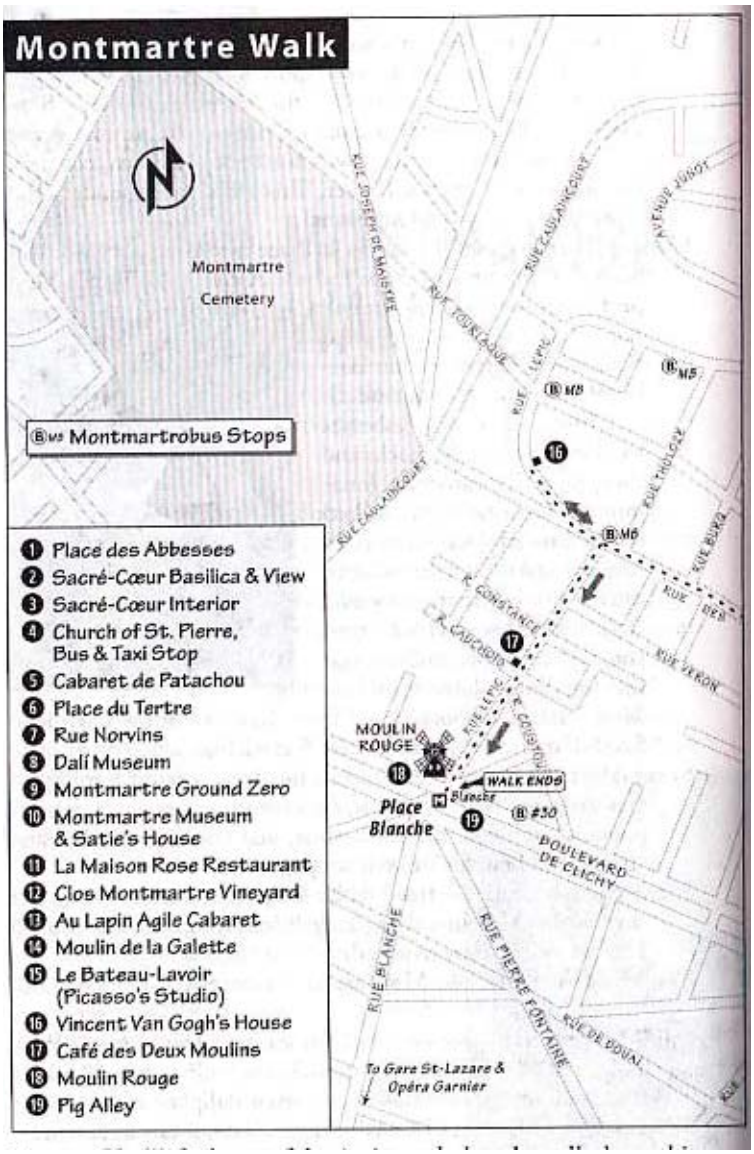
MONTMARTRE WALK

From Sacré-Cœur to the Moulin Rouge

Getting There: This walk begins at Place des Abbesses (Mo: Abbesses). Other nearby stops include Anvers and Pigalle. (Expect some seediness around Anvers and Pigalle, and avoid the sketchy Métro station Barbès Rochechouart completely.)

