

Marco Men's Club

British Isles Tour Travel Notes

October 22, 2024

I am not going on the British Isles Tour and have never been through Scotland or Ireland. However, as a retired architect with a passion for history, being an experienced European traveler, and having lived in France, I wanted to support your tour by assembling the enclosed travel information to provide you with some background information in order to give more of a sense of history and reality to what you will be experiencing.

I have tried to provide details and back stories on some of the sites that you will be visiting, background on significant people and events that have impacted British Isles history, as well as help to define terms that may further enhance your travel experience. In addition, this information may pique your interest prior to traveling in order to learn more about the places you will be visiting.

As you visit these historic sites throughout the British Isles, think about how and when things were designed or constructed, as well as how and why they have survived through generations. What were the social, cultural, environmental, religious, political, and historical conditions, as well as the technological advances, which led to their creation?

Over the centuries, they have survived natural aging, erosion, vandalism, surrounding destruction, environmental degradation, political influences, and war. However, they exist today often because of meticulous care, preservation, and restoration, recognizing their value to be preserved for future generations to observe and appreciate.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Bruce Dahlquist

(847) 815-9474

Dahlquistbruce@gmail.com

General:

In describing the background of buildings, sites, people, events and organizations, there are terms that will be used to explain what you see. I have tried to identify some of these and provide background information to make them more relevant. Hopefully, this will add more appreciation and depth to what you will experience.

Why is Ireland rainy? Trade winds bring warm moist air from depression centers west of Ireland intersecting with cold air coming down from the north. The result is cloud cover, humidity, and rain. When the warm, humid air is exposed to cooling at night, fog forms in the low-lying areas.

Terms:

- BCE:** Before Common Era
Secular for **BC** – Before Christ
- CE:** Common Era
Secular for **AD** - Anno Domini
- CA:** Latin for circa, or approximately

Organizations:

UNESCO

United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization.

Headquarters in Paris, France.

Founded in 1945 as a successor to the League of Nations International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.

Establishes World Heritage Sites of cultural and national importance, demonstrating influence in a global context.

As of July 2024, there were 1,223 World Heritage Sites.

There are three types of sites:

Cultural Sites:

Historic buildings and town sites, important archeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting.

Natural Sites:

Natural areas that:

Furnish outstanding examples of the Earth's record of life or its geological processes.

Provide excellent examples of ongoing ecological and biological evolutionary processes.

Contain natural phenomena that are rare, superlative or outstanding beauty.

Furnishing habitats for rare or endangered animals or plants or are sites of exceptional biodiversity.

Mixed Heritage Sites:

Elements of cultural *and* natural sites.

An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland

In Irish, **An Taisce** means “The Store or Treasury.”

Established in 1946, and incorporated in 1948.

Mission:

“To protect and celebrate Ireland’s natural and built environment for present and future generations, and to ensure Ireland leads the way in defending a livable planet.”

There are six pillars in three categories:

“Nature – Covered at large a scale by climate and biodiversity, and at a more local level by land and water.

Built Environment with Heritage – Covering the importance of the past and planning, addressing the present and future of our lived environment.

People with Community and Society – Covering how we work with external stakeholder groups and organizations, covering An Taisce’s internally focused operations.”

At each site identified as a National Trust site, try to evaluate which of the pillars exemplifies the significance of that site.

Architectural Styles:

General

While this description does not reflect all architectural styles, it represents the major historic styles found in the British Isles.

Neolithic Era

The Neolithic Era is known as the New Stone Age.

It extended from CA 10,000 BC to 3,500 BC.

The Neolithic culture in Britain occurred between 4,300 BC and 200 BC, coming from the Aegean Sea.

It signaled the beginning in the settlement of human life, cultivating plants and domestic animals instead of relying on hunting and gathering. Evidence making it different than pre-historic humans include: the development of stone tools shaped by polishing and grinding, the settlement of permanent villages, agriculture as well as the invention of the wheel.

Romanesque Architecture

Commonly found between 1000-1200 AD.

These were heavy solid and fortified structures. Their interiors were dark because technology had not evolved, allowing for the creation of large window openings.

The solid, thick walls with a minimum number of windows provided more protection from the wars, which were common.

The Basilica cruciform floor plan of a nave, west portal and apse was typically that of a Latin Cross. The roofs were supported by barrel vaults.

There was little sculpture, ornamentation, with windows and doors having round arches.

In the British Isles, Romanesque Architecture is known as Norman Architecture.

Gothic Architecture

Architecture from the Middle Ages, 12th – 16th Centuries.

