

VAN GOGH WALKS...PARIS!

Van Gogh Walks...

Paris



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Paris

“ARTISTS AND THEIR JOURNEYS” TRAVEL GUIDES

**Van Gogh Walks...**

# Paris!

VINCENT, THEO, JOHANNA VAN GOGH.  
MONET.GAUGUIN.LAUTREC.RENOIR.DEGAS.SEURAT

*Priscilla Bain-Smith*

**Elpub bv, The Netherlands**  
([www.vangogh-paris.com](http://www.vangogh-paris.com))



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*This book is dedicated to Vincent van Gogh, Theo, his younger brother, and Johanna, Theo's magnificent wife and Vincent's true friend...they all quietly, and quite unexpectedly, changed my life...*

*A further dedication must go to Princess Diana who was a soul mate of Vincent's. They shared the same spirit of living and giving as well as tragically tragic deaths. And they both moved through Paris with the utmost passion.*

*I dearly dedicate this book to Janice Jacob, my sister, for that perfect day in Auvers...*

*And I eternally dedicate this book to my children, Christian and Alexandria, and to all the experiences (now memories) we had together in Paris...many years before this book was conceived...when Paris was new to each of us...*



*This book celebrates Vincent's life and brilliance, the Paris he knew, and the Paris you'll come to know...*





## INTRODUCTION

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## PREFACE

**Van Gogh Walks...Paris!** is the first in a series of guidebooks following famous artists around cities they lived, loved, and worked in. This book focuses on Vincent van Gogh, his family, and the artistic milieu in which they moved.

The premise is to arrange itineraries around people and places Vincent mentioned in the more than 650 letters he wrote as well as those mentioned in letters written by family and friends. My art historian self relished every word of these letters and because of the endless people and places he spoke about, you'll, for example, read about Gauguin and visit his birthplace; find out how Vincent felt about Seurat and locate his studio; and even read about Vincent's fiery affair with Agostina Segatori, the owner of a local restaurant.

Because Vincent loved books and was a voracious reader, in order to understand him on a deeper level, I began reading the books he'd read. It's a fabulous journey and not over yet. I highly recommend you pick up novels by Flaubert, Zola, Balzac, Baudelaire, Hugo, and even the Bible. They'll provide you with an insider's insight into Vincent's interests as well as those of the 19th century in general. You'll notice I often inserted literary vignettes from these masterpieces throughout the book when they were too perfect not to include.

*Welcome! In these pages you'll find background information on Vincent's life and a summary of his Parisian periods. You'll also find my preface explaining how to use the book along with my sincere thanks to everyone who's been intimately involved with its development...now, all you have to do is free your spirit and join me in following Vincent's, remembering as you move about the city Vincent considered life a journey.*





## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This guidebook is divided into two sections:

### The Quick Trip

This section is for the traveler who's interested in, or only has time, to see the major tourist sites. I've listed them alphabetically for quick reference since no two trips are alike.

### Three Walking Tours

This part contains three walking tours – Montmartre proper, the boulevards below Montmartre (Clichy, Rochechouart), and the area below the boulevards, known as Nouvelle-Athènes. These are three very distinct areas where Vincent and his friends lived, worked, and followed their dreams. To make the walks easier, a map in each section pinpoints the addresses you'll locate. As for the book itself, it's also a journal and scrapbook of sorts. In addition to a set of one blank page and one lined page accompanying each of the major sites in the Quick Trip, you'll find other blank

pages throughout the book. These are for notes or drawings...you might want to paste postcards on them or even your own photographs of the trip once you return. And don't forget to write down the addresses and phone numbers of those great restaurants and sensational shops you'll discover on your own!

While perusing the streets of Paris, keep in mind cities are ever changing. What is here today, may be gone tomorrow, or may have been modified in some manner. Therefore, don't be alarmed if when comparing my photographs with the sites you'll spot some differences – a new paint job, different surrounding shops – take heart, and take your own photos to update our visual record of Vincent's life. Also, be sure to check the hours of establishments, museums, hotels, restaurants before you go. Changes can occur anytime for assorted reasons – especially in August and the winter months. Also, expect to pay entrance fees at museums...they're not included here.

