Favorite Cinema Set in Paris & France

Films are a great way to pique your interest of the city. Amélie and Midnight in Paris are light hearted and show terrific Parisian scenes.

Le Dinner de Cons - Friends have a weekly fools' dinner, where each friend finds and brings an idiot in a secret competition for the worst simpleton as sadistic fun for all. Pierre meets the perfect champion moron for the coming dinner

Une Heure de Tranquilité - Having just unearthed a precious vinyl record at an amazingly low price in a second-hand shop, a middle-aged dentist needs one hour of peace to enjoy the rare album. However, his distraught wife, his activist son, his mistress and a maladroit plumber have other plans for his time

Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain (2002) - or simply 'Amélie ' as it was released in the US is about an innocent and naive girl in Paris with her own sense of justice. She decides to help those around her and, along the way, discovers love.

Midnight in Paris - Woody Allen: On vacation in Paris, a married man who is a goofy killjoy. While on one of his lonely excursions he comes upon a group of characters who seemingly take him back in time to the age of jazz and amongst the literary and artists of times gone by. He slowly falls in love

Mon Oncle - Jacques Tati: Monsieur Hulot visits the technology-driven world of his sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, but he can't quite fit into the surroundings.

Rififi - Four men plan a technically perfect crime, a tough-guy robbery of a secure Parisian jewelry boutique. Human element intervenes

La Grande Vadrouille - Several ordinary but comedic Frenchmen go on an epic voyage through the occupied WWII France to the Allied zone as they help British pilots in Paris avoid Nazi captivity.

Le Prénom - Vincent is about to become a father. At a social dinner with spouses and childhood friends he announces the name for his future son. The scandalous name ignites a discussion which surfaces unpleasant matters among all.

Diabolique - The wife and the mistress of a loathed school principal together plan to murder him with what they believe is the perfect alibi.

Paris, je t'aime - Through the neighborhoods of Paris, love is veiled, revealed, imitated, sucked dry, reinvented, and awakened. This two-hour film is composed of 18 short quirky segments by well known directors and actors set in 18 Paris neighborhoods.

A Bout de Soufle - Jean-Luc Godard: Breathless - A small-time thief steals a car and impulsively murders a motorcycle policeman. Wanted by the authorities, he reunites with a hip American journalism student and attempts to persuade her to run away with him to Italy.

Les Quatre Cent Coups - François Troufaut: The 400 Blows - A young boy, left without attention, delves into a life of petty crime.

French Kiss - A woman flying to France to confront her straying fiance gets into trouble when the charming crook seated next to her uses her for smuggling.

Manon des Sources - A beautiful but shy shepherdess plots vengeance on the men whose greedy conspiracy to acquire her father's land caused his death years earlier.

Three Colors: Blue - First “Three Colors Films,” Blue depicts A woman struggles to find a way to live her life after the death of her husband and child.

La Règle du Jeu - A bourgeois life in France at the onset of World War II, as the rich and their poor servants meet at a French chateau.

Ratatouille (2007) This is an animated movie so you won’t get ‘real-life Paris’ but it’s such a fun movie to watch. It’s especially great if you have children as they will surely love it, but as an adult, it was worth it for sure. We loved it! It’s about a rat who loves cooking (bear with me) and arrives in Paris not knowing what to do until he ends up at a famous restaurant there and unwittingly to start with helps a young man in the kitchen who is a useless cook. But the rat is a great cook and with him showing the young man how to cook the food soon becomes a big hit. I’ll avoid the spoilers of what happens.

Les Miserables is set during the French Revolution and is a classic stage musical, although the movie that I liked has nothing musical in it, just the hard life of a convict who tries to start his life anew and to do good, but is constantly hounded and chased by a police detective intent on ‘bringing him back to justice’. A look at Paris during the French revolution so is great to get some history about Paris during that time to understand the history of the city better and also has a very good humanitarian story to it. Essential watching for those interested in history. There have been many versions of Les Miserables put into movies. I recommend the one from 1998 with Liam Neeson and also the 2012 one.

Hugo (2011) - Hugo is directed by Martin Scorsese so you know you’re in for a good movie. But this is no gangster movie that he normally does but a lighthearted story about 12-year-old Hugo, an orphaned boy in the 1930s Paris who lives in a train station. Hugo’s most prized item is a mechanical man that his father, who had died, took from a museum. During the course of the movie Hugo tries to discover exactly what the mechanical man is and what its importance is. That’s just a brief outline of what is a magical story that older children should enjoy, as well as parents.

Band of Outsiders (1964) - One of the classics of French New Wave cinema. 2 men enlist the help of a woman to help commit a heist after being inspired by their Hollywood antiheroes in film noir. The 3 misfits have a lot of fun along the way, whether romping through the Louvre or dancing in cafes until the robbery comes along. It’s a unique film from its time and has some great set pieces in Paris.

La Haine (1995) - La Haine translates into English as ‘hate’ and that symbolizes a lot of what this movie is. It’s about the lives of 3 youths living in a rundown housing project on the edges of Paris. They are multi-raced boys and live in poverty and have a rage inside against the system that doesn’t help them. When a youth from the project is tortured by police riots break out in Paris and during these moments the 3 young men find a gun lost by the police and then use it as leverage to get their friend released. One of the best movies about Paris to get a glimpse into the other side of the city you won’t see in the travel guides.

The Da Vinci Code (2006) - After a murder in the Louvre Museum mysteries are found in Leonardo Da Vinci’s paintings that unravel a 2000 year old secret that could… well I don’t want to give to many spoilers so I’ll stop here. It’s a cool movie and it’s not all set in Paris so don’t expect non-stop Paris action. But it’s a fun fictional movie to watch.

Are Your Favorite French / Parisian Films Missing?

Let us know in the discussion page directly following

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