

MARAIS

the 30-second city

3-SECOND PERSPECTIVE

Built on marshes, from which its name derives, the Marais district, once home to aristocracy and literati, evokes the spirit of 'vieux Paris' as is evident from its architecture.

3-MINUTE SOJOURN

One of the most extravagant mansions, L'Hôtel Salé, completed in 1659 as a home for Pierre Aubert, in rue de Thorigny, is now home to the Musée National Picasso. It contains an outstanding collection of artworks donated to the French Republic by Picasso's heirs in lieu of estate taxes. Thanks to the Department of Historic Monuments the house was refurbished between 1979 and 1985 by Roland Simounet who restored the building to its former glory.

The Marais in the 4th *arrondissement* has been reinvented many times in a history that spans over five centuries. Place Royale, now Place des Vosges, was part of a building project initiated by Henri IV, inaugurated in 1612. It was the first planned square in Paris and attracted the nobility who built mansions here. Its aristocratic character changed in the mid-eighteenth century and during the Revolution, with the surrender of the nearby Bastille on 14 July 1789, and the nobility fled. The area escaped 'Haussmannization' in the nineteenth century but was, by the first half of the twentieth century, so squalid, overpopulated and unfashionable that it faced total demolition. It was saved by the French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, in the early 1960s and, in 1965, became Paris's first conservation area. Today its beautifully renovated buildings attract numerous visitors; there are at least ten museums, several important churches, Hector Guimard's synagogue and various cultural institutions. A trendy and cosmopolitan part of Paris, home especially to Jewish communities, the Marais has recovered its former appeal. As well as visiting the area's boutiques and bars, tourists flock to the Place des Vosges, Victor Hugo's house, the restored Musée National Picasso and the Musée Carnavalet, an outstanding example of Renaissance architecture.

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3-SECOND BIOGRAPHIES

HENRI IV
1553–1610
First Bourbon monarch of France who instigated the creation of Place Royale

VICTOR HUGO
1802–85
Romantic writer lived in a second-floor apartment of 6 Place des Vosges between 1832 and 1848, where he wrote some of his most famous works including a large part of *Les Misérables*

30-SECOND TEXT

Sophie Bostock

Named for its marshes, the historic district of Marais is known as 'Old Paris'.

