



CICERONI
T R A V E L

BEHIND THE ARRAS CONNOISSEURS' VERSAILLES

SUNDAY 17 – FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2019 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: ROSALIND SAVILL

£2770

- **Comprehensive introduction to the Palace of Versailles & its surroundings with free time to explore the elegant town of Versailles**
- **Special access to the State & Private Apartments of the Kings of France & their families during hours of closure to the public**
- **Private access to the Grand & Petit Trianons & visits to the Hamlet, the Royal Opera, the Chapel, Royal Stables & the scene of the Tennis Court Oath**
- **Stay at the prestigious 5* Waldorf Astoria Trianon Palace adjacent to the Royal Park**



Versailles, Hall of Mirrors

OVERVIEW

Have you ever dreamt of visiting the Palace of Versailles without the crowds? Have you wondered who lived in the apartments usually closed to the public? Or how they lived there? Here is an opportunity to engage in this gilded world of splendour and ambition as we enjoy extraordinary access to the palace and its pavilion buildings, accompanied by the palace's specialist curators who will bring it to life: a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

When Louis XIV began to extend his father's hunting lodge into a magnificent palace, he can have had little idea of its overwhelming impact over three hundred and fifty years later. From the 1660s until Louis XVI was beheaded in 1793, Versailles was largely the centre of government in France, and where royal, foreign and diplomatic visitors were welcomed. It was also home to generations of the French royal family and was rearranged, redecorated and redisplayed to suit the tastes of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI and their wives, families and mistresses. Resplendent interiors and furnishings stemmed from the evolution of lifestyles from formality to intimacy, and artistic styles from the Baroque to the playful Rococo and eventually the restrained purity of Neo-classical tastes. We thus have an opportunity to experience this visual journey through visits to the State and Private Apartments, and through the extraordinary array of decorative arts which were in daily use.

However, the palace is only part of the Versailles phenomenon. We will also absorb the enormity of the place with visits to André Le Nôtre's grounds and grand spaces for open-air entertainment, to the more private and exquisite retreats of the Grand and Petit Trianons and Marie-Antoinette's recently restored 'Hamlet' or 'model farm', as well as to the Royal Stables. We include a visit to one of the finest chateaus of the French Baroque, the newly-restored Château de Maison-Laffitte to the north of Versailles. Finally, we will see the poignant indoor Salle de Jeu du Paume where the Tennis Court Oath of 20 June 1789 was declared, which led to the French Revolution and the fall of the monarchy.

This is a concentrated and scholarly connoisseurs' tour, exploring one of the greatest and most influential palaces in history. It will be led by Dame Rosalind Savill, formerly Director of the Wallace Collection, London who is one of our foremost experts on the visual culture of the *Ancien Régime*.

We shall stay at the prestigious 5* Waldorf Astoria Trianon Palace. Set in handsome grounds and woodlands adjacent to the Royal Park of Versailles, it is within walking distance of the great palace estate and the elegant eastern side of the town of Versailles. Michelin-starred dining and a spa are just some of its many facilities.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 17 November – We travel by Eurostar from London to **Paris Gare du Nord** and continue by coach to **Versailles**, arriving in the afternoon at the 5* Waldorf Astoria Trianon Palace Hotel for our five night stay. In the early evening we will have our first group dinner in a nearby local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group dinners and lunches.

Day 2: Monday 18 November – The **Palace of Versailles** is closed to the public on Mondays and we shall have special access. We walk from our hotel through the grounds to the splendid entrance court, and then explore the grand **State Apartments** of Louis XIV and his Queen, as well as some of the **Private (Petits) Apartments** of Louis XV and Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette. After lunch (not included) Versailles' curators will escort our party into the palaces' **intimate apartments** including those of Louis XV's daughters and mistresses, and Marie-Antoinette. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 3: Tuesday 19 November – This morning we return to the palace and continue our tour of the private and rarely-seen apartments on the ground and second floors, including a visit to **Marie-Antoinette's bathroom**. We pause for lunch at Ducasse's restaurant, *Ore*, within the palace. In the afternoon we visit the **Royal Chapel**, created for Louis XIV and still showing the royal symbols that were defaced during the French Revolution. Louis XV's **Royal Opera** was built to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin to Marie-Antoinette in 1770, and is still in use as an Opera House today. Finally, we engage with the comprehensive exhibition on the history of Versailles, its architecture and people. We return to our hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Wednesday 20 November – We begin by walking some of **Louis XIV's extraordinary Park**. This was devised with both formal gardens and canals on axis with the Hall of Mirrors, and open parkland walks peppered with groves and grottoes, fountains and sculpture (covered in the winter) for feasts and festivities, intimate gatherings or larger entertainments. We continue by visiting Louis XIV's **Grand (or Marble) Trianon** which was built in 1687 as the King's retreat from his public life at the Palace. Later residents included Louis XV's Queen, Marie-Leczinska, Napoleon and his wife Marie-Louise, and President de Gaulle. We pause for our group lunch at *La Flottille*. In the afternoon we visit the **Petit Trianon**, the intimate, neo-classical pavilion which was intended for Madame de Pompadour, but then became the private retreat of Marie-Antoinette. Here, some of her specially-commissioned furniture has been re-acquired, perfectly rekindling the atmosphere she created in her lifetime. We end the day visiting **Marie-Antoinette's Hamlet** (or model farm) which has recently been painstakingly restored. We return to our hotel where the evening will be free.

Day 5: Thursday 21 November – We return to view more of Versailles extraordinary grounds. Following a glimpse of the **Orangerie** and its formal garden, we engage with sites in the town itself. The **Church of Notre-Dame** was built by Hardouin-Mansart de Sagonne in 1686 as Louis IV's court church to the growing town. We continue to view the **Royal Stables** and the **Coach Gallery**. After lunch (not included), our final visit will be to the **Salle de Jeu du Paume** where, on 20 June 1789, the famous Tennis Court Oath was declared which, together with the storming of the Bastille prison in Paris on 14 July 1789, brought revolution and an end to almost one hundred and forty years of royal brilliance and extravagance. The remainder of the afternoon will be free for you to explore at leisure. In the evening we will enjoy our final dinner in a Michelin-starred restaurant in central Versailles.

Day 6: Friday 22 November – Having spent the week celebrating these three great kings, their families and mistresses through their stupendous achievements at Versailles, we will travel by coach to the northwestern suburbs of Paris close to the River Seine to visit **Château de Maison-Laffitte**. Designed by Francois Mansart between 1630 and 1651 for René de Longueil, it is one of the finest examples of the French Baroque with newly-restored baroque and neo-classical interiors. We make our way by coach into central Paris for a final group lunch. Later in the afternoon we depart from Gare du Nord to London.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2770

Without Eurostar £2650

Deposit £375

Single Supplement £475 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

Hotels 5 nights with breakfast at the 5* Waldorf Astoria Trianon Palace Hotel

Eurostar Standard Seating

Outward: Depart London St Pancras **1131**, Arrive Paris, Gare du Nord **1447**

Return: Depart Paris, Gare du Nord **1704**, Arrive London St Pancras **1832**

Upgrade to Standard Premier Seating £100, includes a light meal and drinks served to your seat

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, private access to Versailles, entry fees & gratuities, services of Rosalind Savill & James Hill as Tour Manager

Not included Travel to/from St Pancras, 3 dinners & 2 lunches



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