

Streets of Paris vs Streets of Cincinnati

Paris's streets have an extremely long history. They've been around since BC times when the Parisii formed a settlement on what is now the Île de la Cité. The oldest street in modern Paris is Rue Saint Denis. It was created by the Romans in the first century and can still be walked down today, having survived all the changes made to Paris over its long history. Despite its historic significance, Rue Saint Denis is notorious for prostitutes and sex shops, so it should probably stay out of any travel plans. For less sketchy historic streets, check out the first stone streets, which were seen in Paris in the late 12th century or early 13th century. Rue Saint-Jacques, Saint-Martin, Saint-Antoine, and Saint-Honore were the first cobblestone streets in the city (Wikipedia.org).

The first street in America was First Street, later named Leyden Street, in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was created in 1620 by the Pilgrims and is still in use today. Concrete streets didn't come to Ohio until the 19th century with Court Avenue, which was paved in 1891 (touring-ohio.com). Paris's streets understandably had a much earlier beginning, and generally they were improved and renovated with the newest technology (concrete, pavement, etc) before Ohio's or even the United States' streets.

The Baron Haussman Era brought about the biggest changes to the streets of Paris. Haussmann rebuilt the city in only 17 years between 1853 and 1870, spending 2.5 billion Francs and displacing 350,000 mostly lower class people in the process. On the bright side though, 1/5 of the French working class was employed by him. His renovation of Paris included 80 kilometers (about 50 miles) of new roads that were bigger, wider, and straighter than the ones they replaced in order to ease military movements and make it harder for the rebels to blockade and hide in the streets. It also made traveling significantly easier, especially for horse drawn

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carriages and other carts that could barely fit down the old Paris's streets. Although he was widely supported, he also faced a lot of criticism due to the amount of money he was spending, the people he was displacing, and the fact that all the street fronts were monotonous. In 1870 he was forced to resign because of the changing hands in the government. Despite the fact that they basically fired him, they hired someone else to carry out the rest of his projects. The final one, Boulevard Haussmann, wasn't completed until 1927 (mtholyoke.edu).

The biggest changes in American streets occurred with Industrialization and the Progressive movement. In that time, cities were sprouting up rapidly and the population in those areas was growing exponentially. The streets and systems in place at that time were not equipped to deal with that scale and that amount of traffic, resulting in very congested and unsanitary cities. The Progressive movement came about because of the disease and disorder of this time. It began with the improvement of water supply and sewage, and led to much of the same improvements made during the Haussmann Era. Parks were created and streets were added and improved. In fact, Haussmann's changes to Paris were used as a model for the US until the late 20th century. The US had a much harder time emulating Haussmann's Paris than other parts of Europe did because the states held much less power in America, which meant large renovation projects like that required approval and funding from the national government, which was a lot more challenging to get than just going through the state. This time did result in some beautification of America though, represented best by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago (Britannica.com).

Despite the fact that so many lower class citizens were displaced in Haussmann's time, it did not seem to diminish the number of people living in

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poverty in Paris. In modern times, France has about 142,000 homeless, and Paris's streets are home to approximately 12,000 of them (france24.com), while Cincinnati only has a homeless population of about 9,675 (dropinn.com). Paris is kinder to its homeless though, as they are allowed to sleep in tents on the sidewalks and are not bothered by the police, whereas Cincinnati is ranked 6th meanest city to homeless, and 40% of US cities ban sitting or lying in public (enquirer.com). The general population of Paris is more understanding of the homeless, too, with the majority of them seeing homelessness as the result of unfortunate circumstances rather than the result of drugs and alcohol, which is how most Americans see it.

Another aspect of Paris's streets that is better than Cincinnati's is their public restrooms, called *sanisettes*. There are currently 420 installed throughout the city, getting 3 million uses per year. The first ones were placed in 2002. They originally cost 40 cents per use, but they began making the ones near large homeless populations free (another way Paris is nice to their homeless), and eventually they were all made free (Wikipedia.org). These restrooms are significantly better than any street side porta potties in the US because they flush, they include a sink, soap, and paper towels, and they are self-cleaning. I think one reason for the *sanisettes* is the lack of bathrooms in establishments in Paris. A lot of the shops we went into did not have a bathroom, whereas almost everywhere that I've been in the US has. And in the US, it is almost always free to go to the bathroom, but in Paris, it either costs a euro or so, or you have to buy something to use one.

