

# Seine up to highest level in 35 years, Paris landmarks shut

June 3 2016, by Raphael Satter And Angela Charlton

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People look at the flooding Seine river, in Paris, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

The swollen Seine River kept rising Friday, spilling into Paris streets and forcing one landmark after another to shut down as it surged to its highest levels in nearly 35 years. Across the city, museums, parks and

cemeteries shut down as the city braced for evacuations.

The Seine was expected to peak in Paris early Saturday at about 5 meters (16 feet, 3 inches) above normal. Authorities shut the Louvre museum, the national library, the Orsay museum and the Grand Palais, Paris' striking glass-and-steel topped exhibition center.

"We evaluate the situation for all the (cultural) buildings nearly hour-by-hour," said Culture Minister Audrey Azoulay, speaking to journalists outside the world-famous Louvre. "We don't know yet the evolution of the level of the Seine River in Paris."

At the Louvre, home to Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," curators were scrambling to move some 250,000 artworks from basement storage areas at risk of flooding to safer areas upstairs. The Louvre will stay closed through Tuesday and the Orsay Museum, known for its impressionist art, closed through the weekend.

Nearly a week of heavy rain has led to serious flooding across a swathe of Europe, leaving 16 people dead and others missing.

Although the rain has tapered off in some areas, floodwaters are still climbing and could take weeks to clear and authorities urged vigilance. Traffic in the French capital was snarled as flooding choked roads and several Paris railway stations shut down.



Plastic boxes placed between sculptures as artworks are packed to be moved from the exhibition hall, as visitors are turned away from the entrance of the Musee de Louvre which is closed due to the unusually high water level of the nearby river Seine in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. French officials say that the Seine River is still rising in Paris as France's unseasonable spate of rainfall begins to taper off. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

Basements and apartments in the capital's well-to-do 16th district began to flood Friday as the river crept higher, and authorities evacuated a campground in the Bois de Boulogne park on the western edge of the city.

French authorities activated preliminary plans to transfer the French presidency and other sensitive sites to secure places in case of flooding. The SGDSN security agency says the National Assembly, or lower house of Parliament, and the Foreign Ministry were at greater risk.

The Louvre said the museum had not taken such precautions in its modern history - since its 1993 renovation at the very least. Disappointed tourists were being turned away but most were understanding.

"It's good that they are evacuating the paintings. It's a shame that we couldn't see them today, but it's right that they do these things," said Carlos Santiago, visiting from Mexico.



Cars that have been washed away sit on a mud covered road in Simbach am Inn, southern Germany, Friday, June 3, 2016, which was hit by flooding a couple of days before. (Peter Kneffel/dpa via AP)

Elsewhere in Europe, authorities were counting the cost of the floods as they waded through muddy streets and waterlogged homes.

German authorities said the body of a 65-year-old man was found in the town of Simbach am Inn and a 72-year-old man died of a heart attack after being rescued from a raging stream in the village of Triftern, bringing the country's death toll from recent flooding to 11.

France's Interior Ministry also reported the death of a 74-year-old man who fell from his horse and drowned in a river in the Seine-et-Marne region east of Paris, the second death in France.

In eastern Romania, two people died and 200 people were evacuated from their homes as floods swept the area, including one man ripped from his bicycle by a torrent of water in the eastern village of Ruginesti.



A damaged display dummy sits in the rubble of a street in Simbach am Inn, southern Germany, Friday, June 3, 2016, which was hit by flooding a couple of days before. (Peter Kneffel/dpa via AP)

In Belgium, rescue workers found the body of a beekeeper swept away by rising waters while trying to protect his hives in the village of Harsin.

The German Insurance Association estimates this week's flooding has caused some 450 million euros (\$500 million) in damage in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg alone.

The foul weather has added to the major travel disruptions France is already experiencing after weeks of strikes and protests by workers upset over the government's proposed labor reforms. French rail company SNCF said the strikes had led to the cancellation of 40 percent of the country's high-speed trains.

