



Naturist
Action
Group

NAG Mission to naturist Paris

7 - 10 September 2018



1. PURPOSE

1. One of the UK Naturist Action Group (NAG) projects in London over the previous 8 years had been to get official acceptance for naturism at London's Hampstead Heath by the City of Corporation's HH management. In summer 2017 we heard that our French colleagues in Paris, the Association des Naturistes de Paris (ANP) had achieved this at the BOIS DE VINCENNES. In October 2017 NAG decided to have a 4 days fact-finding "mission to Paris". We wanted to find out what lessons we could learn and use in London. It would be similar to a previous NAG "mission to Munich" which has naturist open spaces. The visit to Paris by the NAG 'mission' group of three took place on 7 – 10 September 2018.

2. Friday 7 September

2. The NAG 'mission', John Paine, Harvey Allen, Ray Ward, travelled to Paris by Eurostar. They boarded the *Eurostar* at *St. Pancras* station, London, that morning, and arrived at *Gare du Nord*, Paris in mid-afternoon. From *Gare du Nord* it was a short walk to *Nord Est Hotel*. By 4.00pm we were celebrating our arrival with a welcome bierre at local *Bar Titi*.
3. Sadly, we were not able to enjoy the Friday naturist activities at *Piscine Roger le Gall* due to an extended summer maintenance closure. Plan B was to have dinner that evening with Laurent Luft, and ANP officers, at his Saint-Mande flat in east Paris. We had bought Metro travel cards and, in preparation, visited *Marche St. Denis* to buy bottles of wine, two as a gift for ANP and some to drink with the pasta meal cooked by Laurent. ANP's Stephane Charlot-Dufor joined us for the meal and discussion.
4. That evening, in the privacy of Laurent's 12th Arrondissement flat the meal was taken naturist style. Whilst eating the delicious food and consuming wine we gained much information on how ANP won political support for the nearby *Bois de Vincennes* naturist area. Details are given at para.18. ANP had previously received support from local politicians, which led to a range of regular naturist activities at *Piscine Roger le Gall* in the 12th Arrondissement (see para.14). At the end of the evening we arranged to meet Laurent and his ANP colleagues again on the Sunday afternoon at the naturist picnic in *Bois de Vincennes*.

3. Saturday 8 September

5. We had planned to make a visit to the *Bois de Vincennes* during the day. Directions for getting to the naturist space are given at para.10. Harvey had badly cut his ankle the week before, it was under a dressing and could not take a lot of stress. Ray was not able to walk long distances. To visit the naturist space required a Metro journey and long walk to get there. A 7.30pm dinner was booked for naturist restaurant *O'Naturel*, at Rue de Gravelle in the 12th Arrondissement. We felt it best to conserve our energies, as we had planned a Sunday visit for *Bois de Vincennes*. We took advantage of being tourists in Paris during the sunshine, as a less taxing daytime activity. We also bought picnic items for Sunday.
6. The restaurant *O'Naturel* is run by two brothers. It is frequented by both local and Paris-visiting naturists. On arrival you undress and take your seating towel into the dining room, which has a nice ambience. It was a normal Saturday evening when we visited but *O'Naturel* also runs frequent special events. A late-notice cancellation by a group of eight naturists meant that during the evening, in addition to us, there were only two naturist couples eating. Our meal and wine choices were excellent. By the time we returned to our hotel we were ready for sleep after a pleasant, relaxing day.