Street markets are another big thing in Paris. There are 69 open-air markets and 13 covered markets in Paris. Cincinnati only has about 5-10 markets total. The largest French market is Clignancourt, formed in 1885, which spans several blocks, has over 200 stalls, and sells a wide variety of products (discoverfrance.net). Findlay

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Market, founded in 1852, is Cincinnati's largest, and is Ohio's oldest year round market. There used to be 9 such markets in Cincinnati, but Findlay Market is the only one remaining (Wikipedia.org). In addition to street markets, Paris also has countless souvenir stands, selling everything from trinkets to art to books to scarves. They were on just about every street we walked down, though I could not find an official count on the number of them in the city. Another feature of the streets of Paris is the vendors that sell the little Eiffel Tower trinkets, who are actually doing so illegally. It is also illegal to buy something from them, though most people do not know that, and you will not get in trouble for it. There are about 300-400 of these illegal vendors around the Eiffel Tower in the summer. Fun fact, police recently seized 60 tons of these mini Eiffel Tower trinkets from a warehouse near Le Bourget airport (reuters.com). Because Cincinnati is not a large tourist destination, it does not have the souvenir stands and illegal trinket vendors that Paris does.

Public transportation is much more sophisticated in Paris than in Cincinnati. Their main source is the underground metro, which is a very efficient way to travel. Cincinnati's main source of public transportation is the bus system, also called the Metro, which is very unreliable. The bus times are unpredictable, as they are often not running on schedule. The beginning of Cincinnati's public transportation was with a street railway that went into operation in 1889. The 1920s saw the first gasoline-powered buses in Cincinnati, the first routes forming around 1926. There are now 392 vehicles with Metro and nearly 7000 stops (go-metro.com). Paris has 58 bus lines currently running. Their bus transportation began in 1662 with rentable horse-drawn carriages. The first official bus line opened in 1828, still with horse-drawn carriages. The first combustion engine bus line was implemented in 1906, and that type of transportation became very popular, growing into the major system

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it is today (Wikipedia.org). Another popular and efficient mode of transportation is by train. There are 6 train stations in Paris, the oldest of which is Gare Saint Lazare, which was built in 1837. Rail travel is not as popular in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Railway Company does offer train rides through Cincinnati, but they are luxury rides rather than a practical form of transportation. There is also an Amtrak station in Cincinnati, but it is for long distance traveling, not just within the city or even within the state. Parisian's favorite form of transportation, the underground metro, currently has 16 lines. The first line was created in 1900, and 30,000 tickets sold on the first day alone. The popularity of this mode of transportation never dwindled, and now there are 133 miles of lines under the city, serving 1.4 billion people per year (france.fr). Cincinnati does not have a subway system in place, though 7 miles of tunnels and 6 stations were built in anticipation of one. However, construction stopped in the 1920s and never began again (cincinnati-transit.net).

Both cities have a darker side to their streets and are sites of a lot of crime. Although technically not illegal in Paris, France is the home to 20,000 – 30,000 prostitutes, 80% of which are foreigners. The average pay for prostitution is 500 euros/day (Wikipedia.org). I couldn't find any estimates on the total number of prostitutes in Cincinnati, but police recently busted 17 people on solicitation charges, several of whom were on McMicken Avenue (wcpo.com). Drugs are another problem, with 157,341 drug offenses reported in 2010 in Paris, most of which were marijuana charges (euronews.com). In Cincinnati, heroin is the largest problem. 32.9% of treatment center admissions were due to heroin use, and only 29.4% of admissions were due to marijuana, though marijuana is still more widely used (drugabuse.gov). Paris's biggest issue is pickpocketing, with very roughly 100 people per day falling victim to this small crime. Estimates are not very accurate,

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though, because it is believed that only about half of victims report pickpocketing, and a lot of people assume they just lost their money or wallet (*Travel Advisory: How to Avoid Theft, Cons, and Street Scams while Traveling* by Bambi Vincent and Bob Arno). Cincinnati's biggest crime issue is robbery, with 5.14/1000 people getting robbed in the city, while only 1.09/1000 people get robbed in the US as a whole (neighborhoodscout.com).

Cincinnati and Paris's streets host different issues and have very different histories, though there are still many parallels that can be drawn. Paris's evolution and problems arise from its larger population. The larger transportation system and pickpocketing issue are due to the higher concentration of people. Cincinnati is home to fewer people, so robbery and violent crime are larger, and the public transportation system is not as extensive. The improvement of the streets was done in a similar manner and for similar reasons though, because as the populations became more concentrated in both cities, it was necessary to build more and larger streets, and to improve water supply and sewage. Despite this commonality, they developed in completely different manners. Cincinnati has a larger highway to street ratio, and the streets seem to be made almost purely for travel by vehicle, whereas Paris's streets are still made to be beautiful and enjoyable to just stroll down. Personally, I prefer the streets of Paris to the streets of Cincinnati, though it would probably be faster and easier (if there was less construction) to get from one place in Cincinnati to another by car than it would be to do so in Paris.