*While on this journey do not ignore the beauty and pleasures of modern Paris – so many linger from the past.*

**I'd love to hear from you about your trip...please let me know what worked for you and what didn't. Contact us at [www.vangogh-paris.com](http://www.vangogh-paris.com) and leave your comments and/or suggestions. May you, in spite of all human imperfections, have a glorious trip. I've done my utmost to fact check every entry. If there is an error, I apologize. Please correct me.**

Lastly, soulfully, I wish to thank so many people who've supported me in the pursuit of my dream. I immeasurably thank Billie (and Winston) Sutter who from the very beginning embraced this book in all its concepts and worked so hard

*For instance, you'll most assuredly walk by exquisite doorways, jewel-like encounters with the past...and you can be confident Vincent meandered by many of them too...*



*I chanced upon this modern-day Vincent—full of drink and dreams—on a crisp Sunday morning. I'm sure you'll spot a similar sight too...Paris is full of artistic souls...*

trying to find the right home for it. And for connecting me with Book Builders. I can't thank Jennifer Waine of the Alliance Française's Barat Foundation enough for ordering the book for one of her summer tours to Paris; I thank Philip Conisbee, Curator of French Painting at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., for his enthusiastic response to my book; I thank Donald Henderson, also at the NGA, for his congratulations. I thank Claudie Judrin of the Musée Rodin who generously gave me background information on the three van Goghs in their collection; I most especially thank D.C. Janssens of the Maison de Van Gogh in Auvers-sur-Oise for his generous spirit both in New York City and Auvers and for the information he shared; I thank John Curran of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for his interest and guidance; I thank Maria Pica for embracing the book with such a supportive spirit, eternal encouragement, and enthusiasm. Evelyn Poon, I thank for walking the streets of Paris with the book at night, discovering wondrous things and wondrous people. Likewise, Michael Fisher, I thank for his total support. He followed the Montmartre walk diligently and had his own cosmic experience in place Émile Goudeau. Ask him about it when you see him. I thank Ann Elphick, Daniel D'Arrezzo, Joyce Carpati, Nancy Lindemeyer, Jill Kremenz, Kurt Vonnegut, Martha Kaplan, Kelly Ames Smith, Heidi Rustin, Stacey Wellman for her proofing, Al Zuckerman, Seward Johnson, Tula Lewnes (for sharing her love of words and precise details and for the grand review she wrote!), Laura



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*Vincent struggled with depression his entire life and even as a child was considered different from other children. He often spoke of being melancholy and there will be times as you read this book and travel the streets he did, you, too, will feel a sense of sadness about his spectacular, but tragic life.*

thank Professor Jane Peters at the University of Kentucky (my former professor of art history) who embraced the book so enthusiastically; I most graciously thank David Brooks, creator of the excellent van Gogh website, [www.vangoghgallery.com](http://www.vangoghgallery.com), where dialogue and intellectual curiosity are encouraged. I thank him for his precise proofreading and his suggestions which I incorporated into the book. And for connecting me with my marvelous publisher, Pieter Hermans in Nuenen, The Netherlands!

I also want to thank Jonathan Littlefield of [www.jblittle@JLBooks.com](mailto:www.jblittle@JLBooks.com) where my book had been listed as a self-published title. I must also thank all the many van Gogh lovers who bought my book while I was still handcrafting it. A final thank you goes to Win Komain at the 7th Ave Copy & Office Supplies in Brooklyn, NY. He always took such care in the final, flawless binding of each book and it was sincerely appreciated each time.

*Priscilla Bain-Smith  
Brooklyn, New York 2001*



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## VINCENT'S READING LIST ABOUT THE AUTHOR BOOKS TO ENHANCE YOUR LIFE



# Vincent's Parisian Timetable

Vincent lived in Paris on three separate occasions, twice working as an art dealer for the family firm, Goupil & Cie, and then, years later, as an artist living with his younger brother, Theo, for two very tumultuous years. Theo had begun financially supporting his older brother by sending him 50, 100 francs here and there, and by the time Vincent moved in with him in Paris in 1886, it was a solid *fait accompli*. He'd become his sole support and Vincent had quite simply come to expect it. After Vincent left Paris for the south of France in 1888, he returned twice to visit his brother and his new family. Each visit had its own headaches and its own heart-aches. But, Vincent's first travels to Paris occurred much earlier, in May 1873. It was a short stay he was able to squeeze in before starting a new job in London at, of course, a branch of Goupil & Cie.



