



# PHOTO BOMB

During a holiday in Paris, **Eugene Yiga** realised that a picture is not worth a thousand likes

## THE EIFFEL TOWER

was first on my sightseeing list during my four-day Parisian summer holiday. Named after engineer Gustave Eiffel, whose company designed and built the monument as the entrance to the 1889 World's Fair, it recently celebrated its 300 million visitors milestone since opening more than a century ago.

In some ways it felt as though all those people were there the morning I visited – forcing me to stand in a long line, hold my breath in a crowded elevator to the top of the tallest structure in Paris (324m, if you're interested), and dodge an army of selfie sticks as though I was caught in the midst of a medieval sword fight.

It was less crowded at the top of the Arc de Triomphe, perhaps because it required winding your way up 284 steps. But, as I could see from the live camera feed, modern life was waiting down below in the Place Charles de Gaulle (formerly named Place de l'Étoile because of the "star" of 12 avenues that radiate from this square).

As the cars circled, a seemingly endless stream of tourists was bussed in for quick photographs before being whisked away, still oblivious to the wonder of this monument, which was commissioned in 1806 by French Emperor Napoleon to honour the *Grande Armée* – the name of the French army at the time – and inaugurated in 1836.

It wasn't long before I noticed a pattern, which I saw repeated throughout my trip at tourist hotspots such as the Louvre, Notre-Dame, Sacré-Cœur and the Pantheon. Day after day, I couldn't help but stand in awe at the size and scope of these magnificent monuments. Indeed, there were times when I was so overwhelmed by the grandeur before me that all I could do was sit and marvel at the immensity of humankind's achievements. And yet, as much as I wondered why we don't build grand structures like

this any more, I also wondered why we don't see the ones we already have. People might take a quick pic and before turning their backs to start snapping all the selfies (blocking everyone's view) to brag to family and friends that they were there – almost like graffiti artists spray-painting "I WAS HERE" to make their mark.

No, there's nothing wrong with taking pictures to remember a special place, but we must improve the way we create our memories.

First, pretend your camera has limited film. This will force you to consider what you're looking at and compose your image well, which will save you the hassle of going through thousands of similar pictures when you get home.

Second, if you want to be in the picture, ask someone else to take it for you. Finding a trustworthy individual (ideally someone with a professional-looking camera

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around their neck) is far better than using your cheap selfie stick. You might even make a new friend.

Third and most important, put away your camera when you're done. If you're brave enough, you could even leave it behind once or twice so that you can stop and savour the sights without an agenda.

There were many times during my trip when I realised that what I was seeing was too big or too beautiful to capture in a frame, so I didn't even try. Instead, I opened my ears to the sounds, opened my hands to the textures, and, unlike so many others around me, I opened my eyes. That was more than enough, because while a picture may be worth a thousand words, sometimes a real memory, saved in your head, is worth so much more. 🌈