

Gulf Today

Champs-Elysees to get over £200 million green facelift

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A view of the iconic stretch of Champs-Élysées.

Who doesn't know the Champs-Élysées? It is a beautiful, picture-postcard avenue in an equally beautiful city, Paris. Many important events have been held here, even major movies have been filmed in this area.

This historic thoroughfare runs from Place de la Concorde to the majestic Arc de Triomphe.

Now the iconic stretch in the French capital is set to be given a €250m (£225m) green makeover, the mayor of Paris has announced.

Anne Hidalgo, the city's mayor, told French newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* that the work would make the 1.9-km (1.2 mile) long road into "an extraordinary garden."

The Champs-Élysées committee has been campaigning for change since 2018, when they decided that something needed to be done to spruce up the famous avenue, the *Independent* reported.

The committee is made up of those who live and work on the avenue. It is headed up by Jean-Noël Reinhardt, who previously said that the Champs-Élysées is "often called the world's most beautiful avenue, but those of us who work here every day are not at all sure about that."

The planned work was first unveiled in 2019 and with the help of the public, plans for the area were drawn up. These include reducing space for vehicles by half, pedestrianising roads and increasing the number of trees planted to help improve air quality there.

Members of the committee released a statement saying: "The legendary avenue has lost its splendour during the last 30 years. It has been progressively abandoned by Parisians and has been hit by several successive crises: the gilets jaunes, strikes, health and economic." They welcomed the mayor's announcement.

The Champs-Élysées was first laid out in 1670 but was redesigned by Baron Haussmann in the mid-1800s and was last renovated 25 years ago. It is used for the annual Bastille Day parade on 14 July and is also the finishing stretch for the Tour de France.

In spite of the avenue being a popular destination for those visiting the city, Parisians tend to give it a wide berth.

According to architect Philippe Chiambaretta, whose firm PCA-Stream drew up the redevelopment plans, an estimated 100,000 people walk the street each day. Tourists account for 65 per cent and only five per cent are Parisians.

The transformation will not happen before the French capital hosts the Olympic Games in 2024, with aims to complete the project by 2030. Other plans include redesigning Place de la Concorde at one end of the avenue.

The area around the Eiffel Tower is also due for a revamp and more fountains, ponds and parks are set to surround the world-famous landmark, according to the *Independent*.

The Pont d'Iéna (a bridge linking the Eiffel Tower to Trocadéro) will also be turned into a grassy walkway, lined with trees. This should be ready by 2024 and is being financed by the company who operates the landmark.

In a move to pedestrianise Paris, Hidalgo has already shut stretches of both riverside roads to vehicles. She has also changed seven of the city's major squares to give more space to pedestrians, scooters and cyclists.

The Parisian mayor told *Le Journal du Dimanche* that the project was one of several planned to transform the city "before and after 2024."