From Place des Abbesses we'll walk a few level blocks and then take the funicular (one-minute ride, one Métro ticket) to the base of Sacré-Cœur. To instead start at Sacré-Cœur, catch the "Montmartrobus" right here; this city bus drops you right by Sacré-Cœur (at the top Funiculaire stop, one Métro ticket, 4/hour). A taxi from the Seine or the Bastille to Sacré-Cœur costs about €20 (€25 at night).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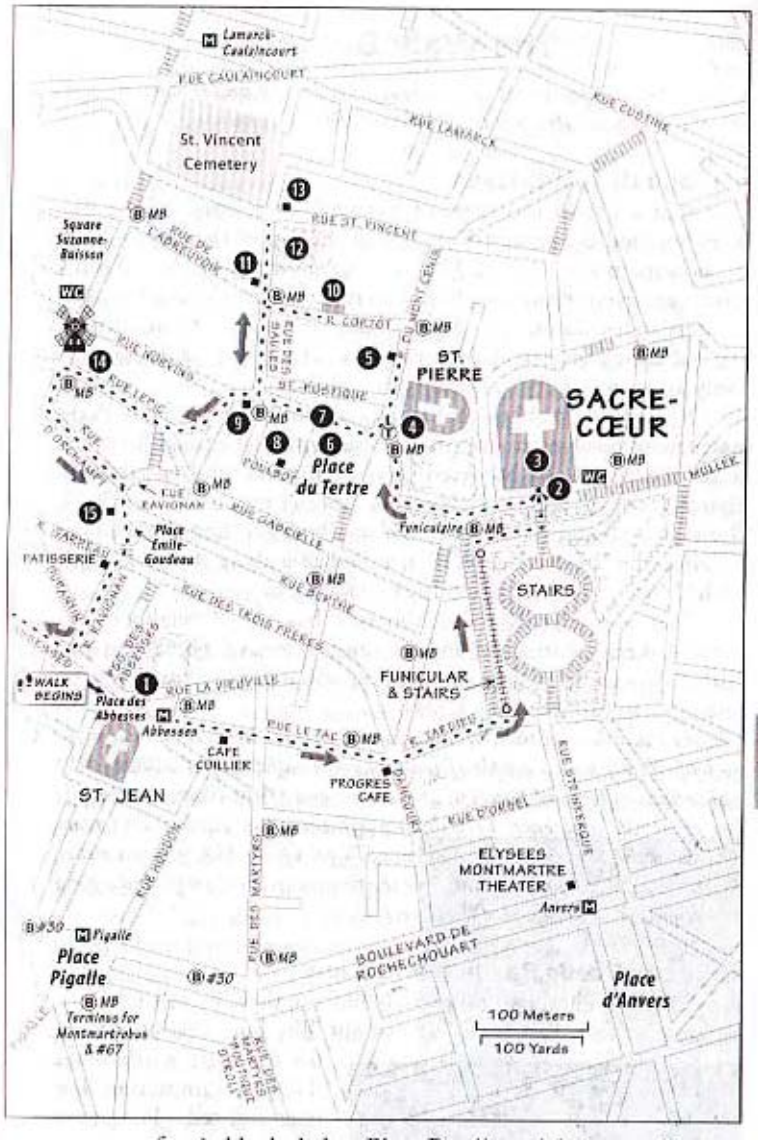
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St. Vincent Cemetery
RUE LAMARCK
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Square Suzanne-Buisson
RUE DE L'ABREUVOIR
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POULBOT
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PROGRES CAFE
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ELYSEES MONTMARTRE THEATER
Anvers
RUE AUDUBON
RUE DES MARTYRS
#30
Pigalle
Place Pigalle
BOULEVARD DE ROCHECHOUART
Place d'Anvers
Terminus for Montmartibus & #67
100 Meters
100 Yards

The Walk Begins

• From the Abbesses Métro stop, take the elevator up and surface through one of the original Art Nouveau "Métropolitain" entrances.

❶ Place des Abbesses

Our tour starts in the heart of today's Montmartre. While the neighborhood center has shifted from the top of the hill to here, the bohemian vibe lives on. Place des Abbesses and its surrounding streets are lively with cafés, bars, and rustic charm. Young Parisian hipsters (called *bobos*, or bourgeois bohemians) flock to Montmartre—as their forebears did—for cheaper rents, less urban noise, a lively arts community, and plenty of nightlife.

Named for an abbey that it once abutted, this perfectly Parisian square revolves around its carousel with just enough benches to meet demand. It's bordered by a small park, an unusual brick church (St-Jean) and strollable lanes fanning out in all directions. Romantics should wander into the small park to find the *Mur des je t'aime* (the "I Love You Wall"), a tiled area along the park's wall with "I love you" written artfully in 250 languages.

The main drag, Rue des Abbesses, has lots of neighborhood shops, bakeries, *pâtisseries*, and restaurants (great for breakfast and lunch). You could explore the street now, but our walk will also be returning to this street later.

• Leave Place des Abbesses, heading east on Rue le Tac (facing the church, go left). You'll pass a couple of recommended cafés: Café Cuillier (#19) has serious coffee and pastries, and at the end of the block, Le Progrès has great café ambience. Veer slightly left onto Rue Tardieu and walk a block to the park below Sacré-Cœur. To get up the hill, you can either climb those 200 steps, or better, take the funicular. At the top, find a good viewing spot on the steps of the church.

❷ Sacré-Cœur Basilica and View

From Paris' highest natural point (430 feet), the City of Light fans out at your feet. Pan from left to right. The long triangular roof on your left is the Gare du Nord train station. The blue-and-red Pompidou Center is straight ahead, and the skyscrapers in the distance define the southern limit of Paris. Next is the domed Panthéon, atop Paris' other (and far smaller) butte. Then, standing solo to the right, comes the modern Montparnasse

Tower, and finally (if you're in position to see this far to the right), the golden dome of Les Invalides. The grassy park below was once dotted with openings to gypsum mines, the source of the white "plaster of Paris" that plastered Paris' buildings for centuries.

