

Rome-heavy Weekend in Paris – James Heath – Attachment A

My partner has always wanted to see Paris, but aside from a family holiday to Australia nearly two decades ago, and our trips to Rome and Sweden, she hasn't been outside the country. So, to celebrate two years of being together, off we went to Paris on the Eurostar. I think it took us longer to get to the St. Pancras from the Isle of Wight than it took to get from St. Pancras to Paris.

We had several visits planned, places we both wanted to see. Unsurprisingly, mine were heavily Rome focused; the Gallo-Roman Baths that held the Musée de Cluny, the Musée du Louvre, the Bibliothèque National de France, and the Arènes de Lutèce were my choices. For reference, Charlotte's choices were Arc de Triomphe, the Champs-Élysées, the Eiffel Tower, the Opera Garnier, Sainte-Chapelle, the Panthéon, and the Moulin Rouge.

Putting my itinerary creation skills to good use, I worked out our Saturday and Sunday visits to include all these (we had a lazy night in at the hotel on Friday night, and spent the Monday morning before our Eurostar back to London at Westfield Les Halles). We managed to see everything and have enough breaks, something I didn't include when I took Charlotte to Rome...

So, the first ancient site we saw, but isn't one listed above, was the Luxor Obelisk at Place de la Concorde (*Fig.1*). One of a pair (the other still being in Luxor), the Obelisk was erected in 1836, with its gold-leaf cap being added by Yves Saint Laurent in 1998. Having strolled down the Champs-Élysées from the Arc de Triomphe to reach the Place de la Concorde, and having stopped to take a few photos of the Obelisk, we were then off to see Sainte-Chapelle, the Panthéon, Arènes de Lutèce, and Musée de Cluny. It all went pretty smoothly, aside from the long time we spent queuing at Sainte-Chapelle, you would think I'd have learnt to always pre-book. When we reached the remains of the Amphitheatre, they were closed as the weekend we were there was the weekend that Storm Ciaran hit Paris. As the



Figure 1: The Luxor obelisk



Figure 2: The remains of the amphitheatre in Paris

Amphitheatre is now in a public park, the local authority had closed the park due to the winds causing a health and safety risk with the tree branches. So, the only photos of it I managed to get were through the locked gate (see *Fig.2*).



Figure 3: The frigidarium at Musée de Cluny

We managed to get a quick look in the Musée de Cluny on our way back towards the Eiffel Tower, but we got there around closing time, so only had 30 minutes maximum for me to go and see the remains of the Frigidarium (Fig.3) that made up the hall being used for the exhibition space. I would like to go back and see it when the archaeological area is open.

Don't tell any Romans, but we had dinner at Chez Pippo, an Italian restaurant a few streets away from the Eiffel Tower, and the carbonara gnocchi I had might have been one of the best carbonara I've tried. We could just about see the top of the Tower for its customary sparkle on the hour every hour after sunset.

Now, our second day was more my style; The Louvre and the National Library either side of Opera Garnier. The Louvre currently has most of its Roman Galleries closed until an indeterminate date in 2024. Presumably before they host the Olympics, but even with only a few galleries on display, there was more than plenty of items on display! Though I would have to return to see the mosaics and frescoes that were not on display in November 2023, as it was only statues on display at that time. We started in the Greek section and moved into the Roman rooms. The Greek Galleries consisted of lots of funerary stele (Fig.4), Greek Inscriptions room, fragments of architecture



Figure 4: A Greek funerary stele



Figure 5: The Velletri Athena

from temples, statue heads of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and then Hellenistic and Roman-era statues like the Venus de Milo and the Velletri Athena (Fig.5). It was obviously wonderful to see the Venus de Milo, and having failed to get to Velletri Museum in the summer of 2018 to see the copy, I was more happy to have seen the original.

Moving into the open Roman Galleries, the highlights include the altar of the Deii Consentes (Fig.6), Antinous Mondragone (Fig.7), statues of various emperors and empresses – Titus, Trajan, Augustus, Antonia, and Plotina, and the busts of Antoninus Pius (Fig.8) and Lucius Verus as Arval Brethren. If you’ve been to the Baths of Diocletain on a trip and seen the casts in the small cloister with the Acts of the Arvals in, this is where the originals reside.



Figure 6: The Altar of Deii Consentes



Figure 7: The Antinous Mondragone



Figure 8: Bust of Antoninus Pius as an Arval Brother



Figure 9: The Grand Cameo of France

The National Library of France has a museum/gallery space on its upper floor, which includes the greatest surviving cameo from the Roman world; the Great Cameo of France (Fig.9). My parents had seen the Gemma Augustea in Vienna’s Art History Museum and taken photos for me, and I thought that looked fairly large, when compared to the small cameos that have survived from necklaces and other pieces of jewellery. The Gemma Augustea is 190mm tall, but the Great Cameo of France is 310mm tall, so considerably bigger! The Great Cameo depicts the dynastic nature of the Julio-Claudian family across 2 levels and captive barbarians in the lowest level. Divus Augustus and the two Drusii are in

the upper section, looking down on Tiberius, Livia, Germanicus, Claudius, Agrippina the Elder, Agrippina the Younger, Nero and Providentia. It is either dated to the reign of Claudius (due to Younger Agrippina's hair), or the reign of Tiberius, celebrating his adoption of his successors In AD 23, mirroring the adoption of himself and Germanicus in AD 4 by Augustus. I think the latter is more likely.

As well as the Great Cameo, there were also other famous cameos, such as the one depicting Valerian and Shapur, and several others, the museum/gallery space had several cabinets with specific themes like *Women's Clothes, Magic, and Sport in Antiquity*. All of these cabinets had a range of Greek, Roman, and some



Figure 10: An ivory Gladiator statuette

Egyptian, items in. From busts, to inscriptions, statuettes to reliefs, and vases to stele. Once we'd

finished in the National Library, it was back to the hotel to get changed and head out to the Moulin Rouge for the late evening show.



Figure 11: The Valerian & Shapur Cameo

I understand that the Musée Carnavalet, dedicated to the history of the city, has several Roman items in, and it is on my list for next time, but this was all the Roman things we had time for this trip. I'll also be adding a return to the Amphitheatre, and to the Louvre, to my next trip too, hopefully both will be fully open by that time.