

Cafés are important parts of the Parisian landscape and places where all social classes get together to socialise.

They have played a part in artistic and literary history for centuries.

The first café in the 17th century

Le Procope changed the places where people went to drink - taverns - **by the drink it served (coffee)**, but also **by its decoration and layout**: small marble tables surrounded by chairs and paintings on the walls. Its clientele became more elegant. Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau frequented them and topics of conversation involved politics, religion, philosophy, i.e. putting the world to rights ... The popularity of cafés had begun! In the late 17th century, Paris had around ten cafés. A century later it boasted around 900.



Meeting and discussion places

During the French Revolution in 1789, cafés were **places for debate and calls for action**. At the end of the 18th century, on the great boulevards, **show audiences** were frequent customers: when the Paris Opera House was built in 1876, the Café de la Paix opened too. In the 19th century, the best-known cafés could be found on Montmartre hill where the painters Renoir, Monet and Pissarro invented **Impressionism**. Not long after, the painters Renoir, Manet and Degas met in the cafés of the New Athens, south of Montmartre, and laid **the foundations of modern art**.



At Montparnasse

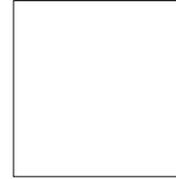
After the Dôme and the Rotonde, the elegant Coupole was founded in 1927 and became popular with Picasso, De Chirico, Foujita and Man Ray. This was also the **age of the literary Left Bank cafés**, with the Flore, Deux Magots and Brasserie Lipp, whose clientele included the intellectuals Jean- Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, **the film-makers of the New Wave** like Jean- Luc Godard and François Truffaut, and poets including Jacques Prévert.



Changing places

Since the 1980s-90s, prices have been going up and traditional coffee has become more of a luxury, more fashionable. Lots of cafés have turned into restaurants. **There's no longer just café singular but cafés plural**: café lounges are more comfortable with armchairs and sofas, cafés that look like traditional cafés and themed bars (poetry, music, arts). Fast food has also appeared at more affordable prices. Of the 400,000 cafés that were in business after the war, 50,000 are still around today. We don't go to cafés in the same way anymore: no longer on a daily basis but to go out or for special occasions.

Did you know?



Works of art at the Coupole

The **Coupole** was the largest café in Paris when it was built, standing broad at 800m². In the main room **32 pillars** were needed to support the **Art Déco style** building. **27 painters from the Montparnasse district decorated it** - including Fernand Léger. Legend has it that they were paid in drinks. You can see the portrait of the dancer and singer Joséphine Baker, surrounded in feathers. In 2008, **the dome of the Coupole was painted by 4 world-famous contemporary artists**. The themes are woman, nature and festivities.

He said:

"Le café, c'est le salon du pauvre"

This is what **the French sociologist Joffre Dumazedier** (1915-2002) said about cafés. For the café is where we meet to talk while sitting comfortably, as if we were in our own lounge. **People who don't have a lounge in their own flat go to cafés to meet up instead.**