the Crypte walk into the plaza in front of Notre-Dame.

3. Parvis de Notre-Dame

The **Parvis** (plaza) in front of Notre-Dame was once only about a quarter of the size it is now. It was the center of medieval Paris and remains **"point zero"** in Paris today. A bronze plaque in the plaza marks the spot where distances from Paris to all other cities in France are measured. The crush of humanity one usually experiences in the plaza is typical of the **crowds**, from pilgrims to pickpockets, who have frequented the plaza since medieval times. There is a **statue of Charlemagne** on the south side of the plaza. He was a fierce warrior who expanded his base in what is now France to include much of western and central Europe. He is also credited with promoting a rebirth of learning and culture during the course of his forty-seven year reign.

Now it's time to explore the cathedral itself.
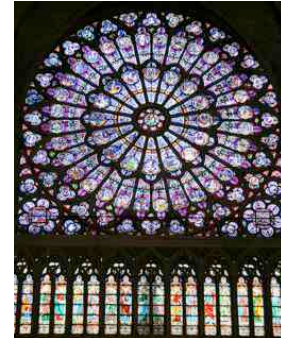
4. Notre-Dame

Notre-Dame (1163-1330) is the spiritual and architectural center of France. In its grandeur and elegance it epitomizes the dominance of the Catholic church during the Middle Ages. It is located on the site of an earlier Roman temple to Jupiter and a 6th century cathedral, Saint-Etienne (Saint Stephen). Maurice de Sully, the bishop of Paris, decided to replace the older cathedral with the larger and grander Notre-Dame at a time when Paris was coming into its own, not only as a capital city, but also as a religious and intellectual center. The scale of Notre-Dame exceeded all earlier churches in France including Saint- Denis, the first Gothic cathedral ever built. Notre-Dame was no doubt built at least in part to compete with Saint-Denis. Notre-Dame's design is a perfect example of **early Gothic** architecture with high towers and a spire, pointed arches, flying buttresses, ribbed vaults (ceilings) and rose windows. There are so many things to see in Notre-Dame, it's hard to know where to begin. Here are some of the highlights.

Starting with the cathedral's facade, stop to observe the carvings on the three **entrance portals**. From the left, the **Portal of the Coronation** focuses on the coronation and burial of the Virgin Mary. The center **Portal of the Last Judgement** shows the resurrection of the dead, the judgement by Saint-Michel, and Christ surrounded by two angels as well as kneeling figures of the Virgin and John the Baptist. To the far right, the **Portal of Sainte Anne**, originally created for the older cathedral Notre-Dame replaced, tells the story of the parents of the Virgin, Sainte Anne and Saint Joachim. In this portal, carvings show the Virgin attended by the cathedral's two original patrons, Bishop Sully and King Louis VII. The carvings on the portals are incredible works of art just as they are. Imagine how glorious they must have been in their original state when they were painted and set off against a background of gold. Above the portals is the **Gallery of Kings**. The statues, representing the kings of Judea and Israel, had their heads lopped off during the Revolution when revolutionaries mistook them for kings of France. The heads on these statues are replacements.   A **statue of the Virgin and Christ Child** sits on top of the Gallery of Kings.

Inside the cathedral, sit for a moment just to absorb the building's huge size and soaring height. Of course, the cathedral's **three rose windows** are not to be missed. In the **west window**, the Virgin Mary is surrounded by kings, virtues and vices, months of the year and signs of the Zodiac. In the **north window**, the Virgin is encircled by scenes from the Old Testament. Christ is at the center of the **southern window**, surrounded by the twelve apostles and other biblical figures. As you work your way around the interior of the cathedral, be sure to stop and admire at least a few of Notre-Dame's thirty-seven **side chapels**. Leaving the building, turn left and walk around the cathedral, stopping to appreciate the **transept entrance facades.** The rear of the building is the best place to observe the cathedral's famous **flying buttresses**. Many of the "buttresses" are actually gargoyle-capped drain spouts. (www.cathedraledeparis.com; cathedral 8:00-6:45, towers 10-5:30, Apr-Sep to 6:30 and to 11 in Jul-Aug, treasury Mo-Fr 9:30-6, Sa 9:30-6:30, Su 1:30-6:30; cathedral free, towers 8 €, treasury 3 €)

After admiring the cathedral's northern transept entrance facade, cross rue du Cloître Notre-Dame, turn right and walk past the souvenir shops for half a block; turn left on to rue Chanoinesse into the considerably more peaceful Ancient Cloister Quarter.

