

3 Hour Marne River and Bois de Vincennes Tour

On this tour I'll meet you at the RER A station Le Parc de Saint-Maur in my town of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, located just outside of Paris. I'll meet you at the RER A station with our bikes and then we'll be off. This is a timed tour of 3 hours in duration (though for a supplemental fee you can add more touring time). I have a general itinerary for this tour but how much of the itinerary we complete will depend on your cycling pace and how often or how long you stop for breaks. You can cycle at whatever pace you are comfortable with and take as many breaks as you'd like (stop at a café for a drink, stop for pastries or just stop to relax and take in the beauty of your surroundings). Or you can cycle as fast as you'd like and maybe we'll see more than what's covered in the general itinerary. Use your three hours of touring time any way you'd like. You're the boss!

I'll give you the logistics of the itinerary I have designed and below you'll see the photos of the sites you'll see on this tour following my itinerary. You may see more or less than shown in the photos based on your cycling speed and breaks taken but no matter what your cycling speed may be and how much of the itinerary you may complete you will be guaranteed to experience the beauty of the places you'll see and the sites I'll show you.

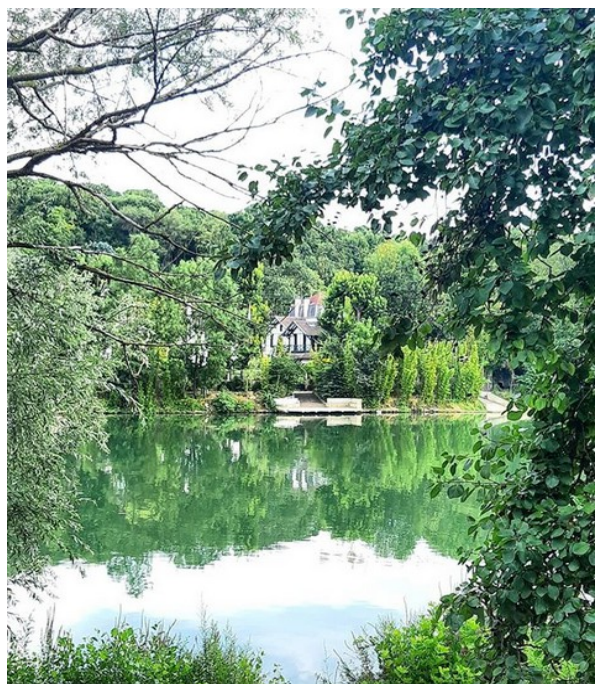
The general itinerary I have designed will have us start off by cycling for about 15-20 minutes through the quiet, residential side streets of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (which is a very posh and upscale suburb of Paris). After our ride through various residential neighborhoods we'll arrive at the banks of the Marne River, at which point we'll join a cycling path bordering the banks of the river. We'll continue on the cycling path for roughly a half dozen kilometers (more or less) and then we'll make a detour to "Le Vieux Saint-Maur", which is the little medieval section of Saint-Maur. Here you'll have a few minutes to visit the old church, where inside you'll see the 12th/13th century wooden statue of the "miraculous" Virgin Mary (I'll explain the legend). You'll also have a chance to stop here and have a drink (if you'd like) in one of the lovely cafés in the square and sit on the terrace and admire your surroundings.