*You'll recognize over and over during this trip how much of Paris' past actually remains in the present...and how fortunate you are to be able to recreate many of Vincent's own experiences...*

## PARIS: OCTOBER 1874- DECEMBER 1874 "LOVESICK"

While in London, Vincent became disillusioned with his career as an art dealer because for one he felt people purchased art solely as business speculations, not because they truly loved the works they bought. If he disagreed with what someone wanted to buy, he'd do his best to dissuade the deal in no uncertain terms. This obviously made his bosses slightly irate and frustrated with their young relative who until then had been an excellent employee. To add to this, Vincent was lovesick over Eugénie, his landlady's daughter, who'd been secretly engaged to, according to Vincent, an *invisible*, fiancé from Wales for an entire year. Uncle Cent (and the rest of the family) sympathetically thought all Vincent needed was a change of scenery and sent him to Paris. These good intentions backfired resulting in Vincent becoming annoyed with anyone (especially his father) who interfered with his life. After three months, the company returned him to London. By now he was more lovesick and more subversive as ever.



*Vincent ate frugally throughout his life whether for religious, philosophical, or monetary reasons. Sometimes he'd fast, sometimes he'd go hungry in order to buy paint supplies...always his health suffered. But, please, while in Paris, let yourself savor all the culinary delights that make traveling here so memorable...*

## PARIS: MAY 23, 1875-MARCH 1876 "THE TOURIST"

This transfer back to London solved nothing. By May he was back in Paris and his family was still perplexed what to do with him. He'd definitely lost interest in his career and had, instead, become extremely passionate about religion. He found a small room in Montmartre and became friendly with Harry Gladwell, a co-worker at Goupil's, who was lodging in the same building. Vincent's room overlooked a garden full of wild ivy and had a resident mouse he fed each night. Gladwell usually woke him up two hours early each morning to eat the oatmeal his father sent from

England. Vincent thought Gladwell strange looking with “glittering eyes” and much too thin, but, eventually got used to how he looked and being around him. They soon became fast friends and wandered around Paris tourist-like, to the Louvre, Luxembourg Palace, and Notre-Dame-usually on their free Sundays. While in Paris Vincent sent his brother photographs of artworks he liked along with chocolates tucked in every so often for assorted family members. This turned out to be the last time Vincent worked for the family firm in any capacity...they permanently let him go after less than a year. Uncomfortably, Gladwell assumed his position within the company. Thus, begins Vincent’s period of evaluation and re-evaluation, of changing professions from art dealer to school teacher to bookseller to evangelist to artist. By the time he moved a third time to Paris (ten years later) he’d decidedly decided to dedicate his life to art.

**PARIS: MARCH 17, 1886-  
FEBRUARY 19, 1888  
“VINCENT AND THEO”**

You can just imagine how the family felt after Vincent was dismissed and then spent the next ten years struggling with job after job, meeting forsaken woman after forsaken woman, and still having difficulty relating to people, and still dressing in an unkempt, distressing fashion. He arrived in Paris, this third time, planning to live with his brother and work solely as an artist. Vincent did his best to persuade Theo everything would be okay once he arrived – but, Theo knew better – knew the reality of their relationship and Vincent’s reality. He did everything he could to persuade Vincent not to come to Paris just yet. But to no avail. Only a handful of letters exist from this Parisian period to let us know Vincent’s mind and movements



*Vincent never dressed properly, according to society’s standards, his whole life, no matter what he was doing. Even when painting people ridiculed how he looked. At one time, he and Gauguin planned to visit Marseilles, the hometown of Adolphe Monticelli, a favorite artist of Vincent’s. While there Vincent intended to dress exactly like the artist (who’d recently died in 1886). This meant donning a yellow hat, black velvet jacket, white pants, yellow gloves, and sporting a bamboo cane. Earlier in his artistic career, while in The Hague, he began collecting provincial clothes as costumes for his models.*

because he was now living with Theo who'd been the primary recipient of his previous correspondence. We learn about him during this period in other ways, using other people's letters, memoirs, and recollections. Now living in Paris as an artist, not as an art dealer as before, Vincent busied himself honing his craft. He studied a few short months at Fernand Cormon's studio where he met Toulouse-Lautrec and Émile Bernard and then dropped out becoming the itinerant artist of Montmartre and Asnières (a suburb of Paris where his good friend, Bernard, had a studio). Vincent dwelt not in painting the past, its monuments or historical stories, but in recording everyday scenes—painterly complements to his favorite authors (Zola and Balzac, to name just two) who described similar everyday scenes in so many powerful, precise words.

