

autumn

The TJCAA Quarterly

2024
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Helen Tran: TJCAA's Own Olympic Correspondent

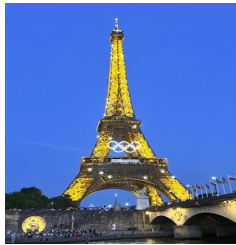
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Relatively few of us will ever have the chance to see the Olympic games in person, which means watching recaps on TV, reading online news reports, or, for a dwindling few, perusing a daily newspaper.



Paris 2024, Cauldron

For everyone reading this article, however, you get a first-person account from TJCAA's very own Helen Tran. Here's what she had to say about her trip to Paris to see the Olympics.



Eiffel Tower, Paris 2024

What was the most memorable moment of the Olympics for you?

By pure chance, we got to meet the US women's badminton team—actual Olympics athletes who sat next to us during the badminton match we got to watch. We learned more than we ever thought we would about badminton.



Go Team USA!!!

For example, we had no idea that each country could only send one player to the Olympic games to compete in the singles tournament, unless they are ranked in the top 16 in the world. Then they can have two players. For doubles badminton teams, a country can send two pairs, but only if they are in the top eight in the world. When you compare that small number against some of the other teams, like gymnastics or track and field, you realize how good you must be at badminton to even have a chance to qualify for the Olympics.



USA Women's Singles Badminton, Beiwen Zhang

What events did you get to watch?

In addition to the badminton match, where we met the US Women's team, we saw some track and field events. It was hard to keep up with all the events happening in the stadium as several events were going on simultaneously. The track and field events included the discus throw, hurdles, running, pole vault, javelin throw, and shot put, to name a few. After the final of each event there was a medal ceremony



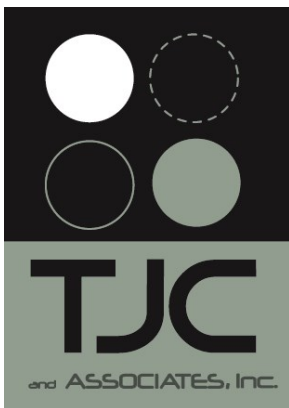
The US won four medals on the last day of the track and field events.

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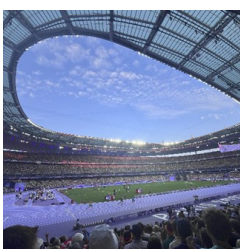
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shown on the Jumbotron where we could watch the athletes receive their medals. It was amazing to feel all this positive energy in the stadium. Everyone was cheering on the athletes—even ones who weren't from their country. It was loud and crazy and a ton of fun!



Stadium of France

How easy was it to attend events and get around in Paris?

Pretty much everything was driven by apps on our phone. There was an app for the Metro (the Paris subway system), an app for the tickets, and a general Paris 2024 Olympics app. The Metro had signs everywhere to help visitors find events and venues, and there were police officers and volunteers everywhere that could direct people to where they needed to be or wanted to go. Overall, we found it to be a very well run and organized system and process.

What else did you get to do while you were there?

We spent two weeks in Paris and barely scratched the surface of what there is to see and do. But we did get to go **below** the surface and visit the ancient catacombs underneath the city. These catacombs are the final resting places for more than six million people.

The history of the catacombs is fascinating!

In the late 18th century, the cemeteries around Paris were all getting full, but people kept dying, which was inconvenient <laughs>.



Visit the Paris catacombs, where it's always Halloween!

There were a lot of abandoned limestone quarries and tunnels below the city, which had been excavated over several hundred years to supply building materials as Paris grew. The city leaders decided that the catacombs would be a good alternative burial ground and began transferring



Artwork created by local artist to respect the dead.

bodies from the cemeteries to the catacombs. These bodies spanned the centuries from the days of the Romans through the French Revolution to the mid-19th century. Everywhere we walked we saw bones and skulls of people—some labeled, but most not. It was creepy and fascinating and awe-inspiring at the same time. I'm not a fan of bones or being underground, but this was probably my favorite tourist destination while we were in Paris. We also got to do some

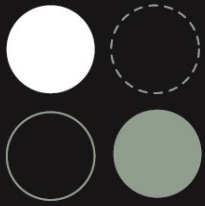


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shopping and a lot of eating—it turns out Paris is a good spot for both of those activities <laughs>.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to attend a future Olympic game?

Plan ahead and save your money! We started researching tickets and accommodations about 18 months before the games started. Even with that head start, we found rooms were very expensive—most of them were double what they normally charge.

Also, take your mobile phone. Everything is done through phone apps, including the tickets, so make sure your mobile phone will work in whatever country you visit.

However, if you just want to tour Paris, then August is a great month to go. Most Parisians go on holiday for the entire month, so the cities are less crowded than normal. There are so many amazing neighborhoods, shops, restaurants, and historical places—we can't wait to go back!



No ticket to the closing ceremonies? No problem! Watch them from a Paris sidewalk café and make friends from another country!

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