5. Rue Chanoinesse

The Ancient Cloister Quarter, a section of streets just north of Notre-Dame, was once a cloistered community where clergy associated with Notre-Dame lived. With its narrow medieval streets, it provides a glimpse of what much of the Ile de la Cité was like during the Middle Ages. **10 rue Chanoinesse** was the site of one of the best known tales of medieval romantic love. Canon Fulbert lived here with his lovely and intelligent niece **Héloîse**. To tutor his niece, he hired **Pierre Abélard** (1079-1142), a handsome philosopher and teacher who was in the vanguard of medieval Scholasticism, arguing that reason leads to faith (not the other way around as most traditional scholars believed). Abélard acknowledged that he and Héloîse "dealt more in kisses than in words." Héloîse became pregnant and the two lovers were forced to marry. Héloise was sent off to a convent. Canon Fulbert took his revenge on Abélard by having him mugged and castrated. Abélard then retreated to a monastery. A famous series of letters testifies to the enduring love and respect Héloîse and Abélard held for each other. In the 19th century, the two lovers were finally reunited at Pierre Lachaise Cemetery.

Continue along rue Chanoinesse; just before you reach the end of the street turn right down the narrow rue de la Colombe toward the Seine.

6. Place de l'Hôtel de Ville / Quai de la Mégisserie

As you reach the Seine, look across to the Right Bank and the **place de l'Hotel de Ville**, once known as the place de la Grève. "Grève" in French means a flat area on the bank of a river or ocean. During the Middle Ages, these banks were in fact flat, creating a prime spot for a harbor. As the harbor grew, commerce and industry grew around it. The place de la Grève was also the site of celebrations, executions, and strikes for many centuries.

Moving west along the river you can also see the **quai de la Mégisserie** (tannery) across the river. In the Middle Ages, one would most likely have smelled the slaughterhouses and tanneries well before seeing them.

Continue walking west along the river bank following the quai aux Fleurs and the quai de la Corse; when you reach the boulevard du Palais turn right and walk out onto the Pont au Change for the best view of the Conciergerie which is part of the Palais de Justice.

7. Palais de Justice

Today's **Palais de Justice** was known as the **Palais de la Cité** in medieval times. It includes the Conciergerie and Sainte-Chapelle, the next two stops on this walk, as well as a number of other buildings. The area has been home to some type of government institution since Roman times when the governor's residence was located there. Clovis, the first king of France, made the site the center of government for his kingdom but Clovis' early medieval successors tended to move around a lot. During this era, the Palais area retained its royal status and some administrative buildings, but was less important politically until Philippe II "Augustus" finally settled down and established his court there in the 12th century. From the 12th to the late 14th century, the Palais was France's royal palace. The Conciergerie and Sainte-Chapelle survive from this era. Charles V abandoned the Palais for the Louvre at the end of the 14th century. After Charles V moved out, the Palais still held many royal administrative offices and judicial facilities. Today, most of the site is still devoted to France's judiciary, housed in buildings dating primarily from the 19th century.

Now focus on the Conciergerie.

8. Conciergerie

The **Conciergerie,** the forbidding fortress on the northeast corner of the Palais de Justice complex, takes its name from the French word "concierge", the royal caretaker who took control of the palace facilities after Charles V moved to the Louvre. The towers along the palace's northern side were built by three different kings. Starting from the west, Louis IX "Saint-Louis" built the Tour Bonbec in the mid 13th century. Philippe IV "The Fair" built the twin towers in the middle, the Tour d'Argent and Tour de César, in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. And Jean II "The Good" built the square Tour de l'Horloge (clock tower) in the mid 14th century. His son Charles V installed the city's first public clock in the tower in 1370.

Return from the bridge and walk back to the Tour de l'Horloge; stop to admire the clock before proceeding along the boulevard du Palais to the entrance to the Conciergerie on the right. Several medieval structures remain inside the building.

