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In Paris, a Bridge to the Stars

(Branford, CT) Following in the footsteps of A-list film stars turns out to be a surprisingly budget-friendly way to tour Paris.

The wooden pedestrian bridge in Paris known as the Pont des Arts provides “one of the most glorious 360-degree-views in Paris,” proclaims Michael Schuermann, a Paris-based freelance translator and sportscaster. The view from the bridge includes both banks of the Seine, and the Île-de-la-Cité with the spire of Notre-Dame cathedral in the distance. Reason enough, one would think, to make a stop here on any visit to the City of Light.



The view from the Pont des Arts, as you gaze at the Île-de-la-Cité, has been enjoyed by many famous film characters, including Amélie and Inspector Clouseau.

But Schuermann offers another motivation for visiting this site: you can stand where film stars from Audrey Hepburn to Harrison Ford to Steve Martin have stood. “Few Paris-based Hollywood movies seem ready or willing to miss this view,” he explains.

Audrey Hepburn in *Funny Face*, Audrey Tautou in *Amélie*, Tom Everett Scott as the eponymous *American Werewolf in Paris* (when he feels his first wolfish hunger pangs, no less), Jean Reno and Steve Martin in the remake of *The Pink Panther*, and lovers Harrison Ford and Julia Ormond in the 1995 version of *Sabrina* appear on the silver screen at this picturesque bridge.

Schuermann should know: the author of *Paris Movie Walks: Ten Guided Tours Through the City of Lights! Camera! Action!* (just published by The Intrepid Traveler, \$15.95 US) has spent years showing visitors the Parisian sights made famous in films from the French New Wave classics to Hollywood blockbusters like *The Da Vinci Code*.

“I first realized there might be a market for this kind of thing,” he says, “when friends and visitors, having displayed a dutifully polite interest in the former studios of Picasso and Toulouse-Lautrec down our road, suddenly brightened up when told that a scene of *French Kiss* had been shot right underneath their bedroom

window.” Film buff Schuermann discovered more and more locales that had made appearances in cinema over the years. He began making up suggested walking tours that would lead strolling visitors from one film site to the next, in the process incorporating the more traditional sights, sounds, and tastes of the city.

The tours, he found, were ideal for many visitors for a number of reasons. First, of course, there’s the novelty of recognizing the setting of a scene from one of your favorite movies. On a more practical note, though, many of the most popular sites for movies include iconic views of Paris’s landmarks. Too, walking from one to the next allows you to pace yourself, taking anywhere from a couple of hours to a full day to complete a route, depending on whether you decide to pause for shopping, refreshments, or checking out museums along the way. Finally, and, perhaps most importantly these days, self-paced equals budget-friendly, as the views on the street are free and the stops strictly optional.

Eventually, Schuermann put together ten tours to make up *Paris Movie Walks*: four through the heart of the city, four around the periphery of central Paris, and two through the working-class neighborhoods that served as settings for French film classics of the 1930s and 1940s.

Schuermann points out another reason to take his tours, one that follows from the city’s popularity with filmmakers. “Paris is one of the most active film locations in the world,” he notes. “When my editors field tested the walks, they encountered four active film shoots, one of them a John Travolta movie!”

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Movies at the Museum

If you hit the Louvre, notes author Michael Schuermann, the following paintings would be of special interest to the film buff:

- the “Venus de Milo” is referenced in John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge*
- “Winged Victory” shows up in *Funny Face*
- “Raft of Medusa” and “The Death of Sardanapalus” are admired by Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman in *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge*
- a “Self Portrait” of Rembrandt inspired a break-in in *The Lovers on the Bridge (Les amants du Pont-Neuf)*
- and the “Mona Lisa,” of course, shows up in *The Da Vinci Code*.

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By Michael Schuermann

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