Evolved from Romanesque Architecture. This was a period of relative peace and prosperity.

While Romanesque Architecture was heavy, Gothic Architecture provided a sense of lightness through its detailing, sculpture, and ornate decoration.

Gothic Architecture reflected and praised the majesty of God. The details supported this. Historically, churches were built on an East-West axis with the altar and apse facing East.

The reason for this was twofold:

The sun rising in the East symbolizes Christ and Resurrection.

It faces East, toward Jerusalem, as the site of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

The invention of flying buttresses allowed for opening the walls, which allowed for increasing the size of window and door openings.

Interior spaces are bathed in light, particularly with stained glass windows.

The design intent was to have the visitor's eyes focused on the heavens, with the windows being long and narrow. Window and door openings were pointed, encouraging people to focus on the heavens.

The West Portal typically has three door openings, representing:

1. The ascension of Christ
2. The second coming of Christ
3. The life of Virgin Mary

Another interpretation is that openings represent The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Centered within the West Portal is a spectacular stained glass rose window.

Renaissance Architecture

Ran concurrently with the Protestant Reformation (between 1517-1648).

1512: Martin Luther's 95 theses were written, leading to the separation from the Roman Catholic Church.

1534: Henry VIII broke with the Pope, creating the Anglican Church.

With the coming of the Reformation, Gothic Architecture was replaced by simpler design and a more austere architecture design.

Renaissance Architecture reflects the use of Classical orders, mathematically precise ratios of height and width, symmetry, proportion, harmony, and the invention of perspective drawing in art.

Neoclassical Architecture

This was a fashionable style in the 19th century, bringing back the architecture of the Middle Ages, as well as Roman styles and thinking.

The Neoclassical Movement coincided with the 18th Century Age of Enlightenment, and into the 19th Century. The focus was on the celebration of reason and truth, introduced by the scientific revolution.

Preference for blank walls, lacking decoration, grandeur of scale. and dramatic use of columns.

Simplicity of geometric shapes and forms (including the Classic Greek orders of Doric, Ionic and Corinthian, or Roman detail).

Gothic Revival Architecture

Began in the second half of the 17th Century.

It became widespread in the 18th and 19th Century.

Gothic Revival draws upon the architectural elements of the Gothic period including a sense of verticality, decorative patterns, lancet windows, window hoods, and spires.

Contemporary Architecture

You will certainly see great 20th Century architecture in the British Isles. However, stop and think about how with the technology available today, architecture has responded to the same needs of enclosure, light, and protection as were required through the past thousands of years

Ireland:

Settlement in Ireland was to have begun by the Celts (responsible for the Gaelic language), Vikings, Normans, Scottish and English.

Belfast

The name, Belfast, was derived from the Irish term “Beal Feirste” meaning “estuary on the sandbank.” An estuary is defined as “a water passage” where the tide meets a river current.

Prior to 988, settlements were built along the River Liffey.

1177: Belfast was settled by the Anglo-Norman John de Courcy, having built a fort. It was turned into an English occupied region known as “Pale.”

The Protestant settlers arrived from England and Scotland, followed by the Huguenots. Huguenots were a group of French Protestants in the 16th and 17th Centuries who followed the teachings of John Calvin. They were seen as heretics, and persecution against them was officially sanctioned. Children of Protestant parents were removed and given to Catholic families. Many Protestants were forcibly baptized into the Catholic faith.

Because of its positioning, Belfast became a natural harbor where textiles were exported, and tobacco was imported.

In the 19th Century, mechanical engineering and shipbuilding industries developed.

It was here that Harland & Wolf, one of the most advanced successful shipyards in the world built the Titanic in 1912.

1829: The Catholics were emancipated.

1888: Dublin’s 1000th anniversary. It also marked the incorporation of Dublin into the Kingdom of Ireland.

1896: The Belfast City Hall was begun.

1890: St, Anne’s cathedral opened.

1897: The Grand Opera House was designed in an Oriental style.

Belfast Peace Walls:

The purpose of the Peace Walls was to minimize the tension between the Catholics (most of those who were Nationalists saw themselves as Irish) and Protestants (who identified themselves as British). In the 1920’s, peace lines were first constructed. With the civil unrest in the 1969 Northern Ireland riots, larger more permanent walls were constructed. By 2017, there were at least fifty-nine walls, with most being in Belfast. A cease fire in the riots was declared in 1994.

Dublin

Since 1922, Dublin has been the capital of the Irish Republic.

