

# FRANCE

Travel • Food & Wine • Culture • Holidays

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## *Five minutes with* **CAROLYN CAMPBELL**

Author Carolyn Campbell delves into the history of Père-Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, from its grand opening in 1804 to the present day, in her new book, *City of Immortals*, which focuses on the famous artists, writers, actors and musicians who are buried there

History, artists, culture, architecture and design have been life-long interests of mine. The cemetery tapped into all these passions.

After spending close to 80 days over the past few decades wandering around the monuments and delving into the lives of its famed residents, my love of this extraordinary place has deepened immeasurably.



 **It is the people of Paris that make it the City of Light for me**

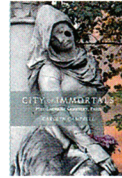
From my own observations, I'd say Édith Piaf is the most highly-visited grave by the French and Oscar Wilde by the British.

My research began the first day I visited, some 30-plus years ago. I interviewed everyone, starting with the tour guide, to the many City of Paris officials and historians who advised me, to hours spent at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and libraries in my birthplace of Washington DC and my current home in Los Angeles. I continued taking photographs with my colleague, British photographer Joe Cornish, up until December of last year.

Ironically, one of the most spectacular tombs at Père-Lachaise is not a grave, per se, but an unforgettable monument at the end of the Avenue Principale. Created by sculptor Paul-Albert Bartholomé, originally as a tribute to his wife, Aux Morts (To the Dead) features a mournful procession of 20 men, women and children marching toward an immense

dark doorway into the next life. They rest in what is called the Romantic Section, a lush, tree-filled area that is one of the most bucolic parts of the cemetery's original 16 acres.

But, I must declare that I am not exclusively enamoured with dead people in Paris! I count among some very special friends, who I met over the years and still live in the city, extraordinary filmmakers, curators, scholars, artists and hoteliers. They all have been wonderful hosts and fellow taphophiles (cemetery lovers), as well as dinner partners celebrating the best cuisine in the world. It is the people of Paris that make it the City of Light for me. 🍷



Carolyn Campbell was talking to Helen Parkinson. Carolyn's latest book, *City of Immortals: Père Lachaise Cemetery*, is out now (£19.95, Goff Books).

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