The Salle des Gardes (guard room) is immediately behind the Tour d'Argent and Tour de César. It leads to the enormous Salle des Gens d'Armes, Europe's largest surviving secular structure. This room, built during the reign of Philippe IV as a dining room for the palace staff, was capable of holding 2,000 people. Just north of the Salle des Gens d'Armes, Jean II added the huge palace kitchen with four giant fireplaces, one in each corner. During the French Revolution, the dining room and kitchen were used as huge jail cells for poorer prisoners. Wealthier prisoners such as Robespierre and, of course Marie Antoinette, paid for and received private cells. (www.conciergerie.monuments-nationaux.fr ; daily Mar-Oct 9:30-6, Nov-Feb 9:00-5; 7 €)

Turn right as you emerge from the Conciergerie and you'll find the entrance to Sainte-Chapelle a little further along the street on the right; most likely you'll also find a line out to the street; the first line is for security so you have to do it; skip the next line, for tickets, if you have a Museum Pass.

9. Sainte-Chapelle

Sainte-Chapelle (1245-1218) was built by Louis IX "Saint-Louis," for his daily devotions and to house relics purchased from the Byzantine emperor Baldwin II, including fragments of Christ's crown of thorns and cross. These relics are now in the Treasury in Notre-Dame. Sainte-Chapelle was perhaps the most spectacular architectural achievement of medieval Paris, so beautiful that some called it a "gateway to Heaven." The church, built in the **Rayonnant Gothic** style with thin masonry-framed walls and tall narrow columns, is almost twice as tall as it is wide. Despite its height, Sainte-Chapelle has remarkably little buttressing. Iron was used to strengthen the structure. Stones are tied together with iron hooks and two bands of iron encircle the entire upper chapel, hidden in the masonry and disguised in the window tracery. There are two chapels, a **lower chapel** for the king's servants and household, and an **upper chapel** for the king and royal family.

The lower chapel is rather dark, but its red, blue, and gold paint scheme, redone as part of a late 19th century restoration, makes it feel quite rich and elegant. The upper chapel held the reliquary shrine. Louis IX could access the chapel via a passageway leading directly from his bedroom. In the upper chapel, the lightness of the structure allowed most of the walls to be replaced with 85 soaring arched stained glass window panels. They are magnificent. Two-thirds of the windows are still originals, the oldest stained glass windows in Paris. The windows depict stories from the Bible and also include references to the accomplishments of Louis IX. (www.sainte-chapelle.monuments-nationaux.fr;daily, Mar-Oct 9:30-6, Nov-Feb 9:00-5, 8 €)

Turn right on to the boulevard du Palais; cross the Pont Saint-Michel; continue on boulevard Saint-Michel for a block; a left turn on rue Saint-Séverin and a right turn two blocks later onto rue des Prêtres Saint-Séverin will bring you to the entrance of Saint-Séverin.

10. Saint-Séverin

Saint-Séverin (1220-1495) was built as the parish church for the Left Bank. It is an example of the elaborately decorated **Flamboyant Gothic** style with decorative vaulting, realistic sculptures, and flame motifs in its window tracery. The construction of the main aisles and double ambulatory is especially unique. The pillars and vaulting combine to create the appearance of a "palm grove." The church is also unusual in that it has no transept and is almost as wide as it is long. Over the old main entrance on the north side under the bell tower, there is a bas-relief of Saint-Martin of Tours. Since he always appears on horseback, he was seen as a protector of travelers. During the Middle Ages, when starting out or returning from long voyages, it was customary to attach a horse shoe to Saint-Martin's image for good luck. The open cloister-like area on the south side of the church was once a graveyard. (www.saint-severin.com ;Mo-Sa 11-7:30, Su 9-8:30)

Turn left as you leave the church; continue to the busy boulevard Saint-Germain; turn left to rue Saint-Jacques; turn right, cross the street, and turn right again; at the next corner, across the street to the left you 'll find the entrance into the medieval-style garden behind the Hôtel de Cluny; after pausing to enjoy the garden, stay to the left of the building; take a right at the corner and you will find the entrance to the museum.

11. Hôtel de Cluny/Musée National du Moyen Age

The **Hôtel de Cluny** (1485-1498) was built for Abbot Jacques d'Amboise as a residence where he and other abbots from the wealthy Cluny monastery in Burgundy could reside when they were in Paris. Its architecture retains lots of Middle Ages military imagery including crenelated (notched) walls and pyramidal turrets with conical roofs. However, these features were designed more to display the abbots' wealth and power than to protect them. The decoration on the portals, windows and towers is Flamboyant Gothic. There are remnants of old Roman baths next to building. In the 19th century, the Hôtel de Cluny was bought by a wealthy collector of Middle Ages art and eventually acquired by the state. It is now the **Musée National du Moyen Age**. The beautiful "Lady and the Unicorn" tapestries in the museum are especially worth seeing. (www.musee-moyenage.fr ; We-Mo 9:15-5:45, 8.50 €)

Cross the street in front of the museum; walk through the place Paul Painlevé; in front of you, across the rue des Écoles you'll see the Sorbonne.