French energy company Enedis said more than 20,000 customers were without power to the east and south of Paris because of flooding.



Visitors gather in front of the entrance of the Musee de Louvre which is closed

and tourists being turned away, due to the unusually high water level of the nearby river Seine in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. French officials say that the Seine River is still rising in Paris as France's unseasonable spate of rainfall begins to taper off. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

Paris measures Seine water levels using an unusual method called the Austerlitz scale, which compares the surface level with an underwater sensor at the Austerlitz Bridge, said regional environment director Jerome Goellner.

In normal times, the river level is between 1 meter and 2 meters (3 feet, 3 inches to 6 ½ feet) on the Austerlitz scale, he said. But a piece of trash trapped in the sensor led authorities to undercount the rise of the Seine earlier this week, he said.

The Seine so far has risen about 4.5 meters (15 feet) from its typical position following days of heavy rain. Goellner says it's not possible to put a precise time on when the peak is expected, but said Friday "we're near the maximum."

The Environment Ministry predicted the river would reach its highest level early Saturday and stay there for a few days.



People arrive at the Musee de Louvre which is closed and tourists being turned away, due to the unusually high water level of the river Seine in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. French officials say that the Seine River is still rising in Paris as France's unseasonable spate of rainfall begins to taper off. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

Extreme rainfall, such as that hitting France, has increased worldwide and especially in Europe because of man-made climate change, four different scientists told The Associated Press on Friday. They said downpours like this are one of the clearest signals of global warming.

Record-breaking rainfall in Europe has increased 31 percent from 1980 to 2010, when compared to the previous 80 years, according to a 2015 Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research study.

"These increasing trends have already been measured and are now affecting every storm that forms, including recent storms in France,"



said Gerald Meehl, a climate scientist at the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research,

With leading Paris museums closed, the surging currents were a tourist attraction in themselves. Prakash Amritraj of India, a 42-year-old visiting with his wife and two children, took selfies on the Mirabeau Bridge in western Paris.

