



# Smellwalking Guide

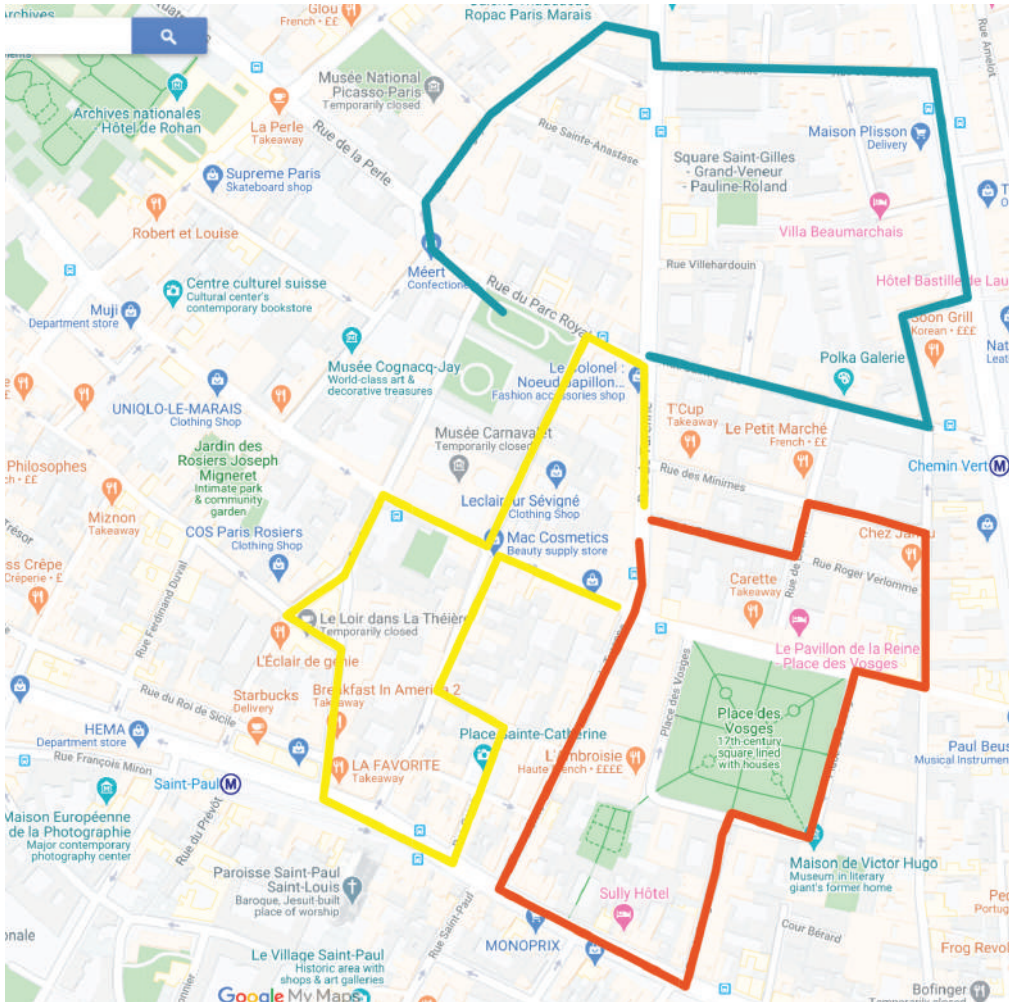


## Why do a smellwalk?

- To investigate your town/city from a new perspective and uncover different details
- To explore the importance of context and place to smell perception
- To understand the world through a different sense (be more like other smell-centric animals)
- To understand your own relationship with your nose and smell preferences



## Plan your route



- You can smellwalk anywhere, you can start from where you are now
- Try a circular walk, or different sides of a street, even going in the opposite direction on the same street will reveal different smells
- Limit the distance to a maximum of 2 km
- Limit your walk time to 45 minutes as sniffing is tiring
- Take a bottle of water and drink regularly – smells, and you, need moisture



## Recording the smells



You should aim to record a total of 12 smells using 3 different approaches. For each smell, use the “smellnote” form to record:

- Your location
- Name the smell (this can be literal or lyrical)
- Record the smell intensity, smell duration and your like/dislike on a scale of 1–7
- Note if the smell is expected or not
- Add your own associations and thoughts about the smell, does it remind you of something or someone?

