

La Belle France small group escorted history tours for seniors

Reading List

The History of Modern France: From the Revolution to the War on Terror

by Jonathan Fenby

With the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815, the next two centuries for France would be tumultuous. Bestselling historian and political commentator Jonathan Fenby provides an expert and riveting journey through this period as he recounts and analyses the extraordinary sequence of events of this period from the end of the First Revolution through two others, a return of Empire, three catastrophic wars with Germany, periods of stability and hope interspersed with years of uncertainty and high tensions. As her cross-Channel neighbour Great Britain would equally suffer, France was to undergo the wrenching loss of colonies in the post-Second World War as the new modern world we know today took shape. Her attempts to become the leader of the European union is a constant struggle, as was her lack of support for America in the two Gulf Wars of the past twenty years. Alongside this came huge social changes and cultural landmarks but also fundamental questioning of what this nation, which considers itself exceptional, really stood - and stands - for. That saga and those questions permeate the France of today, now with an implacable enemy to face in the form of Islamic extremism which so bloodily announced itself this year in Paris. Fenby will detail every event, every struggle and every outcome across this expanse of 200 years. It will prove to be the definitive guide to understanding France.

How the French Think: An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People

by Sudhir Hazareesingh

Sudhir Hazareesingh's *How the French Think* is a warm yet incisive exploration of the French intellectual tradition, and its exceptional place in a nation's identity and lifestyle

Why are the French an exceptional nation? Why do they think they are so exceptional? An important reason is that in France intellectual activity is regarded not just as the preserve of the thinking elite but for almost everyone. French thought can sometimes be austere and often opaque, yet it is undeniably bold and innovative, and driven by a relentless quest for the regeneration of humanity. Sudhir Hazareesingh traces its tumultuous history in an enormously enjoyable and highly original manner, showing how the French ways of thought and life connect. This will be one of the most revealing books written about them - or any other European country - for years.

Sudhir Hazareesingh was born in Mauritius. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and has been a Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Balliol College, Oxford, since 1990. Among his books are *The Legend of Napoleon* (Granta, 2004) and *Le MytheGaullien* (Gallimard, 2010). He won the Prix du Memorial d'Ajaccio and the Prix de la Fondation Napoleon for the first of these, and a Prix d'Histoire du Senat for the second.

Lower Normandy: French Impressions

by George East

The sixth in the popular French Impressions series, taking the form of a personal travel narrative exploring the three départements of Lower Normandy. As well as reviewing more than a hundred towns and villages and tourist attractions, the book looks at the historical events and peoples which helped form the unique character of this part of France. The book also features the recipes and background to many traditional and unusual Norman dishes. In all, a complete celebration of one of Frances most beautiful and fascinating areas.

From the D-Day Beaches to the birthplace of William the Conqueror, George East's unique style paints a gloriously coloured picture of some of the most visited and intriguing parts of Normandy. Learn about where your favourite cheeses come from, along with recipes for exciting and traditional dishes.

Cambridge Illustrated History of France

by Colin Jones

In a tour de force, Colin Jones gives a gripping, superbly and intelligently illustrated account of the political, social and cultural history of France, placing an innovatory emphasis on the impact of regionalism, class, gender and race in French heritage. Ranging from prehistoric menhirs to the Pompidou Centre, from Louis XIV's Versailles to twentieth-century highrises, from Marie Antoinette to Marie Claire, The Cambridge Illustrated History of France is host to lively and penetrating new insights that take us through the shaping of France from the earliest times to the brink of a new millennium. Combining superb illustration with outstanding scholarship, the diversity of the French heritage--scientific and artistic, national and regional--is explored with an engrossing and accessible style. Special features on places, people and events, a glossary, and a further reading section enhance this engaging book that will appeal to history buffs and students of French history and culture. Colin Jones is also the author of the Longman Companion to the French Revolution and The Cultural Atlas of France.

France: A History: from Gaul to de Gaulle

by John Julius Norwich

I can still feel, as if it were yesterday, the excitement of my first Channel crossing (as a child of nearly 7) in September 1936; the regiment of porters, smelling asphyxiatingly of garlic in their blue-green blousons; the raucous sound all around me of spoken French; the immense fields of Normandy strangely devoid of hedges; then the Gare du Nord at twilight, the policemen with their képis and their little snow-white batons; and my first sight of the Eiffel Tower... This book is written in the belief that the average English-speaking man or woman has remarkably little knowledge of French history. We may know a bit about Napoleon or Joan of Arc or Louis XIV, but for most of us that's about it. In my own three schools we were taught only about the battles we won: Crécy and Poitiers, Agincourt and Waterloo. The rest was silence. So here is my attempt to fill in the blanks...

