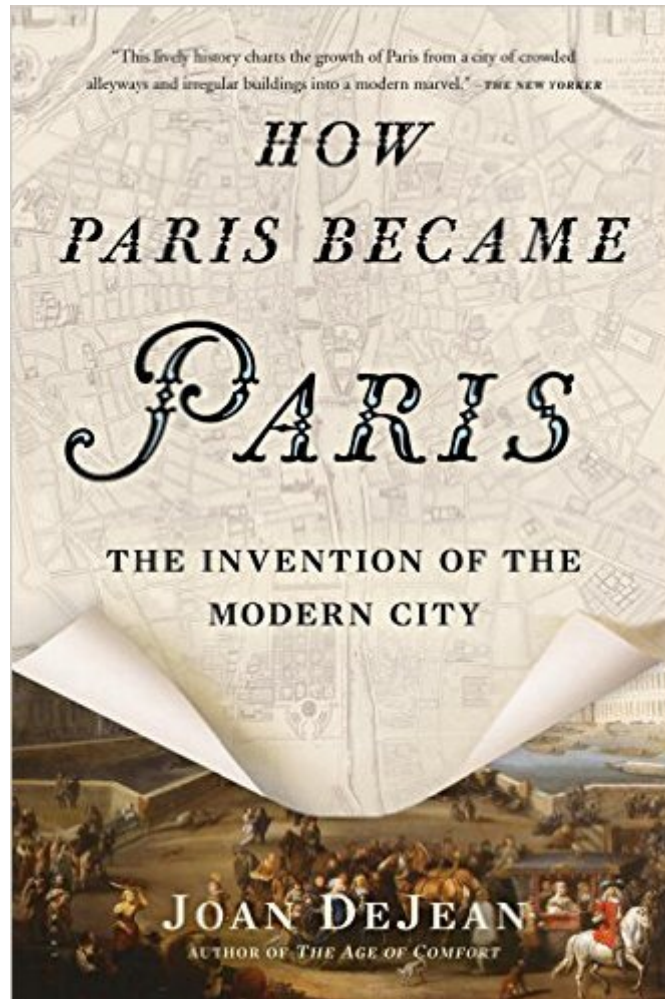


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How Paris Became Paris: The Invention Of The Modern City



Synopsis

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Paris was known for isolated monuments but had not yet put its brand on urban space. Like other European cities, it was still emerging from its medieval past. But in a mere century Paris would be transformed into the modern and mythic city we know today. Though most people associate the signature characteristics of Paris with the public works of the nineteenth century, Joan DeJean demonstrates that the Parisian model for urban space was in fact invented two centuries earlier, when the first complete design for the French capital was drawn up and implemented. As a result, Paris saw many changes. It became the first city to tear down its fortifications, inviting people in rather than keeping them out. Parisian urban planning showcased new kinds of streets, including the original boulevard, as well as public parks and the earliest sidewalks and bridges without houses. Venues opened for urban entertainment of all kinds, from opera and ballet to a pastime invented in Paris, recreational shopping. Parisians enjoyed the earliest public transportation and street lighting, and Paris became Europe's first great walking city. A century of planned development made Paris both beautiful and exciting. It gave people reasons to be out in public as never before and as nowhere else. And it gave Paris its modern identity as a place that people dreamed of seeing. By 1700, Paris had become the capital that would revolutionize our conception of the city and of urban life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I freely admit I will read/watch just about anything that has Paris as its subject, or even uses that city as a background, but this book took me ages to finish. (A highly unusual situation for me it must be

said!) So constantly I got the feeling that I was just reading the same page over again. The author knows her material, and presents it in quite a conversational tone but repeats and repeats similar anecdotes and facts until you get this odd feeling of déjà vu. Yes Paris may have been innovative in so many ways but again and again we are told this and she lauds the praises of that particular city so constantly that even I became more than a little bored, ...and I hasten to add that Paris is my very favourite city in the world! Each chapter is devoted to another area or field where Paris apparently "led the way" in becoming "modern". Now there's next to nothing on the very extensive work carried out under the direction of Baron Haussmann at all, ...everything here takes place in the 16th/17th centuries and basically starts off with the removal of the surrounding defensive walls, the building of the Pont Neuf with footpaths, Place des Vosges, Place Vendome, and the development of the up until then barren Ile St. Louis. She charts the rise of shops and also what we would call "developers" and "financiers", but I think they were probably more like astute speculators than anything else. Oh, and she does harp on (and on!) about the streets being "lit", ...but as this was only by single candles, suspended one to a street so I don't think the "city of light" was all that bright for quite some time.

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