Sounds perfect. Idyllic. Except soon Vincent's personality kicked in and society was alarmed. His unconventional, messy manner of dressing alerted the public he was different and they soon labeled him mad. Models refused to model. And sometimes he was forbidden to paint in the streets he loved so much. If you were his friend it was difficult to remain so—his conversations tempered with his own temper, absinthe, and whatever—became nonsensical, useless tirades. Everyone soon tired of his antics. Especially Theo. Unable to cope any longer, he threatened to move out if Vincent did not. And then when Vincent finally did leave, he was surprised how much and how deeply they'd bonded after all those crazy months together.

#### **PARIS: MAY 17-20, 1890 VISIT "AN OLIVE A DAY"**

And so, Vincent left Theo and Paris emotionally and physically drained in



February 1888 and moved to Arles in the south of France where he hoped to found a school for artists and, most of all, find peace of mind. He accomplished neither. In fact, it was in Provence, where he'd gone to get away from the stressful stresses of Paris, that he humbly endured a series of mental breakdowns.

After spending time, voluntarily and involuntarily, in two hospitals, by May 1890 he was ready to return North in hopes of regaining a quasi-normal life. He also wanted to see Theo again and meet his new wife, Johanna, and greet his new nephew (named after him) for the first time. It's not surprising he wanted to see the child—Johanna, *while in labor*, while Theo and his sister and her mother and the doctor slept, exhausted, waiting for the baby's arrival, wrote a letter to Vincent (whom she hadn't met yet) asking him, in case she *died in childbirth*, to let Theo know how much she loved him and how happy

*Vincent died distraught at the too early age of 37, sadly unaware he'd gain worldwide fame in the next century, with paintings selling for more than \$82 million. Claims of forgeries surface from time to time and his name and paintings are kept in front of the public's eye in the form of postcards, calendars, mugs, t-shirts, even scarves. As you move around the city take notice other ways Vincent's memory is kept alive.*

he'd made her. It's a remarkable letter from a remarkable woman...

Although in his heart Theo wanted Vincent to live with him again, he was beside himself, ambivalent, and anxious, and couldn't sleep with the thought of Vincent's actual return to Paris. Before Vincent left for Paris, he arranged for two beds and a mirror (which had been in storage in Arles) to be forwarded by goods train to his brother's office in boulevard Montmartre. He gave the rest of his belongings to his good friends, the Ginouxes. Although there was a possibility of a relapse during the journey, Vincent adamantly wanted to travel alone, and this is partially why Theo was so very, very nervous.

When Vincent arrived at the Gare de Lyon at 10 am, Theo picked him up in an open fiacre, and Johanna recalled seeing the two brothers happily enter cite-Pigalle where they lived in a third floor

apartment. She, in fact, thought Vincent looked healthier than her husband. He seemed sturdy and strong, not sickly like she'd imagined. The two reunited brothers quickly hovered over baby Vincent asleep in his cradle and Vincent cautioned against having him covered with lace. Johanna fondly recalled Vincent bought olives everyday and insisted everyone eat them and that the few days were cheerful and lively. Vincent left for Auvers-sur-Oise on May 20, but planned to return soon to paint their portraits outdoors. He never did—something unfortunate for all of us. (A recently re-dated letter from Vincent tells another story about the visit—it had been very tense and he had been left with no financial arrangements whatsoever and given no money whatsoever. After arriving in Auvers he writes Theo he's confused and needs money right away.)

