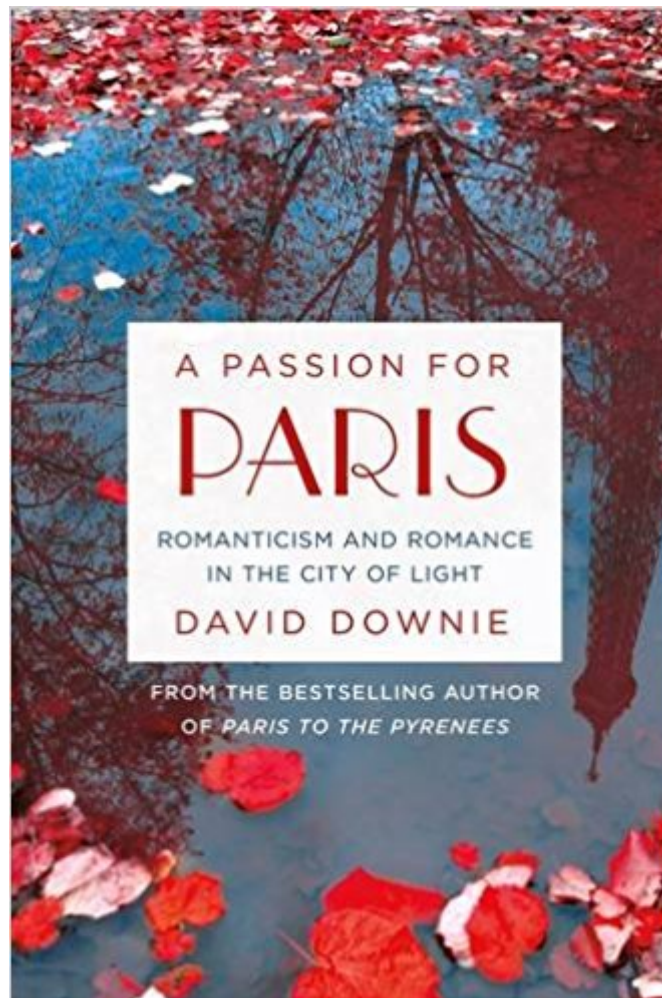




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# **A Passion For Paris: Romanticism And Romance In The City Of Light**



## Synopsis

"A top-notch walking tour of Paris. . . . The author's encyclopedic knowledge of the city and its artists grants him a mystical gift of access: doors left ajar and carriage gates left open foster his search for the city's magical story. Anyone who loves Paris will adore this joyful book. Readers visiting the city are advised to take it with them to discover countless new experiences." —Kirkus Reviews (starred) A unique combination of memoir, history, and travelogue, this is author David Downie's irreverent quest to uncover why Paris is the world's most romantic city—and has been for over 150 years. Abounding in secluded, atmospheric parks, artists' studios, cafes, restaurants and streets little changed since the 1800s, Paris exudes romance. The art and architecture, the cityscape, riverbanks, and the unparalleled quality of daily life are part of the equation. But the city's allure derives equally from hidden sources: querulous inhabitants, a bizarre culture of heroic negativity, and a rich historical past supplying enigmas, pleasures and challenges. Rarely do visitors suspect the glamor and chic and the carefree atmosphere of the City of Light grew from and still feed off the dark fountainheads of riot, rebellion, mayhem and melancholy—and the subversive literature, art and music of the Romantic Age. Weaving together his own with the lives and loves of Victor Hugo, Georges Sand, Charles Baudelaire, Balzac, Nadar and other great Romantics Downie delights in the city's secular romantic pilgrimage sites asking, Why Paris, not Venice or Rome—the tap root of "romance"—or Berlin, Vienna and London—where the earliest Romantics built castles-in-the-air and sang odes to nightingales? Read *A Passion for Paris: Romanticism and Romance in the City of Light* and find out.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A top-notch walking tour of Paris | Downie is the consummate guide” [The author’s encyclopedic knowledge of the city and its artists grants him a mystical gift of access: doors left ajar and carriage gates left open foster his search for the city’s magical story. Anyone who loves Paris will adore this joyful book. Readers visiting the city are advised to take it with them to discover countless new experiences.]

• Kirkus, STARRED review “Paris has been cherished, admired, analyzed for centuries, yet in his wildly entertaining, operatic *A Passion for Paris*, David Downie seems to offer up a whole new place. Writing with an engaging informality, he delves into this most romantic of cities, then and now, focusing particularly on the Romantic Age and its people. . . . Whether the author is leading us into Flaubert’s study or onto the terrace of today’s Deux Magots, there’s a rare excitement in the air--as if Puccini’s Bohemians were united in song, somewhere off stage.”

• Penelope Rowlands, author of *Paris Was Ours* “Victor Hugo, AdÃle and Juliette, Saint-Beuve, Nadar, George Sand and a host of other great figures of French history come alive in David Downie’s compelling and often wickedly humorous investigation of romance and romanticism in the City of Light. Most travelers agree that Paris is by far the most romantic city in the world but thanks to Downie’s extensive research, passionate sleuthing and inspired imagination, they’ll now know why. This unusual and exquisitely told tale of French romanticism is a must-read for true Paris lovers.”

• Harriet Welty Rochefort, author of *French Toast and Joie de Vivre* “On Paris, Paris” “An entertaining read. David Downie is fabulous company!”

• Jacki Lyden, “All Things Considered,” NPR “Downie’s adroit, learned, and ambitious book reinvigorates my sense of travel, taking me back to the happy knowledge that the world is still large, and history unfathomably deep.”