12. Sorbonne

The Université de Paris and its colleges, particularly the **Collège de la Sorbonne,** have been at the heart of the Left Bank since the Middle Ages. The Sorbonne was founded by Robert de Sorbon in 1253 as a place for poor theology students to live and study. It was one of the first significant colleges founded as part of the Université de Paris which itself was one of the first universities in Europe. The word **university** comes from the Latin "universitas" meaning a corporation or guild. Most medieval universities started as guilds of either students or teachers. The Université de Paris began as a teachers' guild. Unfortunately, none of the original medieval university buildings remain today. The complex was rebuilt first in 1626 and again in 1821. In 1970 the university was divided into 13 different universities. Today the Sorbonne buildings house the administration of the Université de Paris and four subsidiary universities.

Cross rue des Écoles; turn left and walk along rue des Écoles to rue Jean de Beauvais; turn right then left onto the narrow rue de Lanneau which becomes rue de l'École Polytechnique after a block; continue to the charning place Larue; turn right onto rue de la Montaigne Sainte-Geneviève; follow the street up and around to the front of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont.

13. Saint-Etienne-du-Mont

Saint-Etienne-du-Mont (1492-1626) is a good place to visit as you approach the end of this walking tour. Its history dates back to the early Middle Ages; its architecture points forward, showing the transition from Gothic to Renaissance and on to Baroque. This charming and rather unusual church was built as an expansion for the parish church of the abbey of Sainte-Geneviève. The original parish church was destroyed to make way for a street. The rest of the abbey is now part of the Lycée Henri IV across the street. The abbey developed around a church founded in 508 by Clovis, the first king of France and a convert to Christianity. It was dedicated to Sainte-Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris, whose prayers are said to have kept Atilla the Hun from attacking the city and whose relics are now in Saint-Etienne-du-Mont. During the Middle Ages, powerful and wealthy abbeys such as Sainte-Geneviève ringed the city, protected by their own walls and independent of royal and city authority. The exterior of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont has a Gothic structure and a rather strange looking Renaissance/Baroque facade. It was once symmetrical with the abbey church next to it.

The interior of the church has Gothic pointed arches in the choir, round Renaissance arches in the nave and transept, and a Flamboyant Gothic star vault over the crossing. The church features the only remaining screen of its type in Paris dividing the choir area from the nave. The screen (called a rood screen) has very fine Renaissance decoration. The stained glass windows in the ambulatory are of both Gothic and Renaissance origin. In addition to looking at these windows, be sure to see the series of twelve small but exquisitely beautiful stained glass windows in the Charnier Cloister at the very rear of the church. The windows were recreated in the early 18th century from pieces of the original twenty-two windows. (www.saintetiennedumont.fr ; Mo 12-7:30, Tu-Fr 8:45-7:30, Sa-Su 8:45-12:15 and 2:30-7:45)

Turn left as you leave the church and left again onto rue Clovis; after you cross rue Descartes you'll see a small sign beside a remnant of Philippe II's wall across the street on the right.

14. Wall of Philippe II

During the Middle Ages when Paris was a walled city, the **walls of Philippe II "Augustus"** (1190/1210) included a wall to the north to protect the economic centers on the Right Bank from attacks by the English and a wall to the south on the Left Bank to protect intellectual centers and encourage development. A remnant of this Left Bank wall can be seen here on rue Clovis. The medieval city walls were about 33 feet high with towers and gates. They were constructed by building two parallel walls and filling the space between with rubble. As the city grew, some houses were built right next to the walls with part of the wall integrated into the building as can be seen here.

Finish

*To reach the **Cardinal Lemoine Métro** station, continue to rue Cardinal Lemoine and turn left; the Métro station will be a block down on your left.*

*Alternatively, retrace your steps back to rue Descartes and take a left; in about four blocks, rue Descartes becomes **rue Mouffetard**. It's one of the oldest and liveliest streets in Paris with many food shops, restaurants and cafes — a fun place to relax after a day of touring.*