

The Champs Elysees Avenue In Paris

Contributed by Martyn Davis
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Did you know that the Champs Elysees Avenue is actually the second widest avenue in Europe, and if you start at the Arc de Triomphe, you can then walk all the way down the avenue eventually reaching the Tuileries Gardens.

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The Champs Elysees is without a doubt one of the most prestigious and most famous avenues in the world, and is very popular with the rich and famous for a shopping trip with its luxury specialty shops and fantastic cafes.

{bot_wrgoogle}Its official name is the Avenue des Champs-Elysees and is the broadest in Paris, yet is also actually the second widest in Europe, after the Unirii Boulevard in Bucharest. But this avenue is not just a place for the rich, even though after New York City's Fifth Avenue, the Champs Elysees is the second most expensive strip of real estate in the world with rent being as high as £600,000 or more per year for only a space of around 100 square metres.

No visitor to Paris should miss taking a walk along this beautiful tree lined avenue to soak up the atmosphere, where it plays host to numerous special occasions including the finish of the famous Tour de France, and the military parades held on Bastille Day, which are the largest parades in Europe.

You can no doubt imagine why there are famous names such as Guerlain Parfumerie with its beautiful curved staircase and turn of the century elegance, Laduree tearoom, the Lido, which is famous for its risqué shows and the Louis Vuitton flagship store that all have prominent positions.

Plus there are also chains stores like Gap and Nike, a Häagen-Dazs Ice Cream House, fast food outlets like McDonalds plus banks, car show rooms, hotels, etc, along with some really nice cafes and restaurants.

However, if want to visit the really famous designer stores such as Chanel, Christian Dior, Cartier, etc then you will need to venture off to one of the very fashionable side streets such as the Avenue Montaigne or the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honore, but bear in mind that a lot of stores in Paris are closed on a Sunday.

Now when you look back at the history of the Champs Elysees, up until the 17th century it was originally fields and market gardens until Marie de Medici decided to extend the garden axis of the Palais des Tuileries with an avenue of trees. Then in the later part of the 1600's Andre Le Notre, who designed the gardens at the Chateau de Versailles, designed the avenue so that there was a great view from the Tuileries gardens.

In the 18th century it was lengthened from the Place de la Concorde with its obelisk through to Place Charles de Gaulle, formerly known as Place de l'Etoile, which is now the location of the famous monument, the Arc de Triomphe.

The Champs Elysees now stretches for approximately two kilometres long and had footpaths and street lighting added in around 1828 when the city of Paris took over. Lovely fountains were also added and there have been numerous transitions, with the most recent in 1994, when the paths were widened for the comfort of pedestrians to be further away from the continuous traffic.

So when you are in Paris, why not start at the famous Arc de Triomphe landmark and then walk all the way down the avenue eventually reaching the Tuileries Gardens, which are a part of the famous museum called The Louvre. Yet when your legs are feeling tired and your feet hurt, it can be nice to relax with a coffee or bite to eat on one of the many cafe terraces dotted along the Avenue des Champs Elysees, but these can be rather expensive, although venturing off to one of the bistros or restaurants in a side street can provide far better value for money, or alternatively if you just feel peckish, then there are even mobile snack bars and stalls serving beverages and burgers, etc that will not burn a hole in your pocket.

The Champs Elysees is also great on a nice day, but with not much coverage, can be a real drudge when it is pouring with rain, although for us the most magical time is at Christmas when the committee get together and adorn the avenue with lots of lights.

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