Now turn and face the church. The Sacré-Cœur (Sacred Heart) Basilica's exterior, with its onion domes and bleached-bone pallor, looks ancient, but it was finished only a century ago by Parisians humiliated by German invaders. Roman Catholics built it as a kind of penance for how the surrounding neighborhood sowed rebelliousness and division. Many French people were disgusted that in 1871 their government actually shot its own citizens, the Communards, who held out here on Montmartre after the French leadership surrendered to the Prussians (the Communards' monument is in Père Lachaise Cemetery—see page 361).

The five-domed, Roman-Byzantine-looking basilica took 44 years to build (1875-1919). It stands on a foundation of 83 pillars sunk 130 feet deep, necessary because the ground beneath was honeycombed with gypsum mines. The exterior is laced with gypsum, which whitens with age.

• *Join the security line to get inside.*

❸ Sacré-Cœur Interior

Crowd flow permitting, pause (sit in a pew) near the entrance and take in the nave. See the map in this chapter with a layout of the church.

❹ View of the Nave: In the impressive mosaic high above the altar, a 60-foot-tall Christ exposes his sacred heart, burning with love and compassion for humanity. Joining him are a dove representing the Holy Spirit and God the Father high above. Christ is flanked by biblical figures on the left (including St. Peter, kneeling) and French figures on the right (a kneeling Joan of Arc in her trademark armor). If you get closer, you'll see other French figures: clergymen (who offer a model of this church to the Lord), government leaders (in business suits), and French saints, including St. Bernard (above, with his famous dog), and Louis IX, the king known as Saint Louis (with the crown of thorns). Remember, the church was built by a French populace recently humbled by a devastating war. At the base of the mosaic is the National Vow of the French people begging God's forgiveness: *"Sacritissimo Cordi Jesu Gallia poenitens et devota..."*—which means, "To the Sacred

Heart of Jesus, we are penitent and devoted." Right now, in this church, at least one person is praying for Christ to be understanding of the world's sins—part of a tradition that's been carried out here, day and night, 24/7, since Sacré-Cœur's completion a century ago.

• *Start shuffling clockwise around the church. Near the entrance, find the white...*

D Statue of St. Thérèse: Follow Thérèse's gaze to a pillar with a plaque ("L'an 1944..."). The plaque's map shows where, on April 21, 1944, 13 bombs fell on Montmartre in an Allied air raid during World War II—all in a line, all near the church—killing no one. This fueled local devotion to the Sacred Heart and to this church.

• *Continue up the side aisle to the apse, and find a...*

C Scale Model of the Church: It shows the church from the long side (you'd enter at left). This early-version model doesn't accurately reflect the finished product, but it's close. You see its central dome surrounded by smaller domes and the tower. The "Byzantine" style is clear in the onion domes and in the heavy horseshoe arches atop slender columns. The church is built of large rectangular blocks (just look around you), with no attempt to plaster over the cracks/lines in between.

• *Continue along, looking to the right at...*

D Colorful Mosaics of the Stations of the Cross: Pause to rub **St. Peter's bronze foot** and look up to the heavens.

• *Continue your circuit around the church.*

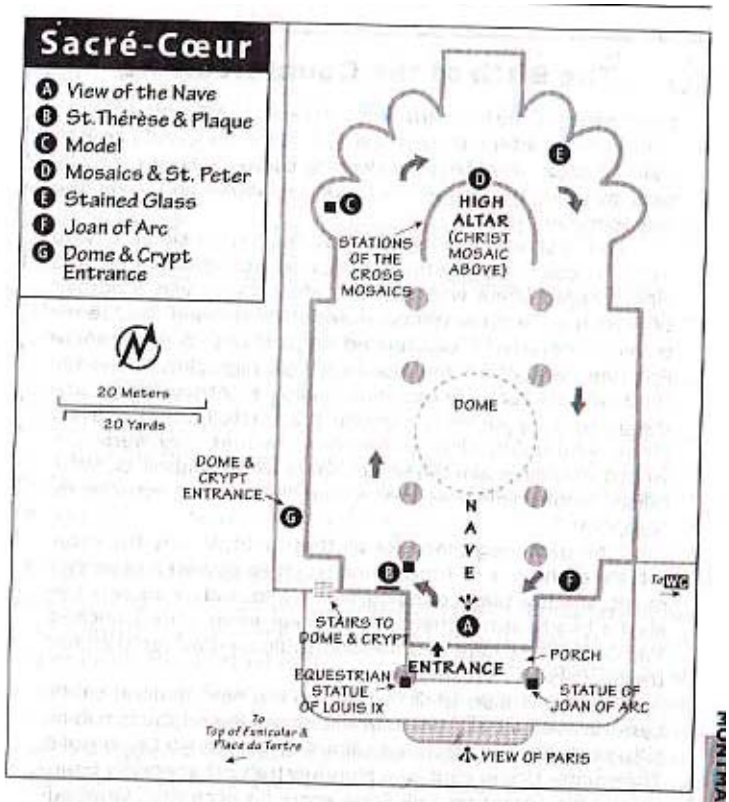
E Stained-Glass Windows: Because the church's original stained-glass windows were broken by the concussive force of WWII bombs, all of the glass you see is post-1945.

