

Paris as Picasso painted it

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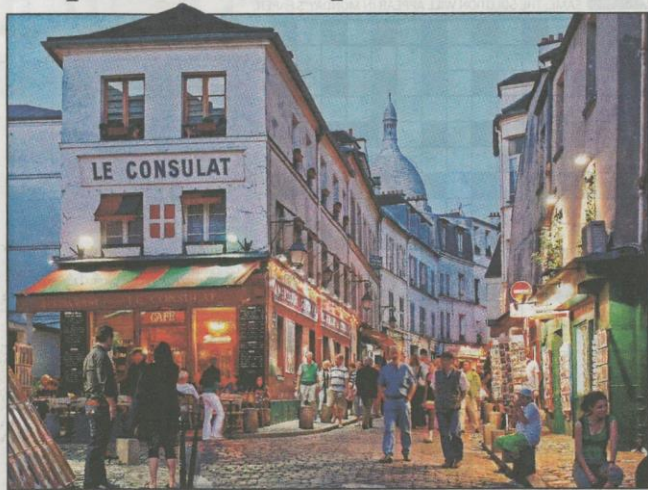
The Picasso Museum has reopened at last – a perfect excuse to hop over to the French capital

Paris as Picasso painted it

By Jenny Coad

HE STILL has the power to excite, exhilarate — and court controversy. Picasso's long-awaited, vastly over-budget museum reopens today after five years of renovation. Housed in the Marais's 17th-century Hotel Sale — the former home of the salt-tax collector — it's an enormous, elegant space, and Picasso's work fills it to the rafters. I had a sneak preview. There are 5,000 pieces, illustrating the breadth of his repertoire, from early paintings to found-object sculptures, collages and shocking nudes. The collection was given to Paris in 1979 — in lieu of inheritance tax — by Picasso's heirs. Of his masterpieces, there are

studies for *Les Femmes d'Alger* (the finished work is in New York's Museum of Modern Art) and a series of photos by his lover Dora Maar showing the artist working on *Guernica*. *Bull's Head*, made from a bicycle seat, casts an eerie shadow, and *Two Women Running on a Beach* is sheer joy. The quietly shattering cubist rendering of the *Sacre Coeur* is here. I particularly like the striking portrait of Dora Maar in lurid greens, yellows and streaks of coral. The attic is given over to masters, including Renoir and Cezanne, as well as Picasso's contemporaries, such as his rival



Matisse. You get a lot for your money — entry is just £8 — and there's something for everyone. The museum should inspire you to delve further into Picasso's Parisian life. He arrived here, aged 19, in 1900, for the World's Fair, where his painting of a deathbed scene was on show. You can now dine in the Mini Palais in the Beaux Arts Grand Palais, built for the event. Picasso first settled in Montmartre — as seedy and

provocative now as it was then. His studio in the *Bateau Lavoir* ('Laundry Boat') was destroyed by fire in 1970, but you can visit the site on Place Emile Goudeau. It doesn't look much and it was squalid in Picasso's day, which suited him in his scruffy overalls. Here he painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* and held a party for the artist Henri Rousseau, at which the critic Andre Salmon reportedly ate a

hat and a box of matches. Below and above the *Bateau Lavoir* are the theatres where Picasso and Georges Braque spent their evenings — Picasso was apparently ejected from the Theatre Montmartre for throwing sausages. The *Moulin Rouge*, that diminutive red windmill on the Boulevard de Clichy, continues to put on a show outside and in. The *Moulin de la Galette*, painted by Renoir and



Inspiration: Montmartre. Above, *Reading and Paulo*, both by Picasso

building of the Sacre Coeur. There are also photos of local artists — Kees van Dongen, Juan Gris, Modigliani and Picasso, in his *Bateau Lavoir* studio. The ivy-clad hotel *Le Pavillon de la Reine* is a ten-minute walk away from the Picasso Museum. Just off Place des Vosges, it's convenient for wassailing in the Marais and recovering from a day on your feet. Paris is proud of Picasso — and rightly so. The city was the scene of some of his greatest work, and his life there was as colourful as his most daring palettes.

TRAVEL FACTS
 PAVILLON de la Reine, + 33(0) 140 291 919, pavillon-de-la-reine.com offers two nights' B&B, two tickets for the Musée Picasso and a self-guided city walking tour for £700 (two sharing) excluding city tax. Eurostar returns from £59pp, eurostar.com