So Vincent left Paris and his brother's sweet family and settled 22 miles away in Auvers-sur-Oise, a quaint river town with luscious, luscious sunsets. Auvers, picturesque with old thatched cottages, was chosen as Vincent's new residence on the advice of Camille Pissarro (an artist Theo handled) who recommended a Dr. Gachet who lived there. At first Pissarro thought Vincent could live with his own family—that is, until his wife vetoed it. But, in any case, little did anyone know Dr. Gachet was *just as eccentric* as Vincent! It didn't take Vincent long to catch on. Intuitively, he painted two extraordinary portraits of the doctor, melancholy, immersed in his own mental disarray. It was the original (containing the Goncourt books) which Christies, an auction house in New York, sold on May 15, 1990 for \$82,500,000.

Once Vincent settled in an attic room in the Auberge Ravoux (today the Maison de Van Gogh), the inn across from the

tiny town hall, he wrote his brother how much he liked the new cité Pigalle apartment he and Johanna had—it was much better than the one they'd shared together in rue Lepic. He also let him know, and others he wrote, how much the noise bothered him while he was in Paris. In particular, that's why he hadn't visited Gauguin—the noise had become too unbearable. But in spite of this extreme discomfort, Vincent managed to take in the Salon's annual art exhibition and had seen some things he liked there.

**PARIS: JULY 6, 1890**  
**“THE VERY LAST TIME”**

Theo's home life became increasingly stressful during the summer of 1890. Sickness plagued each member of the family, Theo's relationships with his bosses continued to deteriorate, his finances were dismal. The family needed a break and on June 8 they took a day trip to see Vincent in the countryside. The weather that day was a mixture of calmness punctuated with storms here and there. Vincent, like any good uncle, took the baby to look at all the different kinds of animals Dr. Gachet kept. And like any small child, some of the eight cats, eight dogs, and roosters frightened him. They lunched outside at Dr. Gachet's on the same red table Vincent included in his portraits of the doctor.

A month later, July 6, Vincent took the 6:10 am train to Paris for what was to be his last time. This visit was full of tension. Theo and Johanna's baby had been sick, really sick for quite a while and they were exhausted and at wit's end. Vincent, as usual, kept advising the child needed country air, not city air, especially that found in a third floor Parisian apartment, to grow healthy and strong. While in Paris Vincent intended to look up two other artists (Quost and

Jeannin) he currently liked and whose works he'd seen at the Salon. Theo'd previously run into Quost and mentioned Vincent's admiration for his work. Quost, pleased, invited Vincent to stop by the next time he was in Paris and to look for him either at his home or garden. But it was not to be. Everyone, everything was still out of sorts. Theo was still strapped financially and Vincent didn't like their conversations at all, or, for that matter, where his paintings were being kept. In the midst of this sort of impending time bomb, several friends dropped in to see Vincent. One, Aurier, the critic who lived just down the street and who'd recently written a perceptive analysis of Vincent's paintings, specifically stopped by to see the artist he'd written about in the presence of his own works. And Toulouse-Lautrec, his old “drinking buddy” who lived around the corner, breezed by, and Johanna recalled how Lautrec stayed for lunch and how the two friends laughed about an undertaker episode that had just happened on the stairs. Guillaumin, another artist whom Vincent had often visited (welcomed or not) on the Île St-Louis, was expected, but Vincent was too agitated to wait and left without seeing him. Overtired and excited, he rushed back to Auvers. This was the last time any of his friends or family (besides Theo) saw him until his funeral on July 30, 1890 in Auvers' quiet countryside on that heartbreaking, sweltering afternoon.



# THE STREETS OF PARIS (OR, YOUR ITINERARY)

For each of the three walks, I've listed below the streets you'll traverse while using this guidebook. I've included very rudimentary maps, but it's to your advantage to locate these places on a *bona fide* map before you leave on your trip. It will save you needless frustrations later and will certainly get you in the mood. I highly recommend picking up in Paris one of their small street guides found in local tourist shops, such as *Paris Pratique*. With one, you'll never get lost.