• *As you approach the entrance you'll walk straight toward three stained-glass windows dedicated to...*

F Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc, 1412–1431): See the teenage girl as she hears the voice of the Archangel Michael (right panel, at bottom) and later (above on the same panel) as she takes up the Archangel's sword. Next, she kneels to take communion (central panel, bottom), then kneels before the bishop to tell him she's been sent by God to rally France's soldiers and save Orléans from English invaders (central panel, top). However, Burgundian forces allied with England arrest her, and she's burned at the stake as a heretic (left panel), dying with her eyes fixed on a crucifix and chanting, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus..."

• *Exit the church. A public WC is to your left, down 50 steps. To your right is the entrance to the church's...*

G Dome and Crypt: For an unobstructed panoramic view of Paris, climb 260 feet (300 steps) up the tight, claustrophobic, spiral stairs to the top of the dome—especially worthwhile if you have kids with excess energy. The crypt is just a big, empty basement.



• Leaving the church, turn right and walk west along the ridge, following tree-lined Rue Azaïs. Turn right at the first street (Rue St. Eleuthère) and walk uphill a block to the Church of St. Pierre-de-Montmartre (at top on right). The small square in front of the church has a convenient taxi stand and a bus stop for the Montmartrobus to and from Place des Abbesses.

You're in the heart of Montmartre, by Place du Tertre. A sign for the Cabaret de la Bohème reminds visitors that in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this was the world capital of bohemian life. But before we plunge into that tourist mosh pit, let's see where this whole Montmartre thing first got its start—in a church.

❹ Church of St. Pierre-de-Montmartre

This church was the center of Montmartre's initial claim to fame, a sprawling abbey of Benedictine monks and nuns. The church is one of Paris' oldest (1147). Look down the nave at the Gothic arches and stained glass. The church was founded by King Louis VI and his wife, Adelaide.

Find Adelaide's 12th-century white slab tombstone *(pierre*

The Birth of the Counterculture

Montmartre of the late 19th century was a creative hive of nonconformist painters, writers, musicians, thinkers, and hard-to-classify eccentrics. They challenged society's norms, practically inventing the notion of a "counterculture," and paved the way to modernism.

The first wave of artists was the Impressionists, who came to paint the windmills *(moulins)*, rustic cottages, and vine-covered stone walls. In 1871, Montmartre was a hotbed of revolution and resistance, quixotically defying the French government after it capitulated to Germany in the Franco-Prussian War. When the Moulin Rouge nightclub opened in 1889 with its racy cancan girls, sleepy Montmartre became the go-to place for edgy nightlife. It attracted artists of every stripe, who boldly championed new theories they were convinced would remake the world. There were Symbolists, Naturalists, Incoherents, Decadents, and "Les Nabis"—Hebrew for "prophets."

The gathering place for all these people was the cabaret. Here, the mix of food, drink (such as powerful absinthe), music, shadow plays, dancing, vaudeville, and circus acts created a heady atmosphere where great ideas were launched. Van Gogh came here to drink, and Toulouse-Lautrec sketched the dancers and prostitutes.

The bohemian spirit lasted into the next generation. Picasso arrived here in 1900, where he pioneered Cubism in his hillside studio and attended cabaret shows at Au Lapin Agile. The painter Utrillo captured Montmartre's otherworldly beauty, and the composer Erik Satie wrote his eccentric, stripped-down piano pieces.

In the 1920s Jazz Age, the cabaret scene shifted downhill a bit, but the party raged on, with the torch carried by jazz-loving African American expats. With World War II, Montmartre fell into disrepair, but the glories of bohemian Montmartre live on in the minds of romantics.

Montmartre helped birth the modern world. No wonder. Nonconformists could escape the shackles of their conventional Parisian upbringing, find freedom on Montmartre's 430-foot summit, and literally look down on the bourgeois world.

tombale) midway down on the left wall. Older still are the four gray Corinthian columns—two flank the entrance, and two others are behind the altar in the apse (they're the two darker columns supporting either side of the central arch). These may have stood in a temple of Mercury or Mars in Roman times. The name "Montmartre" comes from the Roman "Mount of Mars," though later generations—thinking of their beheaded patron St. Denis—preferred a less pagan version, "Mount of Martyrs."

And speaking of martyrs, continue clockwise around the

church to find Montmartre's most famous martyr. Near the entrance is a white statue of St. Denis, holding his head in his hands. This early Christian bishop was sentenced to death by the Romans for spreading Christianity. As they marched him up to the top of Montmartre to be executed, the Roman soldiers got tired and just beheaded him near here. But Denis popped right up, picked up his head, and carried on another three miles north before he finally died.

