

Paris – Highlights by John Broadhurst.

The Palace of Versailles

The Palace of Versailles, a veritable treat,
Well worth the visit; but hard on the feet.
The most impressive chateau we have seen,
Built long ago, by Louis Fourteen,
Room after room on which to feast your eyes
There's no way one could disguise
The magnificence of this unique place,
Its wonders mirrored in every face.
The Hall of Mirrors, 70 feet long
Seems to add numbers to the enormous throng
Of people from every race
Shuffling round at snail's pace
So as to savour the majesty of it all
With mirrors on nearly every wall.
By chance we found out they did provide
In the King's Chamber, an auto guide
Telling of the Louis Kings' place in history
Which till that point had been a mystery.

We walked along the tree lined drives
With statues which depict the lives
And splendour of this great chateau
Standing proudly on its plateau.
In contrast, the enormous trees
Tiny trimmed hedges which kept the breeze
Away from the flowers, freshly planted;
Making us glad that we had been granted
The chance to see architecture, the French way.
It was a marvellous way to spend the day.
In the Orangery there were lots
Of palm trees in great green wooden 'pots'
And citrus fruits of every kind,
The last place you would expect to find
Tropical plants, but that was Versailles
No wonder its the apple of every French eye.

Fontainebleau

Musee National du Chateau
The guide book said it was a good place to go.
It also said it was easy to find;
Which was very like the blind leading the blind.
We asked at the Office of Information
The best way to get to our destination.
Take the Metro to the Gare de Lyon'
A proper train's the best one to be on;

But the Gare de Lyon is very large
With crowds of people, but no-one in charge
To tell you which train to take,
And we thought it would be a piece of cake.
We ended up on Platform Nine
Convinced it was the Fontainebleau line.
The French trains lived up to their reputation,
And we were soon at our destination
Only to find when it put us down
The Chateau's at the other end of town;
But undaunted, and with the minimum of fuss
We got on board a 'bendy' bus.

The Chateau is huge
A hunting refuge
With grounds which stretch for mile upon mile
And gardens of the simple style.
It all gave out an air of calm and tranquillity
This ancient home of the French nobility.
However, they are a secretive bunch
And by the time we found the entrance, they'd closed for lunch.
So off we went to lie by the lake
And of the peaceful scene partake.
We had a snack for something to do
Then we went and joined the queue.
As though to set the scene
As this place once had been.
Outside we saw a horse and cart
While inside were the treasures of Bonaparte.
Chandeliers and tapestries were there
Which made you just want to stop and stare;
From the ornate chapel, still beautiful in the gloom,
To the well lit, elegant king's ballroom.
The coloured upholstery changed as we went
All indicating the time that was spent
Satisfying the egos of the French Nobility
Whilst building the peasants' fiery hostility
Against those who had it all for sure.
No wonder the French kings are no more.

The Pompidou Centre

We have all heard of the Pipes of Pan
Pipes are a monument to the Pompidou man.
President of France some years ago
Why he gave his name to this place I'll never know.
Pipes and tubes inside and out
A visible monstrosity without a doubt.
The Pompidou Centre for its part
Was built to house the world's modern art.

Paintings and sculptures of every kind
All the famous artists you will find.
Much of it is vaguely absurd;
Art has to be an elastic word.
For me, enough was the briefest look
So, I sat down and read my book;
While Jeanette took the whole lot in;
At least she was glad we'd been!