## WALK 1: MONTMARTRE (18th Arrondissement)

Rue Lepic	1 – 6
Rue Tourlaque/Rue Caulaincourt	1 – 13
Rue Tholozé	1 – 17
Rue Girardon	1 – 17
Rue d'Orchampt	1 – 17
Rue Ravignan	1 – 17
Place Émile-Goudeau	1 – 17
Rue des Abbesses	1 – 19
Place des Abbesses	1 – 19
Rue Yvonne-Le-Tac	1 – 19
Rue des Trois-Frères	1 – 19
Rue Tardieu	1 – 19
Place St-Pierre	1 – 19
Rue du Mont-Cenis	1 – 20
Place du Tertre	1 – 21
Rue Norvins	1 – 21
Rue des Saules	1 – 21
Rue St-Rustique	1 – 21
Rue Cortot	1 – 21
Rue de l'Abreuvoir	1 – 22
Rue St-Vincent	1 – 22

## WALK 2: STROLLING THE BOULEVARDS (18th and 9th Arrondissements)

Avenue de Clichy	2 – 8
Impasse de la Défense	2 – 8
Rue Capron	2 – 10
Place de Clichy	2 – 11
Boulevard de Clichy	2 – 12
Avenue Rachel	2 – 13
Cité-Véron	2 – 17
Rue Pierre-Haret	2 – 18
Rue de Bruxelles	2 – 18
Place Blanche	2 – 20
Rue Coustou	2 – 20
Villa des Platanes	2 – 20
Rue Fromentin	2 – 20
Place Pigalle	2 – 22
Rue Frochot	2 – 22
Rue Pigalle	2 – 23
Rue des Martyrs	2 – 26
Boulevard de Rochechouart	2 – 27
Place d'Anvers	2 – 28
Avenue Trudaine	2 – 29

## WALK 3: BELOW THE BOULEVARDS (9th Arrondissement)

Place Pigalle	3 – 8
Rue Frochot	3 – 8
Avenue Frochot	3 – 9
Rue Victor-Massé	3 – 9
Rue des Martyrs	3 – 12
Rue Clauzel	3 – 13
Place Gustave-Toudouze	3 – 14
Rue Henry-Monnier	3 – 14
Place St-Georges	3 – 14
Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette	3 – 14
Rue St-Lazare	3 – 15
Rue St-Georges	3 – 16
Rue d'Aumale	3 – 18
Rue Taitbout	3 – 20
Square d'Orléans	3 – 20
Rue de La Rochefoucauld	3 – 23
Rue de la Tour-des-Dames	3 – 24
Rue Pigalle	3 – 24
Rue La Bruyère	3 – 24
Cité-Pigalle	3 – 24
Rue Chaptal	3 – 26
Rue Henner	3 – 26
Boulevard Montmartre	3 – 27
Rue Blanche	3 – 29



# WHERE VINCENT LIVED

Vincent lived many, many places during his short life. He moved around for assorted reasons – mostly following one job to another. First employed as an art dealer by the family-connected art firm (Goupil & Cie), he led a cosmopolitan life in The Hague, London, and Paris until his dismissal in 1876. He tried teaching in England for a few months, but in his heart he wanted to preach and help the poor. He next worked as a bookseller of sorts in Dordrecht – all the while preferring reading the Bible to selling books. At last he became a very zealous, but very misunderstood, evangelist and meandered around the depressed mining districts of the Borinage. But he soon failed at this too and never worked again. He now devoted his life to art...and was supported occasionally by his parents (during their *rare* good terms), but mostly by Theo, his younger and faithful brother, until his tragic death in July 1890.

Groot-Zundert	March 30, 1853 (born)
Zevenbergen/Tilburg	1861-1868 (schools)
The Hague	July 30, 1869-May 1873
Paris	May 1873 (short visit)
London	June 1873-October 1874
Paris	October-December 1874
London	December 1874-May 1875
Paris	May 1875-March 1876
Etten	March-April 1876 (few days)
Ramsgate/Islesworth	Mid April-December 1876
Dordrecht	January-April 1877
Amsterdam	May 9, 1877-July 1878
Brussels, Laeken, Etten, Borinage	July-December 1878
Wasmes, Cuesmes	December 18, 1878-October 1880
Brussels	October 1880-April 1881
Etten	April 12, 1881-November 1881
The Hague	November 1881-September 11, 1883
Drenthe	September 11-November 1883
Nuenen	December 5, 1883-November 1885
Antwerp	November 24, 1885-February 1886
Paris	March 1?, 1886-February 19, 1888
Arles	February 20, 1888-May 8, 1889
St- Rémy	May 8, 1889-May 16, 1890
Paris	May 17-20, 1890
Paris	July 6, 1890
Auvers-sur-Oise	May 20-July 29, 1890



Van Gogh Walks...

# Paris

