

# LEED and Life in the City of Lights: Paris

Published on **6 Apr 2012**

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Posted in **LEED**



My job fascinates me. Obviously because I get to visit interesting places, but more importantly, because of that delicious curl of anticipation that comes with facing large groups of strangers (yes, I actually enjoy this) and the thrill of discovery that comes with getting to know people. Who among them will be that passionate local advocate I'm looking for to unite the LEED community in that country? Is that lady by the window in the green skirt a technical expert with a rare specialization? How has LEED transformed the lives of those I meet? Hmmm, where did she buy those shoes!

I guess I'm just nosy, but to tell truth, I'm not just drawn to green building because of the architecture. I want the juicy stuff - what makes people tick and how does LEED opens doors and empower individuals to transcend cultural and national borders? How does LEED change lives?

Recently, I had the good fortune to visit Paris and meet some local LEED Professionals. I met a number of wonderful people, but one story sticks in my mind in particular.

I sat next to a very articulate, obviously experienced LEED AP at one of the meetings and I was intrigued to note that while she spoke French very well, it was evident that she wasn't from there. I wondered how she came to be in France, and how she ended up working on LEED projects. LEED, after all, is not the predominant rating tool in France, though it is growing by leaps and bounds.

So, I asked her. As it turns out, this woman ended up in France, because she married a French person. They had decided to move back to France after a stint in the US and she recalled to me how excited she was to start life in a new country - it is Paris, the city of lights after all - until she realized that she was basically unmarketable. She didn't have any French experience, she wasn't a "technical" person by strict definition and she hadn't come out of one of the "Grands Ecoles" of France. She remembered the inner struggle she had when she was submitting her resume for a job. She almost left off "LEED AP" as she figured nobody would know what that was.

Imagine her surprise when she was called in for an interview and was offered the job, precisely because she was a LEED AP. It didn't matter to that employer that she didn't have the usual experience path behind her, because what was important to them was her understanding of this "new-fangled" LEED that clients were starting to ask for. In essence, LEED opened up doors for her and enabled her to start a meaningful and active professional life like no other professional schooling or credential could have offered her.

Her experience with LEED is unique in how it positively impacted her life, and today, drives her passion for bringing it to France - but her experience is also not so out of the ordinary. That LEED and the LEED professional accreditation has the ability to change lives is undeniable, and her story is just one of thousands that demonstrate the true transformational power of LEED - one person at a time.

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