



Monet & Impressionism

Paintings and places in Paris and Normandy

19–24 April 2026 (MM 926)

6 days

Lecturer: Professor Frances Fowle

18–23 October 2026 (MM 219)

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The finest collections of Impressionism in France and places associated with the artists.

2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Monet's death. Visit his house and garden in Giverny and see some of his most renowned paintings, including *Impression: Sunrise* and the *Water Lilies* series, and the sites and landscapes that inspired them.

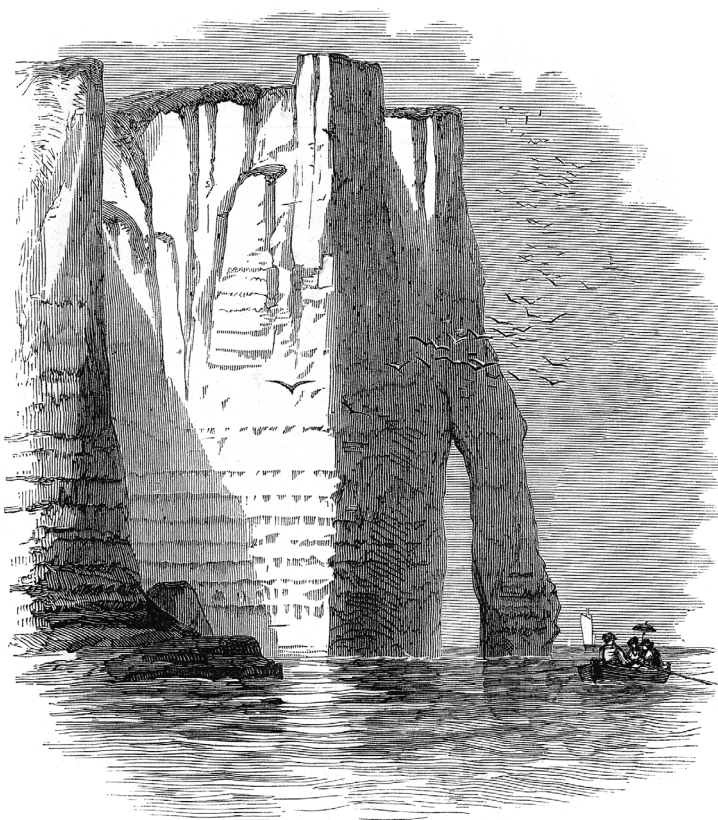
Travel in comfort by Eurostar from London, and good hotels in Paris and Rouen.

Far more Impressionist pictures can be seen in the region covered by this tour than in any other territory of comparable size. This should be no surprise, as this is the region where Impressionism was born and where it was most practised, and the tour visits some of the key sites in that development. Attention is also paid to the precursors – pre-Impressionists such as Eugène Boudin and Jongkind – and to some Post-Impressionist successors.

As it was for mainstream artists, so it was for rebels and innovators: throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Paris was the centre of the art world. All the French Impressionists spent time here, many lived here for most of their lives.

Yet the essence of their art – the recording of the world about them as it presented itself in its immediate, transitory aspect – required them to spend time in the countryside. And the countryside they frequented most was in the north and north-west of Paris, the broad valley of the meandering Seine and of its tributaries the Oise and the Epte, and on to the coast with its vast skies and dramatic limestone cliffs.

This can be illustrated by the case of Claude Monet, the major exponent of Impressionism. He was born in Paris in 1840 and was brought up in Le Havre on the Normandy coast, where he was encouraged by Boudin to paint out of doors. Returning to Paris in 1859, he encountered the artists who would form the Impressionist group. From 1871 he made his home in the suburbs, often working from his studio boat and progressing downstream



Étretat, wood engraving c. 1880

from Argenteuil to Vétheuil and Poissy, before settling in Giverny in 1883.

Monet made frequent trips to the Normandy coast, where Impressionism was developing in tandem with tourism and the new fashion for sea bathing. Water, fresh or salt, was an important ingredient of Impressionist pictures, its fleeting, changing, evanescent qualities similar to the transient effects of light they sought to capture on canvas. The Impressionist emphasis on the importance of painting *en plein air* makes a tour that includes sites where painters set up their easels particularly rewarding.

