

Paris

The City Of Locks

Paris, the “City of Light,” the “City of Love,” and sometimes a city of *jinn* and of angels. I also call it the “City of Locks,” as a phenomenon has spread among lovers who will write their names on a padlock, hang it on the grates of the iron bridges, and toss the key into the river. The municipality has removed more than 40 tons of these “love locks” from the city’s bridges and replaced the nets above the bridges with glass. But the lovers' locks began to spread elsewhere, and frankly, the view was a beautiful reflection of thousands of love stories hanging on these bridges. I would often stand and ponder the names and dates written on those locks, and I would like to inform their owners that love stories don’t always have a happy ending, so it may be better if you save yourselves the trouble. I suppose this is a bit of advice that some would find too pessimistic.

I hold a special love and sympathy for Paris which began thirty-six years ago when I was sent by the Ministry of Oil to attend a six-month course at the French Petroleum Institute. It was my first opportunity to compare Europe with my experiences studying in America.

The French people have changed between that time and the present. I seem to remember them being a more headstrong people and much more proud of their language. If you didn't know French, you wouldn’t have an easy time there. On top of that, some of them knew English but refused to speak anything but French. Nonetheless, people have changed, especially the youth.

Of course, financial crises, the growth of the European Union, and immigrants from across Europe have all shaped its character in some ways. What has not changed is the beauty of that city, with its bridges, palaces, and museums all connected in a web of