Next to Denis, the statue of "Notre Dame de Montmartre" marks a modern miracle—how the Virgin spared the neighborhood from the WWII bombs of April 21, 1944.

Before leaving, rub St. Peter's toe (again), look up, and ask for *déliverance* from the tourist mobs outside.

• Now step back outside. Before entering the crowded Place du Tertre, get a quick taste of the area by making a short detour to the right down Rue du Mont-Cenis. These days it's lined with cafés and shops. But back in the day, #13 Rue du Mont-Cenis was the...

❺ Cabaret de Patachou

This building (now a pleasant art gallery—with serious art rather than touristy posters—run by friendly Julien Roussard) is where singer Edith Piaf (1915-1963) once trilled "La Vie en Rose" to an intimate crowd of 80 diners. Piaf—a destitute teenager who sang for pocket change in the streets of pre-WWII Paris—was discovered by a nightclub owner and became a star. Her singing inspired the people of Nazi-occupied Paris. In the heady days after the war, she sang about the joyous, rosy life in the city. For more on this warbling-voiced singer, see page 363.

• Head back to the always-lively square, and stand on its cusp for the best perspective of...

❻ Place du Tertre: Bohemian Montmartre

Lined with cafés, shaded by acacia trees, and filled with artists, hucksters, and tourists, the scene mixes charm and kitsch in ever-changing proportions. Place du Tertre has been the town square of the small village of Montmartre since medieval times. (*Tertre* means "stepped lanes" in French.)

In 1800, a wall separated Paris from this hilltop village. To enter Paris you had to pass tollbooths that taxed anything for sale. Montmartre was a mining community where the wine flowed cheap (tax-free) and easy. Life here was a working-class festival of cafés, bistros, and dance halls. Painters came here for the ruddy charm, the light, and the low rents. In 1860, Montmartre was annexed into the growing city of Paris. The "bohemian" ambience survived, and it attracted sophisticated Parisians ready to get down and dirty in the belle époque of cancan. The La Mère Catherine restaurant

is often called the first bistro—this is where Russian soldiers first coined the word by saying, "I'm thirsty, bring my drink *bistro!*" (meaning "right away").

The square's artists, who at times outnumber the tourists, are the great-great-grandkids of the Renoirs, Van Goghs, and Picassos who once roamed here—poor, carefree, seeking inspiration, and occasionally cursing a world too selfish to bankroll their dreams.

• *Plunge headlong into the square, meet an artist, sip an espresso, then continue west along the main drag, called...*

❼ Rue Norvins

Montmartre's oldest and main street is still the primary commercial artery, serving the current trade—tourism.

• *If you're a devotee of Dalí, a detour left on Rue Poulbot will lead you to the...*

❽ Dalí Museum (L'Espace Dalí)

This beautifully lit black gallery offers a walk through statues, etchings, and paintings by the master of Surrealism. The Spaniard found fame in Paris in the 1920s and '30s. He lived in Montmartre for a while, hung with the Surrealist crowd in Montparnasse, and shocked the world with his dreamscape paintings and experimental films. Don't miss the printed interview on the exit stairs.

• *Return to Rue Norvins and continue west a dozen steps to the picturesque intersection with Rue des Saules. You've arrived at...*

❾ Montmartre Ground Zero

We're leaving most tourists behind and entering the residential part of Montmartre. Pause to survey the colorful jumble of classic storefronts, cafés, and charm. Walk to the golden souvenir shop on the left (#12)—formerly a venerable old *boulangerie* (bakery) that dated from 1900. This spot was a favorite place for the artist Maurice Utrillo to paint (see sidebar). From here, look back up Rue Norvins to the dome of Sacré-Cœur rising above the rooftops—a classic scene Utrillo famously captured. He painted another a few steps

to the left, looking up Rue Saint-Rustique. Forty yards up this lane is an art-supply shop (where, if inspired, you can pick up a small framed canvas and a few pastels—a €10 starter kit for a new career).

• *Let's lose the tourists completely. Follow Rue des Saules downhill (north) onto the back side of Montmartre. Enjoy the "Van Gogh in Paris" info panels along the way. A block downhill, turn right on Rue Cortot to reach the...*

⓲ Montmartre Museum and Satie's House

In what is now the Montmartre Museum (at #12), Pierre-Auguste Renoir once lived while painting his best-known work, *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*. Every day he'd lug the four-foot-by-six-foot canvas from here to the other side of the butte to paint in the open air the famous windmill ballroom, which we'll see later.

