



Ella Fitzgerald is, except maybe for Sinatra, my favorite singer of all time. Many years ago, she recorded Cole Porter's, "I love Paris in the springtime". The song ends with, "I love Paris every moment, every moment of the year. I love Paris; why, oh why, do I love Paris? Because my love is here."

Every springtime when we return to Paris, we find scores of wonderful places we've never seen before, but we still make sure to visit our old favorites. We start at the Eiffel tower, the symbol of Paris and France to the world, where victorious armies of both friend and foe have marched through the years since 1889.

We stand in awe at the base of the 1,000-foot iron structure, along with tourists from all over the world. Nearby are French booths selling flags and miniature towers. Next to them are Algerian stands peddling brightly-colored African clothing and exotic foods. Then we pay to take the elevator to the top of the tower, where the views, both night and day, are breathtaking.

Then we walk along the famed River Seine, passing all the shops that sell French history in books, old prints and maps, to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a Paris landmark for nearly ten centuries. We always visit the classic interior of the church and admire the Gothic designs and sculptures.

Outside and up near the soaring towers, we see the gargoyles that served as the inspiration for the famed story of the hunchback. We never miss going down below the street level to the catacombs. There we see the massive burial chambers, and at a lower level, the remains of the Roman encampment and village from the time of Julius Caesar.

To me, the highlight of every visit is to another thousand-year-old structure, the Louvre museum. My college education was at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and to students everywhere, the Louvre was the standard for all. We enter through the modern glass pyramid structure into one of the world's most massive collections of fine art and historical artifacts.

We never visit the Louvre without seeing history's most famed portrait, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. Because some crazed visitors have tried to destroy the painting, we can only admire her from afar from behind a bullet-proof glass panel. But she's still there for us, her secret smile still causing us to wonder if it was for Leonardo, her husband or another love.

These are just three of the hundreds of places to see and experience in Paris in the springtime, or at any other time of the year.

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