The Impressionists were also masters of figure painting and invigorated the genre of portraiture in their depictions of family, friends, and the wider Parisian circle. While Degas recorded the women of the city – dancers, milliners and washerwomen – Pissarro preferred to focus on rural workers.

Influenced by photography and Japanese art, these artists recorded the society of their time: from critics and political figures to singers at the café concert, capturing a snapshot of life in France at the end of the nineteenth century.

Itinerary

Day 1: Paris. Leave London St Pancras at c. 10.30am by Eurostar. In Paris visit the Musée Marmottan which, through a donation by Monet's son, has one of the world's largest collections of Impressionists. Continue to Rouen in Normandy where four nights are spent.

Day 2: Rouen, Étretat. Spend the morning in Rouen at the Musée des Beaux Arts. Impressionist works are in the François Depeaux gallery, named after the local donor. Either spend a free afternoon in Rouen,

Monet & Impressionism continued

architecturally and scenically one of France's finest cities, or join an excursion to Étretat, a little seaside town flanked by dramatic chalk promontories scooped into arches by wind and sea, painted by Monet and many others.

Day 3: Giverny. The morning is devoted to the premier site in the history of Impressionism, Monet's house and garden at Giverny where he lived from 1883 until his death in 1926, designing and tending the gardens which grew in size as his prosperity increased. Also at Giverny is the Musée des Impressionnismes. Return mid-afternoon for some free time in Rouen, perhaps to study the cathedral, the subject of over 30 of Monet's paintings.

Day 4: Honfleur, Le Havre. Honfleur is an utterly delightful fishing village at the mouth of the Seine, now crammed with art galleries and antique shops. In the museum are many works by Eugène Boudin, a major influence on the Impressionists. Cross the Seine estuary to Le Havre. After a recent donation and refurbishment, the Musée André Malraux has become the second largest collection of Impressionists in France.

Day 5: Auvers, Paris. Auvers-sur-Oise was a popular artists' colony, frequented by Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. See sites associated with Van Gogh, who spent the last few weeks of his life here, and the studio of Daubigny. Return to Paris for a visit of the Musée des Beaux Arts in the Petit Palais, an under-appreciated collection for which space has recently been expanded. Overnight in Paris. *We sometimes change the visit to the Petit Palais in order to take advantage of a temporary exhibition elsewhere.*

Day 6: Paris. Walk through the Tuileries Gardens and cross the river to the Musée d'Orsay; here are displayed not only the world's finest collection of Impressionism but also masterpieces by important precursors such as Courbet and Millet. Continue to the Orangerie where an excellent collection of Impressionists, Monet's famous water-lilies and 20th-century paintings are housed. Return to London by Eurostar, arriving St Pancras at c. 6.30pm.

Lecturer

Professor Francis Fowle. Emeritus Professor of Nineteenth-Century Art at the University of Edinburgh, and formerly Senior Curator at the National Galleries of Scotland, 2001-24. She has written extensively on Impressionism, most recently in *Monet and London: Views of the Thames* (The Courtauld, 2024). Her books include *Monet & French Landscape* (2006), *Impressionism & Scotland* (2008), *Van Gogh's Twin* (2010) and *Globalizing Impressionism* (2020), listed in 2024 as 'one of the five most essential books on Impressionism'. Frances has appeared on film and TV and has spoken about Monet and Van Gogh on BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* with Melvyn Bragg.

Practicalities

Included: coach travel; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. **Mercure Rouen Centre Cathédrale** (accorhotels.com): modern, functional 4-star hotel in the historic centre. **Hotel Édouard 7, Paris** (hoteledouard7-paris.com): comfortable 4-star hotel, a short drive from the museums. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is a fair amount of walking as well as standing in the art galleries. You need to be able to lift your luggage on and off the train and wheel it at stations. Average distance by coach per day: 82 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.