A few years later, Utrillo lived and painted here with his mom, Suzanne Valadon. In 1893, she carried on a torrid six-month relationship with the lonely, eccentric man who lived two doors up at #6—composer Erik Satie, who wrote *Trois Gymnopédies* and was eking out a living playing piano in Montmartre nightclubs.

The Montmartre Museum offers the best look at the artistic Golden Age of this neighborhood (1870-1910)—and has the best public WCs on the hill. The museum's collection of paintings, posters, old photos, music, and memorabilia is split between two creaky 17th-century manor houses separated by a sweet little garden. An eight-minute film narrated by an actress playing Utrillo's mother, Suzanne Valadon, provides the perfect introduction to the world of the bohemian artists—Renoir, Picasso, Edith Piaf, Toulouse-Lautrec, and more—who lived on Montmartre before and after the construction of Sacré-Cœur.

Next, pass through the garden to find the first house's entry (before entering, continue to the end of the short stone path for great views over Montmartre's vineyard). Inside, you'll learn about the butte's 2,000-year history and see photos of the gypsum quarries and flour-grinding windmills of the Industrial Age. Montmartre's cabaret years come to life here—there's the original *Lapin Agile* sign, the famous Chat Noir poster, and Toulouse-Lautrec's dashing portrait of red-scarved Aristide Bruant, the earthy singer, comedian, and club owner. You'll see more Toulouse-Lautrec posters and displays about the biggest and most famous cabaret of all: the cancan-kickers of the Moulin Rouge.

The second house holds temporary exhibits relevant to Mont-

martre (usually well worth a look), as well as the museum's highlight (hiding on the top floor): the tiny apartment and painting studio of Maurice Utrillo. Rarely has so much artistic talent and creative energy been concentrated in one place at the same time.

Before leaving, take a moment to reflect on this remarkable era by enjoying a coffee or lunch in the peaceful garden far from the throngs of tourists.

• *Return to Rue des Saules and walk downhill to...*

⓫ La Maison Rose Restaurant

The restaurant, made famous by an Utrillo painting, was once frequented by Utrillo, Pablo Picasso, and Gertrude Stein. Today it serves lousy food to nostalgic tourists.

• *Just downhill from the restaurant is Paris' last remaining vineyard.*

⓬ Clos Montmartre Vineyard

What originally drew artists to Montmartre was country charm like this. Ever since the 12th century, the monks and nuns of the large abbey have produced wine from here. With vineyards, wheat fields, windmills, animals, and a village tempo of life, it was the perfect escape from grimy Paris. In 1576, puritanical laws taxed wine in Paris, bringing budget-minded drinkers outside the Paris city gates to Montmartre. Today's vineyard is off-limits to tourists except during the annual grape-harvest fest (first Sat in Oct, www.fetedesvendangesdemontmartre.com), when a thousand costumed locals bring back the boisterous old days. The vineyard's annual production of 300 liters is auctioned off at the fest to support local charities. Bottles sell for over €50 and are considered mediocre at best.

• *Continue downhill to the intersection with Rue St. Vincent, or save your energy by skipping the descent and reading about the next stop from where you are.*

⓭ Au Lapin Agile Cabaret

The poster above the door gives the place its name. A rabbit *(lapin)* makes an agile leap out of the pot while balancing the bottle of wine that he can now drink—rather than be cooked in. This was the village's hot spot. Artists and writers including Picasso, Renoir, Utrillo, Paul Verlaine,

Maurice Utrillo (1883-1955)

Born to a free-spirited single mom and raised by his grandmother, Utrillo had his first alcohol detox treatment at age 18. Encouraged by his mother and doctors, he started painting as occupational therapy. That (plus guidance from his mother and, later, from his wife) allowed him to live productively into his 70s and become wealthy and famous despite occasional relapses into drinking and mental problems.

Utrillo grew up on Montmartre's streets. He fought, broke street lamps, and haunted the cafés and bars, paying for drinks with masterpieces. A very free spirit, he's said to have exposed himself to strangers on the street, yelling, "I paint with this!"

His simple scenes of streets, squares, and cafés in a vaguely Impressionist style became popular with commoners and scholars alike. He honed his style during his "white period" (c. 1909-1914), painting a thick paste of predominantly white tints—perfect for capturing Sacré-Cœur. In later years, after he moved out of Montmartre, he still painted the world he knew in his youth, using postcards and photographs as models. Utrillo's mom, Suzanne Valadon, was a former trapeze performer and artist's model who posed for Toulouse-Lautrec, slept with Renoir, studied under Degas, and went on to become a notable painter in her own right.

