



MAGAZINE
OPENINGS, THE BUDDHIST TRAVELER IN | SOCIETY & ENVIRONMENT

The Buddhist Traveler in Paris

Not just for lovers, the City of Light holds treasures for dharma devotees in all seasons.

By Jennifer Ladonne | WINTER 2019



There are plenty of opportunities to practice Buddhism in France's capital city.



Buddhism in France has come a long way since 1912, when the writer and explorer Alexandra David-Néel introduced herself to the 13th Dalai Lama as “the first Buddhist in Paris.” Today, in a population of around 67 million, there are an estimated 600,000 Buddhists countrywide—two-thirds of Asian origin, with the majority from China and the former French Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). Another 5 million or so French consider themselves Buddhist “sympathizers.” These numbers may be surprising in this land of ardent secularists, but when it

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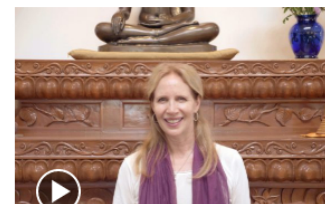
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comes to Buddhism, and especially His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the French have a major soft spot.

The Buddhist traveler in Paris will find plenty of opportunities to practice meditation, hear Buddhist teachings, and view Buddhist art. Though most meditations and classes are conducted in French, they are easy to follow for those with a rudimentary understanding of the language, and many visiting teachers offer talks in English with French translation.



Centra Kalachakra Paris

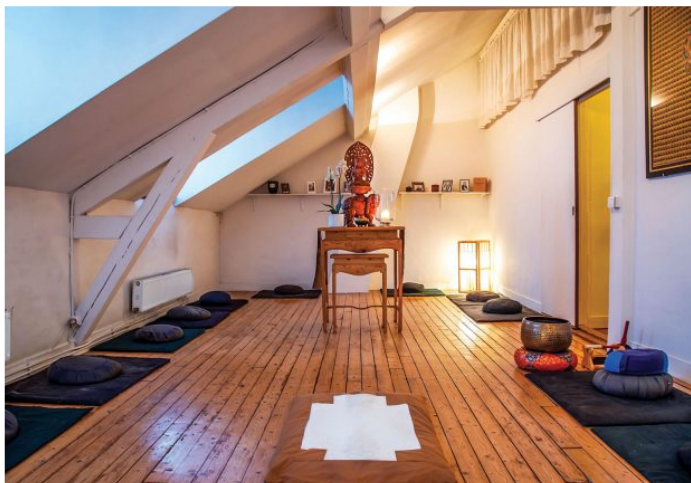
1|Centre Kalachakra Paris

Steps from the scenic Quai de Valmy on the Napoleon-era Canal Saint-Martin is the Kalachakra Center, the Paris branch of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). Along with daily sitting meditation, the center offers a range of activities open to all, such as workshops and teachings in French and English and retreats and initiations with prominent Gelugpa teachers including FPMT co-founder Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and Ven. [Robina Courtin](#).

5 Passage Delessert

10th arrondissement centre

kalachakra.com



Centre Dana Sangha Paris

2|Centre Dana Sangha Paris

Founded in 1994 by Catherine Genno Pagès Roshi, a Soto Zen teacher and dharma heir of Dennis Genpo Merzel Roshi, this Zen Buddhist center in the



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neighboring suburb of Montreuil welcomes visitors to its daily morning and evening meditations, and periodic weekend and weeklong retreats. Meditation instruction is in French, but everyone at the center speaks fluent English.

22 Avenue Pasteur

Montreuil, France

dana-sangha.org/Eng/



Grande Pagode du Bois de Vincennes

3|Grande Pagode du Bois de Vincennes

Built as the Cameroon Pavilion for the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931, the pagoda is now the headquarters of the Buddhist Union of France (UBF). Its conical thatched roof shelters Europe's largest Buddha, 30 feet high and overlaid in 23-carat gold. Be aware that except for Tibetan New Year (February 25-27 in 2020), the Pagoda is open to the public only from April through October for special teachings and Buddhist holidays, and for the Festival pour la Paix à Paris in February.

40 Route de Ceinture du Lac Daumesnil

12th arrondissement

bouddhisme-france.org



Kagyü Dzong

4|Kagyü-Dzong

Established by the Karma Kagyu master Kalu Rinpoche and linked to the 17th Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Kagyu-Dzong offers a variety of daily classes and meditations, as well as regular teachings and empowerments, many conducted in English, by such spiritual masters as Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche. The Tibetan Bhutanese-style temple sits near the Grande Pagode in the Bois de Vincennes.

40 Route de Ceinture du Lac Daumesnil

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kagyu-dzong.fr

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5|Parc Floral deParis

Also in the Bois de Vincennes is the Parc Floral de Paris, the city's loveliest park and botanical garden. The Jardin des Quatres Saisons (Garden of Four Seasons) and the Japanese Bonsai Pavilion, with 500 specimens, can be enjoyed year-round.

Route de la Pyramide

12th arrondissement

parcfloraldeparis.com/fr



Musee Guimet

6|Musée Guimet

Home to one of Europe's finest and most extensive collections of Asian art and Buddhist masterpieces, the Musée Guimet is a must on any Buddhist art lover's itinerary. Highlights include a world-renowned assemblage of Tibetan Buddhist thangkas; among the dozens on display are several from the private collection of Alexandra David-Néel, acquired during her travels in Tibet.

6 Place d'Iéna

16th arrondissement

guimet.fr

7|Musée Cernuschi

Here's good news for travelers planning a spring trip to Paris: The exquisite Musée Cernuschi reopens in March or April 2020 after a renovation. "Art is a shared human language," declared Henri Cernuschi, an economist, banker, and avid collector who began amassing Asian treasures during a late 19th-century sojourn in the Far East. Upon his return, Cernuschi built a mansion near the Parc Monceau for his collection; its crown jewel is a monumental 15-foot-tall bronze Amitabha Buddha.

7 Avenue Velasquez



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Jennifer Ladonne is a Paris-based journalist, counselor and meditation teacher.



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