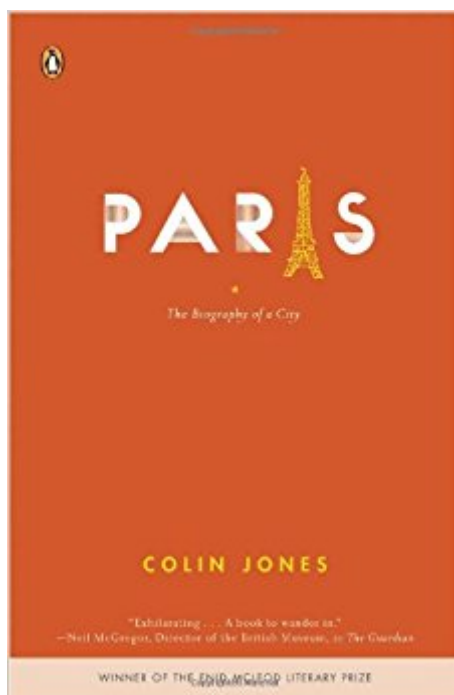


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# Paris: The Biography Of A City



## Synopsis

From the Roman Emperor Julian, who waxed rhapsodic about Parisian wine and figs, to Henry Miller, who relished its seductive bohemia, Paris has been a perennial source of fascination for 2,000 years. In this definitive and illuminating history, Colin Jones walks us through the city that was a plague-infested charnel house during the Middle Ages, the bloody epicenter of the French Revolution, the muse of nineteenth-century Impressionist painters, and much more. Jones's masterful narrative is enhanced by numerous photographs and feature boxes—on the Bastille or Josephine Baker, for instance—that complete a colorful and comprehensive portrait of a place that has endured Vikings, Black Death, and the Nazis to emerge as the heart of a resurgent Europe. This is a thrilling companion for history buffs and backpack, or armchair, travelers alike.

## Book Information

Paperback: 592 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (April 4, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143036718

ISBN-13: 978-0143036715

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #85,181 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #27 in Books > Travel > Europe > France > Paris #106 in Books > History > Europe > France #128 in Books > Travel > Europe > France > General

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Jones, a historian at Britain's University of Warwick, has written a remarkable account of the most celebrated city in the world that blends history, literary sensibility and experience in an understated, affectionate but not sentimental voice. Moving from prehistoric tribal habitation through Roman times, medieval uncertainty and splendor, early modern religious wars, Enlightenment, revolution, and two world wars, Jones examines how rulers, economy, religion and violence have shaped the city. With a concrete sense of place, he evokes the layering of history revealed in the monuments and less visible remnants of the past. While one might deplore the loss of an earlier Paris in wartime ravages and the triumphs and failures of city planning (especially under the infamous Haussmann), one begins to sense that the extent to which the city has been

built, embellished, demolished and rebuilt contributes to its vibrancy. Boxed inserts in each chapter that elaborate on locations and themes at first seem awkwardly placed, but their worth in tying together time and place quickly becomes clear: now-hidden rivers and city walls, a barely recognizable Roman amphitheater, the evolution of restaurants and numerous other sites and topics emerge. The poetry of place established in the early chapters is occasionally overwhelmed by the intensive detail of later time periods, but anyone who loves Paris will find connections and revelations here, a Paris of the mind that resonates through the centuries. B&w illus. (On sale Apr. 25) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As comprehensive in detail and scope as a one-volume history of an ages-old city can comfortably be, but written with a decidedly scholarly tone, this "biography" will find its audience among history aficionados and ardent travelers unafraid to make a significant commitment to reading time and concentration. Logically, Jones relates the history of Paris in a chronological narrative. Augmenting his presentation are frequent "feature boxes," which are sidebars that tackle in more depth certain ancillary but definitely relevant topics, including Robert de Sorbon, founder of the great university; famous letter-writer Madame de Sevigne; and the neighborhood called the Marais. From the city known as Lutetia to the ancient Romans, to its status as a major urban center by the twelfth century, to its establishment as the permanent seat of the French monarchy, to its unseating when Louis XIV moved to Versailles, and then beyond, the story of Paris is made both graphic and distinctive. Brad Hooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Well written

Very interesting.

Very thorough...and historically accurate.

Being from Paris and now living in the US, I looked forward to this book. I thought I would get a review of history and maybe find out new things. The history is OK but very slim in many instances. What disappointed me the most was that there were almost no pictures. It would have been fun, for example, to have both historical illustrations and modern pictures of an area being described in this

book. Many things are described but it just is not the same as seeing it in pictures. Most illustrations were obscure and not explained within the context of the book. All in all, better to get two books - one on history and the other on architecture. Trying to do justice to both does not work.

Interesting story of lovely Paris through the ages. Just a bit pedantic, but definitely readable. Fascinating characters. Makes a good read after seeing , "Midnight in Paris". Wish I was there now.

This is a workmanlike one-volume history of Paris, covering about one thousand years. I would especially recommend it for people deeply interested in urban architecture and city planning given that Professor Jones spends much effort detailing the changing nature and design of the streets and buildings of Paris. Most general readers will find this none too exciting. Those wanting to learn about a specific historical incident, for example the Commune of 1871, will likely read about it in this volume but should just buy one of the many good books that there are sure to be on that given incident. A nice aspect of the book are the many feature boxes that tell interesting tales related to the City of Light that would not fit into the author's general narrative. For the reader who wants a flavor of Paris without the sometimes numbing detail provided by this book, please consider Edmund White's *The Flaneur* and Alistair Horne's *The Seven Ages of Paris*.

This is an excellent book for anyone seriously curious about the history of one of the most fascinating cities in the world. Exceedingly well researched and full of interesting details, this book will take the reader beyond the cliches and postcard images into a comprehensive and very readable account of how this city has evolved over the centuries.

This book is terribly organized. I'm not sure what happened in writing this book, but it seems clear that Professor Jones did not compile this in the chronological order that it is printed in. My main complaint is that rather obscure concepts/people/events are repeatedly referred to, and then only later does Jones bother to define them. (I would almost prefer that he not define something at all, rather than offering a definition 100 pages after his first reference to it!) The fact that the book has an index only further infuriated me - clearly the author/publisher knew where all these terms were located throughout the book, yet did not bother to offer a definition in the appropriate/first reference to the concept. Examples are numerous, but here are a few: \*\*robe nobility: referenced on pages 139, 152, 183. Defined? (pg. 183) \*\*sans culottes: first referenced on page 189, defined on page 231. \*\*Louis-Sebastien Mercier: referenced on pages 11, 138, 178, 189, 200, 204, 212, 213. When

did Jones provide information (that he was a "journalist, dramatist and observer of Parisian mores") on just WHO Mercier is? Page 215. Aside from that, there are some plain old errors. One such is in the text box on Saint Genevieve. Jones mentions that she negotiated with Frankish military chieftains in the 570s and 580s. She died in 512AD, so the negotiations seem improbable. (470s & 480s would be correct, but I should not have to figure that out.) The redeeming quality of the book is that it DOES offer information on Paris if you are willing to sift through the above mentioned annoyances. And Paris is not such a bad subject.

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