Aristide Bruant, and Amedeo Modigliani would gather for "performances" of serious poetry, dirty limericks, sing-alongs, parodies of the famous, or readings of anarchist manifestos. Once, to play a practical joke on the avant-garde art community, patrons tied a paintbrush to the tail of the owner's donkey and entered the resulting "abstract painting" in a show at the Salon. Called *Sunset over the Adriatic*, it won critical acclaim and sold for a nice price.

The old Parisian personality of this cabaret survives. Every night except Monday a series of performers takes a small, French-speaking audience on a wistful musical journey back to the good old days (for details, see page 499).

• Backtrack uphill on Rue des Saules to "ground zero." Circle around the right side of the golden souvenir shop and head downhill on Rue Lepic (the street that curves right). At the first street you cross, look left and spot the short building at the bottom with the faded gray mansard roof. This north-facing artist's studio—designed to catch the indirect light—was Picasso's first studio when he arrived here from Barcelona around 1900.

Staying on Rue Lepic, you come to a fine view of a windmill, the...

⓫ Moulin de la Galette

Only two windmills *(moulins)* remain on a hill that was once dotted with 30 of them. Originally, they pressed monks' grapes and farmers' grain and crushed gypsum rocks into powdery plaster of

Paris. When the gypsum mines closed (c. 1850) and the vineyards sprouted apartments, the grounds around these windmills were turned into the ceremonial centerpiece of a popular outdoor dance hall. Renoir's *Bal du Moulin de la Galette* (in the Orsay—see page 182) shows it in its heyday—a sunny Sunday afternoon in the acacia-shaded gardens with working-class people dancing, laughing, drinking, and eating the house crêpes, called galettes. Some call Renoir's version the quintessential Impressionist work and the painting that best captures—on a large canvas in bright colors—the joy of the Montmartre lifestyle. The namesake restaurant inside is well respected and worth considering.

• *Do an about face, backtrack several steps, and turn right, heading downhill on narrow Rue d'Orchampt. Stop where it curves left and look right to see a memorial plaque to Dalida—a Madonna-like pop star Europeans still idolize. Continue along Rue d'Orchampt and turn right on Rue Ravignan. Next to the Timhotel, at 13 Place Emile-Goudeau, is another studio that Picasso lived in....*

⓫ Le Bateau-Lavoir (Picasso's Studio)

A humble facade marks the place where modern art was born. In this lowly abode (destroyed by fire in 1970 and rebuilt a few years later), as many as 10 artists lived and worked. Formerly a piano factory, it was converted into cheap housing and earned the nickname "the Laundry Boat" for its swaying, creaking, and crude facilities (sharing one water tap). It was "a weird, squalid place," wrote one resident, "filled with every kind of noise: arguing, singing, bedpans clattering, slamming doors, and suggestive moans coming from studio doors."

In 1904, a poor, unknown Spanish émigré named Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) moved in. He met dark-haired Fernande Olivier, his first real girlfriend, in Place Emile-Goudeau, the romantic square outside. She soon moved in, lifting him out of his melancholy Blue Period into his rosy Rose Period. *La belle Fernande* posed nude for him, inspiring a freer treatment of the female form.

In 1907, Picasso started on a major canvas. For nine months he produced hundreds of preparatory sketches, working long into the night. When he unveiled the work, even his friends were shocked.

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon showed five nude women in a brothel (Fernande claimed they were all her), with primitive masklike faces and fragmented bodies. Picasso had invented Cubism.

For the next two years, he and his neighbors Georges Braque and Juan Gris revolutionized the art world. Sharing paints, ideas, and girlfriends, they made Montmartre "The Cubist Acropolis," attracting freethinking "Moderns" from all over the world to visit their studios—the artists Amedeo Modigliani, Marie Laurencin, and Henri Rousseau (see page 199); the poet Guillaume Apollinaire; and the American expatriate writer Gertrude Stein. By the time Picasso moved to better quarters (and dumped Fernande), he was famous. Still, Picasso would later say, "I know one day we'll return to Bateau-Lavoir. It was there that we were really happy—where they thought of us as painters, not strange animals."

• *Go a few steps downhill to the railing of Place Emile-Goudeau and marvel at Paris. Now, descend 10 steps and continue straight down Rue Ravignan. You'll pass an inviting café with fine terrace seating and views, and the Pâtisserie Gilles Marchal, selling top-end treats. Continue down Rue Ravignan to the T-intersection with Rue des Abbesses. (At this point, you could turn left to return to Place des Abbesses, where we started our walk—with several good lunch options.) But we'll turn right on Rue des Abbesses. Continue a few blocks on this thriving neighborhood street, past bakeries, cheese shops, and tempting cafés. When you come to Rue Lepic, consider a short detour uphill on that street to #54, where you'll find...*

⓰ Vincent van Gogh's House

Vincent van Gogh lived here with his brother Theo from 1886 to 1888, enjoying a grand city view from his top-floor window. In those two short years, Van Gogh transformed from a gloomy Dutch painter of brown and gray peasant scenes into an inspired visionary with wild ideas and Impressionist colors.