4. Sunday 9 September

7. After a relaxing morning near *Gare de l'Est* we made our way to the *Bois de Vincennes*. The Bois is in the 12th Arrondissement (equivalent of LB Camden) east Paris and is managed by the Mairie de Paris (equivalent of the GLA). This is similar to Hampstead Heath, which is located in Camden but managed by the Corporation of London. Arriving at the naturist picnic area mid-afternoon we joined about 300 naturists, male and female, all enjoying a picnic in the sunshine. The Sunday picnics, advertised by ANP, are held monthly, naturists just turn up with their own picnic items.
8. At the picnic we again met Laurent and Stephane, together with Julien Claude-Penegry the ANP Communication co-ordinator. Members of the public of various ages, including dog walkers, wandered through on the footpaths and no adverse comments or reactions were heard or seen. Two mounted police officers went through the naturist area on their normal patrol. We picked up a lot more information from Julien, on the work ANP did which successfully resulted in the *Espace Naturiste* being set up.
9. Whilst we were at the picnic an American radio station *NPR* (National Public Radio) interviewed Laurent of ANP. The interviewer was their young Paris-based American journalist Jake Cigainero. After the interview with ANP Jake then held a 15-minute interview with John Paine about NAG, and the reasons why we were at this naturist picnic in Paris. We enjoyed being with so many naturists at the picnic. Later we had a bistro meal, in Rue de Strasbourg not far from *Gare de l'Est*, before returning, elated, to our hotel.

5. Monday 10 September

10. We had intended to make another visit to *Bois de Vincennes*, to see how many naturists might use it on a sunny weekday. As mentioned Harvey and Ray both had walking difficulties. After our previous strenuous activities none of us could face the Metro journey, followed by a long walk from the chateau Metro station into the woods – and then back again. Our evening *Eurostar* departure also meant that an extra visit to the naturist area would make it too tight a schedule.
11. We cancelled that proposed extra visit to the *Bois*. Instead we had a more relaxing day, continuing our Paris sight-seeing, some of it by River Bus. We negotiated the RAPT bus routes from *The Louvre* to Pigalle, and then the small road train up Montmartre hill to *Sacre Coeur* basilica. We looked at the variety of work produced by the artists in Place du Tertre and ate a nice lunch nearby, before visiting a local *Dali* painting exhibition. Then by mid-afternoon we arrived back at our hotel to collect our bags.
12. Sadly, timing did allow us to visit the naturist activities, which restarted at *Piscine Roger de Gall* that evening. On the short walk back to *Gare du Nord* we had our last Parisienne meal. It was a large dinner, including real thick French Onion Soup as a first course, in a busy and popular bistro. Our return to London was on the 21.11 *Eurostar* from *Gare du Nord*.
13. The major costs of the 'Mission' for travel, accommodation and meals, as well as sight-seeing and social activities in Paris, were met by the three participants. Wine for the meal at Laurent's flat Friday 7 September was also paid for by the three NAG participants. Five NAG tee-shirts were given to ANP officers, and the two gift bottles of wine were paid for by NAG. Partial cost of the three Paris travel cards was also covered by NAG. In all NAG paid just £134.18 of the total £671.65 fixed costs of this 'mission to Paris'.

6. Other Paris naturist activities

14. ANP was founded in 1953. It holds various naturist activities over three evenings each week in the *Piscine Roger de Gall*. This is a local authority leisure centre in the 12th

Arrondissement. The swimming, gym, sauna, and yoga activities at the centre are now used by 400 naturists. Those naturist activities resulted from initial ANP discussions with the local politicians, who supported the idea. As mentioned in para.3 the extended summer closure for maintenance meant that the ANP naturist activities were due to re-start on the evening of Monday 10 September.

15. With the success of the espace naturiste at *Bois de Vincennes*, and the monthly picnics, ANP membership has increased significantly in the past year. Based on the success at *Bois de Vincennes* ANP has started a campaign to get a second official naturist area in Paris. This is proposed for the large *Bois de Boulogne* in the 16th Arrondissement on the west side of Paris. Information on ANP activities can be found at www.naturistes-paris.fr
16. APNEL (Association Pour la Naturisme En Liberte) is the French equivalent to NAG. Founded in 2007 APNEL run campaigns promoting an understanding and acceptance of naturism in France. Due to other commitments neither Sylvie the President, nor Jacques Frimont the Vice-president of APNEL, were able to meet with us during our visit weekend 7th – 10th September.
17. APNEL proudly claims that nudity has been legal in France since 1944. APNEL activities include having a marquee in the annual *Fête de l'Humanité*, at Le Bourget north of Paris. For several years they have made a nude appearance at this popular music festival, which is attended by 600,000 people. Sadly, for us, the 2018 event was scheduled for 14th – 16th September the week-end following our visit. You can see the video of the APNEL 2017 participation in *Fête de l'Humanité* at <https://www.apnel.fr/forum/viewtopic.php?id=1187>