• Frances Mayes, author of *Under the Tuscan Sun* “David Downie is the master of educated curiosity. I have walked some of the city’s streets with him, and reading this book is just as tactile an experience.”

• Michael Ondaatje

DAVID DOWNIE, a native San Franciscan, lived in New York, Providence, Rome and Milan before moving to Paris in the mid-80s. He divides his time between France and Italy. His travel, food and arts features have appeared in leading print and on-line publications including *Bon AppÃtit*, *Gourmet*, *Saveur*, *Epicurious.com*, and *Gault & Millau*, the premier French food guide. He is the author of over a dozen nonfiction books, including the highly acclaimed *Paris*, *Paris* and *A Passion for Paris*.

David Downie has written a remarkable and unexpected tale of the 19th century Romantics of Paris.

Deeply grounded in French literature, art and history, he shows readers the physical Paris that was inhabited by Victor Hugo, Balzac, George Sand, Baudelaire, Delacroix and others. Not only where they met, but what their neighborhoods were like, how far apart from one another they lived, and which streets they took to their assignations. Reading, it's possible to follow in their wake imaginatively or even to make your own Romantic map for the next time you are there. Do this and you will time travel to a different Ile Saint Louis from the high-toned one you know. 150 years ago, Bohemia existed there, and can still be traced. Was the Marais always chic? No -- it was both Royal and Bohemian, and ruled by Victor Hugo, more famous than any writer would ever be again. The Montmartre of the Romantics was hilly, grassy, with pasturing goat herds and the freshest of fresh air. The windmills were utterly for real, and the artists' studios were vast, light and cheap. If you have ever wondered how the great Romantics bodily inhabited Paris, how long it took them to walk from one haunt to another, and how much of what they did and saw is available to you today, then read this book. Seeing their art and poetry in a new context that no one but David Downie could provide, you will want a date to meet a like-minded friend under the bust of Chopin in the Luxembourg Gardens, and set off make their trail your own. If you could use an architectural disquisition on why Haussmann's Paris feels and looks all wrong, then there's one here that you can "dine out on for a year." The bountiful illustrations from diverse sources are a delight -- as real and nostalgic as theater ticket stubs. Alison Harris makes a superb photographic contribution to this book. Almost best of all, reading the final pages, you will realize the answer to a question you may never even have posed -- how Romantic are you?

David Downie offers a book of scholarship and reflection in 'A Passion For Paris.' He has a personal interest in studying the Romantic Movement in France and specifically in Paris. So...he walks the streets and cemeteries and makes detailed notes about where Romantic artists and writers lived and are buried; where courtesans held literary salons; he delves into writings by authors and critics to illuminate the movement; he looks at society and social unrest and changing governments during the unfolding of this long-lived movement. All along the way, he makes it clear what this time means to him during his years of living in the city and so...it means much more to us than it otherwise would have.

I thought I knew everything there was to know in my old Parisian Quartier! But, I learned so much not only about my neighborhood but the brilliant visionaries (along with some great juicy tid bits as well) who came before me!! Thanks to David Downie on my next trip up to Paris I have a list of

things I want to see ! I even bought the kindle edition for my iPad too, So I'll have it with me as I search for those hidden treasures. If you love Literature and love Paris you won't be able to put this book down!! I've dragged it out forever not wanting to finish it!!

I have read many books by David Downie starting with the fabulous Paris, Paris. I loved this new one. Mr. Downie does an amazing job of combining his knowledge of history, literature, architecture and Paris and takes the reader on a tour of the city with some of its best known authors. As we slip into the lives of Victor Hugo, George Sand, Balzac and others the reader comes to see the Paris they knew and visit what is left of it in modern Paris. It is difficult to describe what a wild ride it is. The book was so entertaining, and insightful, so filled with startling information that I wanted to start rereading it almost immediately.

It is easy in the throes of passion to lose all sense of equilibrium and plunge head first into a saccharine rhapsody. However David Downie has managed to write a love song to Paris with intimate precision, wit, intelligence and not a trace of sentimentality. He delves into the layers of the collective romantic Parisian psyche with investigative charm, portraying characters (both real and literary), relationships of every possible permutation, and the architectural details of their lives. His ability to weave history, culture, politics, art, and urban landscape, illuminate why Paris is the empress of romanticism. David Downie is a *fabulous fabulist*.

David Downie is unparalleled at transporting a reader back in time to a street, in a room, eavesdropping on a conversation in Paris. His fastidious research and a willingness to cross boundaries - literally (he's always sneaking past guards and through unsecured gates to excavate the ambiance of history)- gives flesh, smell and texture to every person and setting from the era of Romanticism highlighted in this latest tome. Keep a map of Paris nearby as you read *A Passion for Paris* and you can follow the paths and back alleys used by the likes of George Sand, Victor Hugo, Alexander Dumas and more of the incredible coterie of intellectuals and artists who inhabited Paris, and each other's beds, contemporaneously. I kept flipping to his index to confirm that this much talent and joie de vivre existed in one point in time. I never want Downie's books to end and can't wait to see where his erudite curiosity takes him next.

Brilliant study of the great artists that give us modern day Paris. Well written, and different, it is more a memoir than a fiction novel, and is therefore personal and engaging as a story. My only restraint is

to say that to get wrapped up in the story most people would prefer a familiarity with the "City of Light" and especially with the many, many renowned artists and writers referenced. Otherwise, this is a very interesting read and certainly enlightened me about the 'passions' I have over looked during my many visits.

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