Dublin Castle:

18th Century palace, formerly the center of English power for 7 centuries.

Originally where a Viking fortress once stood.

Was an original Norman (Romanesque) castle from 1202.

Was built to protect Dublin against the native Irish.

On the Main Gate was where English rulers impaled heads of rebelling Irish chieftains.

It was damaged and plundered during the Confederate War between 1641 and 1652.

St. Patrick's Cathedral

St. Patrick was said to have introduced Ireland to Christianity.

The present Gothic form was constructed between 1220 and 1270. However, work began as early as the 12th Century,

It is a Protestant Cathedral and is the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland.

Johnathon Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels, was the Dean from 1713 to 1735.

Christ Church Cathedral

A Protestant Cathedral, it is Ireland's mother church for the Diocese of Dublin.

Earliest manuscripts are located here dating from 1030.

Dunan, (the first Bishop of Dublin) and Sitricu, (the Norse King of Dublin) founded the original Viking church in 1038.

Was built between 1173 and 1220. It was renovated and extended in 1875.

Trinity College

Built in 1592, it was established by Queen Elizabeth I "to civilize" the Irish.

It has remained exclusively a Protestant university for most of its history.

The Trinity College collection showcases the Celtic Book of Kells, an illuminated Christian manuscript of the four Gospels of the New Testament. It is thought to have been crafted by Celtic monks at the Columbian monastery on Iona around 800 AD. It is one of the oldest books in the world. In order to escape the Viking raids, Scottish monks brought the book to Ireland.

Hill of Tara

These are Stone Age ruins underground having an underground passage tomb surrounded by earthworks. The site became truly significant during the Iron Age (between 600 BC and 400 AD). This was during in the Early Christian Period where the high kings of Ireland had their palace.

Giants Causeway

Rock formation of 37,000 hexagonal basalt columns. Legend has it that a giant, Fin MacCumhail (known as Finn McCool) built a roadway to Scotland here. However, scientists say that the formations were formed around sixty million years ago, when the lava flows cooled.

Ardmore

Oldest Christian settlement in Ireland, with people converted by Saint Declan between 350-450 AD – bringing Christianity to Ireland before Saint Patrick.

The traditional burying place of St. Declan.

Still attracts pilgrims on the Feast Day of July 24.

Blarney Castle

A medieval stronghold dating from 1446, built by MacCarthy of Muskerry. It was built on the site of former fortifications.

Located here is the Stone of Eloquence (Blarney Stone).

Legend has it that Robert the Bruce sent MacCarthy a piece of the Stone of Destiny reputed to have "supernatural power" as a "thank you" for sending men to fight with Robert the Bruce in the Battle of Bannockburn. The stone was built into the wall of Blarney Castle during a re-build in 1446. Those who have kissed the Blarney Stone to obtain the Gift of Gab include Sir Walter Scott and Winston Churchill.

Scotland:

Robert the Bruce

Is regarded as a Scottish National Hero

Born: July 11, 1274 -- Died: June 7, 1329

King of Scotland from 1306 – 1329

Came from a family of French Norman descent.

1298: England destroyed the Scottish army except for Stirling Castle.

1299: Robert the Bruce succeeded William Wallace as a "Joint Guardian".

1314: At the Battle of Bannockburn, Robert the Bruce led the Scots in defeating the English under Edward II. He led Scotland during the First War of Scottish Independence, becoming one of the most decisive battles in Scottish history. This freed Scotland from English rule, restoring Scotland as an independent kingdom.

1328: With the Treaty of Edinburgh, Scottish independence was restored.

William Wallace

Born: 1272 – Died 1305

William Wallace was seen as a martyr and a symbol of Scottish independence. He was a Scottish knight who became one of the main leaders of the First War of Scottish Independence.

Margaret, Queen of Scots' death, gave England the chance to take over Scotland.

May 1297: Wallace attacked Lanark, killing the English Sheriff, leading to the rebellion.

September 11, 1297: Led the Scottish to victory at Stirling Bridge in the defeat of England,

March 1298: Was knighted, and appointed Guardian of Scotland.

July 1298: The Scottish army was defeated at the Battle of Falkirk. Wallace escaped to France, and went into exile for 7 years where he tried to gain support for the Scottish cause,

1303: While he was gone, Robert the Bruce signed a truce with England.

The English offered a large sum of money for anyone who killed or captured Wallace.

August 5, 1305: Wallace was captured by England near Glasgow.