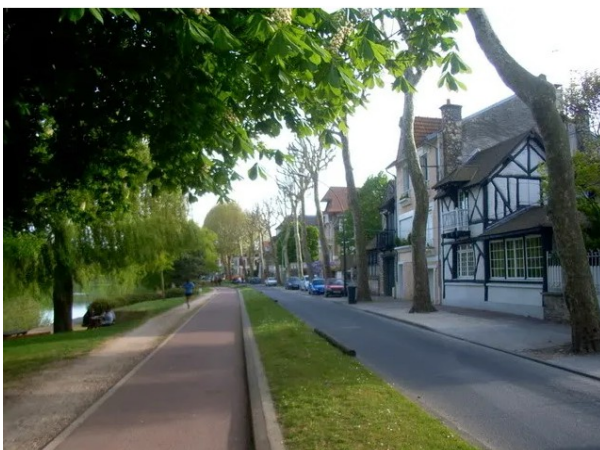
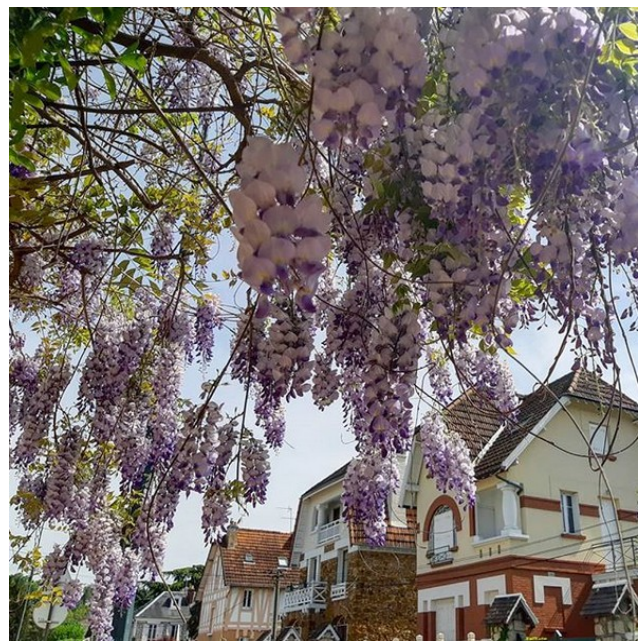
From this point we'll gauge the time remaining on the tour and I'll present you with options at your disposal. For those cycling at a moderate pace then continuing into the Bois de Vincennes should be no problem and here again I'll present you with options of things to see. You may wish to cycle on the shady cycle paths in the woods or you may wish to continue further and perhaps see the lovely Lac Daumesnil and/or the medieval Château de Vincennes. Or, you may wish to stop and spend a short time visiting the Jardins de l'Ecole de Breuil (the gardens of Paris's horticultural school). The gardens are lovely and if you've no time to visit Monet's house and gardens in Giverny then this is a good (albeit brief) alternative. No matter your choice, after our visit to the Bois de Vincennes we'll cycle back to the banks of the Marne River. Here again you'll have options to choose from based on the remaining tour time. We'll certainly be cycling again along the river but time permitting you may also have a chance to see one or two of the famous guinguettes along the banks of the Marne River (I'll explain what guinguettes are if we make it this far). And thus our tour will be finished.

Below I'll post photos of the sites you'll see along the way, sequenced in the order of those sites you may see, keeping in mind that sites seen are dependent on your cycling pace. Anyway, enjoy the beautiful photos.:)

To start with I'll show you some photos of the banks of the Marne River and some of the lovely early 20th century homes lining its banks.









After a while riding on the banks of the Marne River we'll arrive at Le Vieux Saint-Maur, the medieval neighborhood in town.



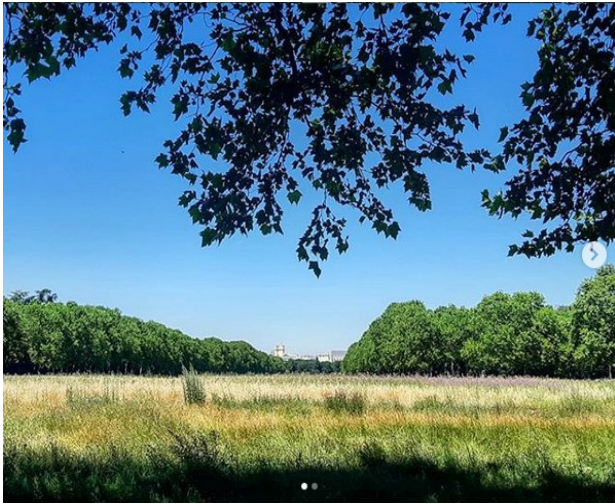
The photo above and to the right is the "miraculous" statue of the Virgin Mary housed inside the church depicted just above it. She was venerated for centuries (and still is today among the faithful) and throughout the ages a pilgrimage occurred annually between Paris and Saint-Maur-des-Fossés to pay her homage.

From this point onward in the tour, following the planned itinerary, we will make our way into the Bois de Vincennes. But a stop along the way at the Jardins de l'Ecole de Breuil (Paris's horticultural school gardens) is up to you (the two photos below).



Next, some photos of the Bois de Vincennes.





And some photos of the medieval castle of the Château de Vincennes.



From the Château de Vincennes we'll make our way back to the banks of the Marne River but before we arrive there we'll see the Pavillon Baltard, which used to be located in the center of Paris (I'll explain that story).



Once arriving back to the banks of the river we'll see one or two of the notable guinguettes in the Paris region. Here are some photos of the first guinguette.



The above guinguette has limited dates and opening hours (it's open seasonally and only on certain days/dates) but if we're lucky enough to pass by while it's open then you'll be able to get a peek inside, which is like stepping back in time to the early 20th century.



But the most emblematic of all the remaining original guinguettes in the Paris region is Chez Gégène.



From here we'll head into the home stretch of our cycling tour, still following the banks of the river and all the beauty it offers.



That's the end of the tour folks. You may or may not see everything shown in the photos, or, you may see more. It's all dependent on your cycling pace. But after several years of doing this tour I can assure that even if you're not the world's speediest cyclist (ok, maybe you don't even cycle that much) you will see a lot of what is shown in the photos. It is a lovely tour that you will thoroughly enjoy.:)