• *Retrace your steps down Rue Lepic to Rue des Abbesses and make a hard right at #36 (still Rue Lepic). Proceed downhill on Rue Lepic, now a lively market street. Take in the small shops and bustling ambience. Two blocks down, on the corner to your right (at #15), you'll find the pink...*

⓱ Café des Deux Moulins

For some time after it was featured in the quirky 2001 film *Amélie*, this café was a pilgrimage site for movie buffs worldwide. Today it's just another funky place with unassuming ambience and reasonably priced food and drinks, frequented by the next generation of real-life Amélies who ignore the movie poster on the back wall (long hours daily, 15 Rue Lepic, tel. 01 42 54 90 50).

• Continue downhill on Rue Lepic to Place Blanche. On busy Place Blanche is the...

⓲ Moulin Rouge

Ooh là là. The new Eiffel Tower at the 1889 World's Fair was nothing compared to the sight of pretty cancan girls kicking their legs at the newly opened "Red Windmill." The nightclub seemed to sum up the belle époque—the age of elegance, opulence, sophistication, and worldliness. The big draw was amateur night, when working-class girls in risqué dresses danced "Le Quadrille" (dubbed "cancan" by a Brit). Wealthy Parisians slummed it by coming here.

On most nights you'd see a small man in a sleek black coat, checked pants, a green scarf, and a bowler hat peering through his pince-nez glasses at the dancers and making sketches of them—Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Perhaps he'd order an absinthe, the dense green liqueur (evil ancestor of today's *pastis*) that was the toxic muse for so many great (and so many forgotten) artists. Toulouse-Lautrec's sketches of dancers Jane Avril and Louise Weber, known as La Goulue, hang in the Orsay (see reproductions in the entryway).

After its initial splash, the Moulin Rouge survived as a venue for all kinds of entertainment. In 1906, the novelist Colette kissed her female lover onstage, and the authorities closed the "Dream of Egypt" down. Yves Montand opened for Edith Piaf (1944), and the two fell in love offstage. It has hosted such diverse acts as Ginger Rogers, Dalida, and the Village People—together on one bill (1979). Mikhail Baryshnikov leaped across its stage (1986). And, the club celebrated its centennial (1989) with Ray Charles, Tony Curtis, Ella Fitzgerald, and...a French favorite, Jerry Lewis.

Tonight they're showing...well, find out yourself: Walk into the open-air entryway or step into the lobby to mull over the photos, show options, and prices. Tickets start at about €120. Their souvenir shop is back up Rue Lepic a few steps at #9.

• Our tour is over. The Blanche Métro stop is here in Place Blanche. (Plaster of Paris from the gypsum found on this mount was loaded sloppily at Place Blanche...the white square.)

If you want more, you can stroll eastward down racy Boulevard de Clichy (known as "Pig Alley"), where you'll find another Métro stop (Pigalle) and the start of my Rue des Martyrs boutique stroll (see the Shopping in Paris chapter).

⑲ Pig Alley

The stretch of the Boulevard de Clichy from Place Blanche to Place Pigalle is the den mother of all iniquities. Remember, this was once the border between Montmartre and Paris, where bistros had tax-free status, wine was cheap, and prostitutes roamed freely. Today, sex shops, peep shows, the Museum of Erotic Art, live sex shows, chatty pitchmen, and hot-dog stands line the busy boulevard. Dildos abound.

In the Roaring Twenties, this neighborhood at the base of the hill became a new center of cabaret nightlife. It was settled by African American jazz musicians and WWI veterans who didn't want to return to a segregated America. Black-owned nightclubs sprang up. There was Zelli's (located at 16 bis Rue Fontaine, a block southeast of the Moulin Rouge), where clarinetist-saxophonist Sidney Bechet played. A block away was the tiny Le Grand Duc (at Rue Fontaine and Rue Pigalle), where poet Langston Hughes bused tables. Next door was the most famous of all, Bricktop's (at #73 and then at 66 Rue Pigalle), owned by the vivacious faux-redhead who hosted Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Picasso, the Prince of Wales, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Josephine Baker, and many more. The area was "Harlem East," where rich and poor, black and white, came for a good time.

By World War II, the good times were becoming increasingly raunchy, and GIs nicknamed the Pigalle neighborhood "Pig Alley." Although today's government is cracking down on prostitution, and the ladies of the night are being driven deeper into their red-velvet bars as the area gentrifies, very few think of the great French sculptor Pigalle when they hear the district's name. Bars lining the streets downhill from Place Pigalle (especially Rue Pigalle) are lively with prostitutes eager to share a drink with anyone passing by.