August 23, 1405: Was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. He was taken to London to be executed for rebelling. It was in London where he was drawn and quartered, his head was put on a spike on London Bridge, with parts of his body sent to Scottish cities to see, first-hand the price of a revolt.

MacBeth

Born: 1005 - Died: 1057

Was the King of Scotland for 17 years, from 1040-1057.

1040: Killed the ruling King, during a battle in Elgin, becoming King.

Lived at the fortified castle in Dunsinane.

1050: Traveled to Rome for a Papal Jamboree. He encouraged Christianity, and imposed law and order.

1057: Was killed at the Battle of Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire.

Braveheart

Was an epic film in 1995, starring Mel Gibson as William Wallace. It was about the Scottish hero's fight against English domination. While the story was told about events in Scotland, a large part was filmed in Ireland; including the Trim Castle constructed between 1176 and 1220.

Although not necessarily historically accurate, it was based upon the account of Scottish poet Blind Harry.

The quote remembered from the movie was William Wallace saying: "Every man dies, not every man really lives."

The Vikings

The term, "Viking," translates to "Pirate Raid."

The Vikings were a fearsome group of people from Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, Norway).

They lived between 800 AD and 1050 AD.

For over 3 centuries they raided monasteries for treasure in the British Isles. Monasteries were easy, unprotected targets since they were typically located on small, remote coastal areas where the monks could live in seclusion to worship.

In the last decade of the 18th Century, they also began the colonization of the British Isles.

Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle and Henge

One of the most spectacular prehistoric monuments in the British Isles.

Is a Neolithic henge and stone circle like Stonehenge, but older.

Was built by an early Neolithic population in northern Britain.

It is approximately five thousand years old, located in the heart of Orkney. Originally there were thirty-six stones, but only twenty-seven remain.

It is thought that the main ring was constructed between 2600 BC and 2400 BC. The surrounding burial mounds date from between 2500 BC and 500 BC.

1882: One of the first places to be protected as a site of historical significance in the British Isles.

1999: Listed as part of the Orkney World Heritage Site.

As you look at the stone formations, ask yourself.

What was the purpose?

Where did the stones come from?

How were they raised and constructed?

Standing Stones of Stenness

Part of the Neolithic Orkney UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Orkney Islands.

May be the earliest henge monument in the British Isles, built about 5,400 years ago.

Comprised of twelve upright stones. Only four are remaining from the Great Stone Circle ancient ceremonial site celebrating the relationship between the living and past.

Skara Brae

The site was occupied from about 3180 BC to 2500 BC. It is Europe's most complete Neolithic village, consisting of ten clustered flagstone homes. It was first uncovered by a storm in 1850. Skara Brae has been called the Scottish Pompeii, because of how well the site has been preserved.

Stone of Scone

A Celtic legend stated that Jacob (the grandson of Abraham) was said to have used it as a pillow in Bethel (an ancient city in Palestine) when he saw visions of an angel. From the Holy Land, the Stone went to Egypt, Sicily, and Spain.

700 BCE: Went to Ireland and was located on the hill of Tara, where ancient kings of Ireland were crowned.

840 BCE: Was taken by Kenneth MacAlpin to Scone. In Scone, it was then encased, becoming the seat of the Royal Coronation Throne.

1296: AD: When England invaded Scotland, the Stone of Scone was moved to London.

1307 AD: A special throne was built in Westminster Abbey, with the stone fit under it. It became the Coronation Chair where the Kings of England and Scotland were crowned.

1950 AD: Four Scottish nationals (students from Glasgow University) stole it from Westminster Abbey. One of the men and the woman sat in the car while waiting for the others to come out of Westminster Abbey. A police officer came by and saw them. Instead of recognizing what they were doing, he thought that they were a couple just "making out"; and told them to move on - which they did and escaped. The nationals returned the Stone to Scotland. Four months later, it was then returned to England, with the nationals being arrested - but later released. One of the Scottish nationals later said, "No one was harmed - to do something for country that spills not a drop of blood is something to be proud of."

1996 AD: Was relocated to Edinburgh Castle.

A replica of the Stone of Scone is now at the Scone Palace in Scotland.

Scone Palace

Was constructed during the 12th Century in the Gothic Style, typical of the period.

Ancestral home of the Earls of Mansfield, located near the village of Scone and the city of Perth, Scotland. 1559:

Damaged as part of the Scottish revolution, but rebuilt in the Gothic Revival Style between 1802-1807.

The Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews

Founded in 1754 by twenty-two noblemen, professors, and landowners. One of the oldest golf clubs in the world, it was originally called the Society of St. Andrews Golfers.