7. Campaigning for the naturist space

18. Discussions started in August 2016 between ANP and Paris City politicians. The ANP Communication co-ordinator, Julien Claude-Penegry, is a young journalist and had been extremely successful in promoting ANP and its activities. As part of the ANP political campaign to get the naturist area, Julien used his contacts to get articles by journalists published in local papers during September 2016, at the start of the Paris political year.
19. As the City manages the *Bois de Vincennes* the ANP discussions took place just with them, the 12th Arrondissement Mayor and local politicians only became involved at the January 2018 review. ANP were initially supported in 2016 by APNEL which does not like 'designated areas' but wants naturist freedom. It should be noted that the FFN (French equivalent to BN) did not join with ANP or participate in the Paris discussions. Because the focus became for a 'designated' naturist area APNEL decided to withdraw.
20. The Prefecture of Police were also involved in the discussions and the regular police patrols in *Bois de Vincennes* include going through the naturist area. During the campaign ANP officers met with Paris City green-space officers and elected politicians. In this period of discussions Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris (equivalent of Sadiq Khan in London) was in support but not publicly identified with the project. In January 2018 Anne Hidalgo met with ANP officers at a reception in the *Mairie* (Town Hall). She said that she was proud to have backed the *Bois de Vincennes* project and pleased to have provided a public space for naturists.
21. Initially the Mairie had suggested four site options in the *Bois* and a start for naturist use on 1 May 2017. ANP checked out each site option and the City green space officers then agreed with ANP on the current site. A delay followed, caused by necessary administrative work at the Mairie. Discussions with the police, and formal public meetings under the Paris

democratic system had to be held. The writing of the legal charter, designating the naturist area, also took time. The Charter is quoted at five signboards on path entries into the naturist space.

22. The initial 2016 discussion led to agreement that an 'experimental period' of naturist use would run from 31 August – 15 October 2017. APNEL colleagues joined with ANP on the inaugural day when, amazingly, an estimated 700 naturists turned up. The 'experimental period' was a great success and for the last picnic, on 15 October 2017, again an estimated 700 naturists attended. In January 2018 a review was held by all parties involved, ANP, Mairie de Paris, Prefecture of Police, and these now included the Mayor and politicians in 12th Arrondissement. The 2017 'experiment' was judged to have been a success.
23. This success led to an agreement for a longer 2018 naturist season, which was to run from 14 April to 14 October. An inaugural *Paris Naturist Day* was held by ANP on 24th June. It was attended by a staggering 900 naturists (ANP estimate) who packed out the *Bois de Vincennes* open space. ANP has plans for occasional special themed events on some Sundays in the *Bois de Vincennes*. As one might expect there are limitations on sound levels in this lovely peaceful spot, so amplified music is unlikely to feature.

8. Getting to the naturist space

24. The nearest Metro station is **Chateau de Vincennes** at the eastern terminus of **Line 1**. Exit the station to face the large Chateau, then cross the road and start a 700m walk to the naturist area. Facing the Chateau you walk alongside the high left-hand wall and continue straight ahead over road junctions. An unpaved path continues past the large concrete letters PARC FLORAL DE PARIS. For some of the time you walk alongside a chain metal fence. Then you come to an official signboard indicating the official naturist area clearing.
25. The official naturist area is 7,300 sqm, a flat clearing in the trees with public footpaths running through it. Five official signboards have been erected on the footpaths, indicating that you are entering an area used by naturists. Up to 900 naturists have (just about) been accommodated for a naturist picnic. Naturists also use the area during weekdays as well. On rare occasions that misbehaviour occurs the police just bundle the offending people into a van and take them down to the local police station.