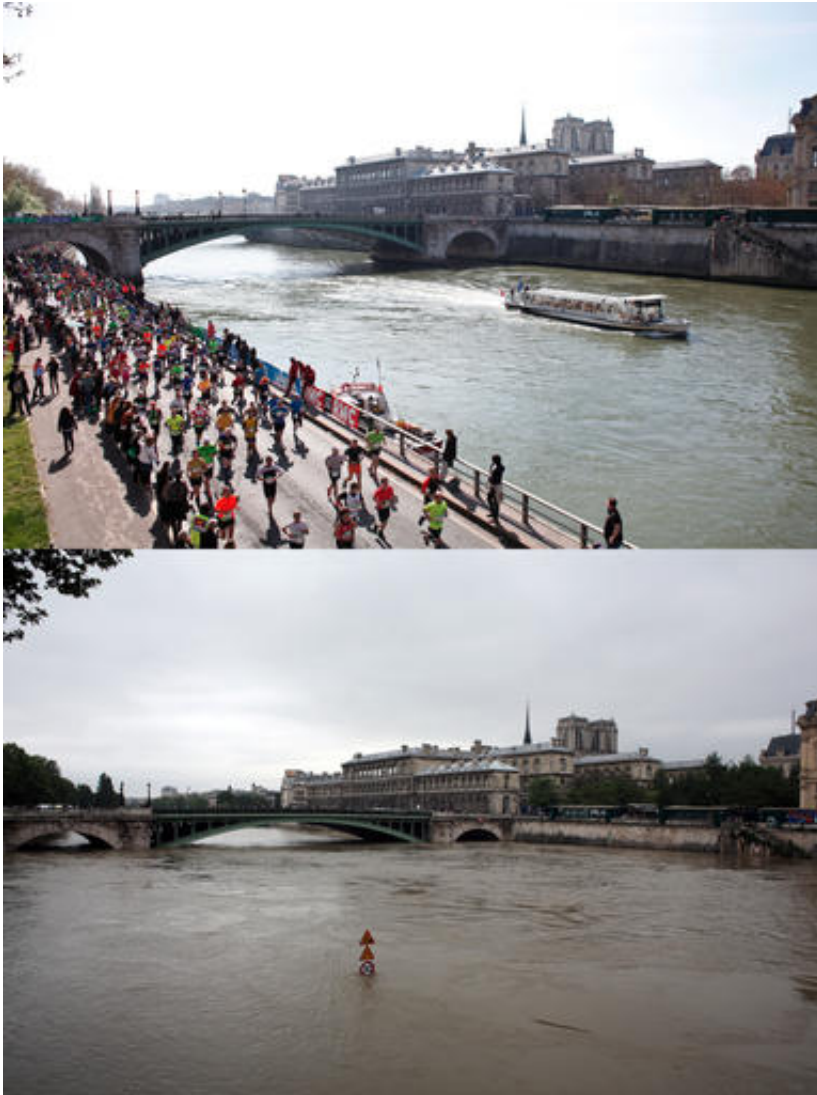


Visitors read an information sheet about the closing of the Musée de Louvre and tourists being turned away, due to the unusually high water level of the river Seine in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. French officials say that the Seine River is still rising in Paris as France's unseasonable spate of rainfall begins to taper off. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

"I had never thought of possible floods in Paris city center. In India, we have the monsoon, but here! It's not supposed to happen!" he said.

While he sympathized with all those affected, he appreciated the flooding from a different perspective.

"It's kind of beautiful, in a way," he said.



Combo of images, from Sunday, April 12, 2015, top, and Friday June 3, 2016 showing the extent of the rise in the floodwaters of the Seine river in Paris. French officials say that the Seine River is still rising in Paris as France's unseasonable spate of rainfall begins to taper off. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



People look at the flooding Seine river, in Paris, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



People takes pictures of the flooding Seine river, in Paris, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



A police boat patrols on the flooding Seine river, in front of the Conciergerie building, a former prison, now used partly as a law court, in Paris, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



People talk alongside the flooding Seine river in front of the Conciergerie building, a former prison now partly used as a law court, in Paris, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



A traffic sign stands in a flooded road in Paris, in front of the Conciergerie building, a former prison, now used partly for law courts, Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)



The crossbars of soccer goals stand out of the water at a sport ground in a flooded area of the town of Nemours south of Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)





Flooded caravans stand on a campground in a flooded area of the town of Nemours south of Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



People looking at the floods stand on the Alma bridge by the Zouave statue which is used as a measuring instrument during floods in Paris, France Friday June 3, 2016. Both the Louvre and Orsay museums were closed as the Seine, which officials said was at its highest level in nearly 35 years, was expected to peak sometime later Friday. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)



Two people use a canoe on a flooded street in the town of Moret sur Loing south of Paris, France, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Two people use a canoe on a flooded street in the town of Moret sur Loing south of Paris, France, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



An abandoned car stands on a flooded street near the town of Nemours, south of Paris, France, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Flooded homes in an area of the town of Nemours south of Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Flooded homes in the area of the town of Nemours south of Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



Flooded homes in an affected area of the town of Nemours south of Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)





Cars stand in muddy water in a flooded area of the town of Nemours south of Paris Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. The interior ministry says 20,000 people have been evacuated from their homes across France in operations involving thousands of firefighters, military personnel and other officials. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



General view from a helicopter of the river Seine which has been overflowing its banks in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. Paris' Seine River has been climbing steadily following days of heavy rainfall but until now has done little damage beyond the steep embankments on either side. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)



General view from a helicopter of the river Seine which has been overflowing its banks in Paris, Friday, June 3, 2016. Paris' Seine River has been climbing steadily following days of heavy rainfall but until now has done little damage beyond the steep embankments on either side. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)

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