1834: It was recognized by King William IV and proclaimed the Home of Golf.

It is a private members-only club, with 2,400 members.

The Royal and Ancient Club organizes golf tournaments, including the British Open.

The Club does not own any golf courses.

1897: It codified the Rules of Golf.

The Old Course at St. Andrews

The course was originally known as the Golfing Grounds of St. Andrews.

Considered the oldest golf course in the world.

Golf was first played here on the Links of St. Andrews in the early 15th Century.

Golf was growing in popularity in Scotland until James II of Scotland banned the game in 1457, because young men were playing too much golf, instead of practicing their archery.

The ban was upheld by James III.

1502: James IV became a golfer and removed the ban.

1552: The Archbishop gave the townspeople right to play golf on the Links

The Old Course was called "The Old Lady" or "The Grand Old Lady."

1797: The course went bankrupt. The Town Council of St. Andrews allowed rabbit farming on the golf course to challenge golf for popularity. This led to twenty years of legal battling between golfers and landowners.

1821: A local landowner bought the land, saving land for golf.

The Cathedral of St. Andrews

1160: Construction began, taking 150 years to build.

This is the largest church ever built in Scotland. It was the center of Medieval Catholic Churches in Scotland and one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Europe.

1272: A storm destroyed the West front.

1308: King Edward I of England removed the lead from the roof to use for ammo in the siege of Stirling Castle.

1318: Was dedicated by King Robert the Bruce.

16th Century: The Scottish Reformation outlawed Catholic mass.

1559: John Knox preached a sermon in the Church which resulted in the church being "cleansed" and abandoned. This led to the Cathedral falling into disrepair.

Rouen, France

Founded by the Romans.

843: The capital of the Duchy of Normandy.

In the Middle Ages, William the Conqueror and Phillip Augustus turned it into a powerful commercial city.

1456: Was the site of the death of Joan of Arc where she was burned at the stake.

Rouen Cathedral

One of the most famous Gothic Cathedrals in the world.

Destroyed during the Viking invasions in 841 AD and the Allied bombing in 1944.

Has the highest spire in France.

Has the heart of Richard the Lionhearted.

The Cathedral was painted by the French Impressionist, Claude Monet, between 1892-1893. He painted twenty-eight views of the West Portal at various times of the day in different lights.

Normandy, France

Although I am not going on the British Isles tour this year, next September I am taking a tour through France. A major stop will be in Normandy to see the D-Day memorials; something which has been on my bucket list. Although the D-Day landing occurred on Omaha, Utah, Gold, Sword, and Juno Beaches, I am going to make sure that I visit Omaha Beach. This was the primary landing site of the United States – particularly the First Division of the Army, known as the Big Red One.

With this being such a significant aspect of 20th Century history, I want to learn as much as I can ahead of time to understand what was felt by the soldiers and how they advanced from their landing crafts to the shore, and the land beyond. To do that, I have read a historical book on the D-Day Landing entitled The Dead and those Who Are About to Die, by John McManus. It traces the D-Day landing from the planning in England to the landing itself. Much of it is seen from the soldier's perspective, giving a sense of how they felt and what they experienced. The title of the book is a famous quote by Colonel George Taylor, when rallying his soldiers who were pinned down on the beach, "Only those on the beach are the dead or those who are about to die!"

Another option for learning about the history of D-Day would be to watch the movie or read the book entitled The Longest Day, by Leon Uris. Although it is a story, the movie particularly gives a sense of what it must have been like through the eyes of those planning the invasion, as well as the soldiers who gave their lives. After doing the research, I anticipate that I will have a more educated appreciation of the story surrounding the D-Day invasion when I visit Normandy.

If you are in the Chicago area and are interested, I would suggest visiting Cantigny. Cantigny is a 525-acre estate in Wheaton Illinois, outside of Chicago. It was formerly owned by Colonel Robert McCormick, who fought in World War I as part of the Big Red One. He also was the publisher of the Chicago Tribune and other media outlets. When he died, he left his property to the people of the State of Illinois. On the property is The First Division Museum, tracing the history of the U.S. Army's Big Red One. This an outstanding representation of what the soldiers faced, particularly in WW I, WWII, Viet Nam, and Desert Storm. The reason that I mention it is that the WWII exhibit focuses on the D-Day landing of the Big Red One. As a visitor, you walk through an interactive exhibit – placing you in a landing craft, coming on shore, and working your way past the Nazi entrapment and arms.