John Julius Norwich (at 88) has finally written the book he always wanted to write, the extremely colourful story of the country he loves best.

From frowning Roman generals and belligerent Gallic chieftains, to Charlemagne (hated by generations of French children taught that he invented schools) through Marie Antoinette and the storming of the Bastille to Vichy, the Resistance and beyond, FRANCE is packed with heroes and villains, adventures and battles, romance and revolution. Full of memorable stories and racy anecdotes, this is the perfect introduction to the country that has inspired the rest of the world to live, dress, eat -- and love better.

A year in Provence

by Peter Mayle

Peter Mayle and his wife did what most of us only imagine doing when they made their long-cherished dream of a life abroad a reality: throwing caution to the wind, they bought a glorious two hundred year-old farmhouse in the Lubéron Valley and began a new life. In a year that begins with a marathon lunch and continues with a host of gastronomic delights, they also survive the unexpected and often hilarious curiosities of rural life. From mastering the local accent and enduring invasion by bumbling builders, to discovering the finer points of boules and goat-racing, all the earthy pleasures of Provençal life are conjured up in this enchanting portrait.

Becoming Bourgeois: Love, Kinship, and Power in Provincial France, 1670–1880

by Christopher H Johnson

Becoming Bourgeois traces the fortunes of three French families in the municipality of Vannes, in Brittany—Galles, Jollivet, and Le Ridant—who rose to prominence in publishing, law, the military, public administration, and intellectual pursuits over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Revisiting complex issues of bourgeois class formation from the perspective of the interior lives of families, Christopher H. Johnson argues that the most durable and socially advantageous links forging bourgeois ascent were those of kinship. Economic success, though certainly derived from the virtues of hard work and intelligent management, was always underpinned by marriage strategies and the diligent intervention of influential family members.

Johnson's examination of hundreds of personal letters opens up a whole world: the vicissitudes of courtship; the centrality of marriage; the depths of conjugal love; the routines of pregnancy and the drama of childbirth; the practices of child rearing and education; the powerful place of siblings; the role of kin in advancing the next generation; tragedy and deaths; the enormous contributions of women in all aspects of becoming bourgeois; and the pleasures of gathering together in intimate soirées, grand balls, country houses, and civic and political organizations. Family love bound it all together, and this is ultimately what this book is about, as four generations of rather ordinary provincial people capture our hearts.

The Bayeux Tapestry

by Simone Betrand and Sylvette Lemagnen

The Bayeux Tapestry is one of the most famous works of art of Medieval Western Europe. Unique of its kind, its name is linked with the town where it has been kept for nine hundred years. It relates the story of the conquest of England in 1066 by William of Normandy, who since then has been known as William the Conqueror. Contemporaneous with the events it describes, it depicts more than 1500 figures, horses, animals of all kinds, ships, castles ... Embroidered in colored wool, They stand out from a background of linen cloth 70 meters long. The daily life of the period unrolls before our eyes adding extra interest to the historical narrative.

Is Paris Burning?

by Larry Collins and Dominique La Pierre

"'Is Paris burning?' was a question that Hitler persistently put to his commander in the French capitol during August 1944. Thus begins the absorbing account of the liberation of Paris. You will be moved by the descriptions and want to see Paris to witness what history allowed to survive. Is Paris Burning? is researched with meticulous and riveting detail, well narrated and certain to keep you intrigued."

All the Light We Cannot See

by Anthony Doerr

A beautiful, stunningly ambitious novel about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II, from the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr. The book won the Pulitzer Price in 2015 for Fiction.

D-Day Landing Beaches: The Guide

by Georges Bernage

This spectacular, large format, full color, new book is quite simply the most impressive book of its type we have seen. Packed with over 200 photographs, maps and charts, the book is divided into the sectors associated with the Normandy landings in 1944.

Paris to the Past: Traveling through French History by Train

by Ina Caro

In one of the most inventive travel books in years, Ina Caro invites readers on twenty-five one-day train trips that depart from Paris and transport us back through seven hundred years of French history. Whether taking us to Orléans to evoke the miraculous visions of Joan of Arc, to Versailles to experience the flamboyant achievements of Louis XIV, or to the Place de la Concorde to witness the beheading of Marie Antoinette, Caro animates history with her lush descriptions of architectural splendors and tales of court intrigue. Organizing her destinations chronologically from twelfth-century Saint-Denis to the nineteenth-century Restoration at Chantilly, Caro appeals not only to the casual tourist aboard the Metro or the TGV but also to the armchair reader of Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*. Caro's passion for and knowledge of France—its soaring cathedrals, enthralling history, and sumptuous cuisine—are so impressive that *Paris to the Past* promises to become one of the classic guidebooks of our time.