# SMELLWALK PLACE MONTH YEAR

Smell no. (pinpoint the smell number on the map)	Name of smell	Smell intensity	Smell duration	Smell like/ dislike	Expected smell?	Comments & thoughts
		(weak    strong)	(short    long)	(dislike    like)	(yes    no)	
1.	Smell Catching (airborne smells, distant, )				<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
3.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
4.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
5.	Smell Hunting (interesting smell sources, close-up)				<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
6.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
8.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
9.	Smell research (your choice of 4 linked smell experiences)				<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
10.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
11.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
12.					<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
13.	Summary smell (pick one smell from today's experience)				<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	



## Approach #1 – Smell Catching of airborne, distant smells



To encounter smells 1 to 4

- Re-focus yourself to receive smells as your primary source of information about the world around you; replace your eyes by your nose
- Walk steadily, breath regularly and note the smells that cross your nose. When you detect a smell then SNIFF hard to double the chance of olfactory molecules reaching your olfactory epithelium
- Record the details of 4 smells encountered this way using the form (smells might be a complex mix, or a single strong note)



## Approach #2 – Smell Hunting for close-up sniffing



To encounter smells 5 to 8

- Use your other senses; crush leaves, sniff textured surfaces, look for bright colours...
- Get close-up to potential smell sources
- Seek out hidden corners, and go to ground level – the more settings you sniff, the greater the opportunities
- Record a second set of 4 further smellnotes using the form



## Approach #3 – Smell Research for olfactory comparison



To encounter smells 9 to 12

- Choose a single category (people, leaves, bicycles, wing mirrors, waste bins, bottle banks, shop doorways...)
- Sniff 4 different examples in your category
- Record a smellnote for each example – I bet they don't all smell the same
- Share interesting smells with your co-smellwalkers, compare notes





## Finally – Summary smell



Pick one smell to represent the place you have walked through today

- Look through all your recorded smellnotes
- Which smell, in your opinion, best represents your experience of walking through the neighbourhood

N.B. If your nose tires and you don't seem to notice smells anymore sniff your own skin for relief.

**Please share your findings** #smellwalk with <https://twitter.com/katemclean> and email for clarification on any points or to request a bespoke designed, led smellwalk to [mcleankate@mac.com](mailto:mcleankate@mac.com)



## Categories of Urban Smells

- **Curious or unexpected smells/scents** are volatile and disappear quickly e.g. perfume on a passer-by, dinosaur,
- **Episodic smells/scents** are temporary or site-specific aromas e.g. fish at a port or in a market, fast food outlets, cafés, wine and beer, baking, factory emissions, flowers
- **Background smells /scents** are specific to the environment and constantly present e.g. humidity, canal, spicy food, damp, pine

### CURIOUS SCENTS

- Dinosaur
- A hard life
- Broccoli / deep dark secrets

### EPISODIC SCENTS

- Roti prata & curry
- Shisha (an evening scent)
- Herby, minty, bitter, dried
- Salt, seawater & salty air
- Manila rope
- Unpolished wood
- Jasmine
- Perfume, floral
- Durian

### BACKGROUND SCENTS

- Spicy, smokey, hot
- Humid



## Further Reading and Smellscape Maps (<https://sensorymaps.com>)

McLean, K (fc). 'Temporalities of the smellscape: creative mapping as visual representation'. In Kühne, O., Edler, D., and Jenal, C (Eds.) *Modern Approaches to the Visualization of Landscapes*, Springer

McLean, K (fc). 'Sniffing Silchester Insula IX: Smells of Urban Roman Britain'. In Bonneau, X and Fragneau, V (Ed) *New Territories of the Olfactory Experience*, Infolio

McLean, K., Perkins, C (2020). 'Smell Walking and Mapping'. In Hall, S., Holmes, H. (Eds.), *Mundane Methods: Methodological Innovations for Exploring the Everyday*. Manchester: MUP

McLean, K (2019). 'Sensory Maps'. In Kobayashi, A. (Ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography 2nd Edition*, Elsevier

McLean, K., Lammes, S., & Perkins, C (2018). 'Mapping the quixotic volatility of smellscape: a triologue-interview with Kate McLean'. In S. Lammes, C. Perkins, A. Gekker, S. Hind, C. Wilmott, & D. Evans (Eds.), *Time for mapping*. Manchester: MUP

Henshaw, V, McLean, K, Perkins, C, Medway, D, Warnaby, G (Eds) (2018) *Designing with Smell*, London: Routledge

McLean, K (2017). 'Mapping the Ephemeral'. In Kent, A & Vujakovic, P (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Mapping and Cartography*, London: Routledge

McLean, K (2017). *Smellmap Amsterdam: Olfactory Art & Smell Visualisation*, MIT Press, Leonardo Vol 50, Issue 1

McLean, K (2016). 'Mapping the City's Smellscape'. In Harmon, K (Ed.) *You Are Here NYC: Mapping the Soul of the City*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press

McLean, K (2016) *Ex-formation as Method for Mapping Smellscape*, T&F Communication Design Vol. 3, Issue No. 2, 2015

Porteous, J (1990) *Landscapes of the Mind: Worlds of Sense and Metaphor*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Henshaw, V (2014) *Urban Smellscape: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments*, New York: Routledge

Henshaw, Victoria, 'Route Planning a Sensory Walk: Sniffing Out the Issues', in *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*, ed. by Tina Richardson (Lanham, Maryland: Rli, 2015), pp. 195-210