Paris, France

When arriving in Paris, there may be 4-5 hours of time available to see the sites of Paris. If there is no pre-arranged Oceanic tour, you will need to be very diligent in your time management. Seeing Paris in 4-5 hours can be called "Mission Impossible". I would suggest researching the sites of Paris ahead of time to efficiently attack Paris. Some sights require tickets ahead of time. If you are sure that a specific landmark is something that you want to see, you may want to consider getting tickets ahead of time. I would check with the cruise director for suggestions and available time.

One option may be to take a hop-on hop-off tour bus. Depending upon the tour company, it will probably stop by the Louvre, Notre Dame, Musee d'Orsay, Champs Elysees, Grand Palais, Trocadero, Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and the Opera Garnier. At each stop, there are other sites nearby that can be visited. One example would be getting off at Notre Dame. Certainly, you will want to see the magnificent Notre Dame, after being restored from fire destroying it. If you have extra time, you may consider visiting the nearby St. Chapelle. St. Chapelle is spectacular 13th Century Gothic chapel completed in 1248. It was built by Louis IX to house artifacts such as the Jesus' Crown of Thorns and a piece of the "true cross" which Louis IX had bought in 1239. The Chapelle is well known for its spectacular 1113 stained glass windows, bathing the interior of the nave with diffused, multi-colored sunlight. The stained-glass panels reflect scenes from the Old and New Testament.

My favorite landmark is the Musee d'Orsay, formerly Gare d'Orsay (the Orsay train station). It houses the collection of the French Impressionist artwork, including Monet's paintings and the work other famous French Impressionists. The adaptive use of Gare d'Orsay is also spectacular in how it was transformed from a train station to an art museum.

Unless you make a special effort to do so, and allot time for it, you will miss the area of Paris known for Montmartre. This is a quaint area overlooking central Paris that includes the Place du Tertre (an intimate artist's square where you can watch the artists paint), the Moulin Rouge with its famous windmill on the roof, and a spectacular view from the Sacre-Coeur Basilica overlooking central Paris.

If you decide to just relax and take in the ambiance of the Paris street scene, get off the bus at the Champs Elysees, find a sidewalk café, have a croque monsieur, and enjoy the vibrant street scene. You will notice how wide the street is and that the buildings on both sides are relatively short. Napoleon III had the engineer Baron Von Hausmann design the boulevard so that if canon fire would knock down the buildings one side, the other side would remain.

What remains from the recent Olympic Games sites would be of interest. Whatever the case, though, in your short visit to Paris, you will not see all of what Paris has to offer. However, Paris is certainly a city to re-visit and enjoy!

Paris, like many other cities in Europe, suffered the ravages of the Nazi invasion during World War II. Besides the destruction of buildings, artwork was also threatened. When visiting the world class art museums in Paris, consider the back story of how paintings, sculptures and other artifacts were saved from Nazi control and how they were found after the war. Specific individuals and organizations can take credit for preserving and recovering the national treasures found in the Louvre, Musee d'Orsay and other museums. When the French realized that the Nazis were going to overtake Paris, they realized that the artwork and valuable papers were in jeopardy and began hiding many examples. Jacques Jaujard, the Director of the French National Museum, led the effort to crate, load, and store thousands of the world's greatest masterpieces. In the Louvre, the French Resistance, in the dead of night was able to save the Winged Victory of Samothrace sculpture, which was sitting on the main stair. The Mona Lisa was also saved, by loading it in an ambulance stretcher in the dead of night, as well.

On June 14, 1944, the Nazis occupied Paris. Then, on June 30th, the directive was given by their High Command to take the great artwork found in Paris. Approximately, 22,000 pieces of art were taken. During this process, Rose Valland, the Director of the Jeu de Paume Museum, surreptitiously recorded the pieces being taken, and where they were being stored. When the Allies landed on D-day and moved toward winning the war, they brought with them a group of art experts to try and locate the hidden artwork. This group was known as the Monument Men. With the assistance of Rose Valland, they were able to find a sizable portion of the stolen artwork.

This is the back story to our being able to view the great artwork at the Louvre, Musee d'Orsay and the other museums. Jacques Jaujard, Rose Valland, the French resistance, as well as the Monument Men, risked their lives so we are now able to view and appreciate this great artwork. To get a better sense of this, you may want to consider reading [The Monument Men](#) or watching movie prior to the tour.

The same thing was happening throughout Europe. If you visit the Bruges Museum you may see the Bruges Madonna, or in Ghent, see the Ghent Altarpiece, which were also stolen by the Nazis but recovered,