

MOVIES

‘Under Paris,’ explained: Why the shark movie is No. 1 on Netflix right now

Sharks in the Seine! "Under Paris" is getting lots of campy thumbs-up, even though it strains credulity.



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By Randee Dawn

It's summertime, which means our thoughts turn naturally to beaches, oceans ... and sharks.

Thankfully, Netflix is here to answer the call with "Under Paris," a new monster film about a shiver of sharks swimming in the City of Lights' legendary Seine River. As of the publication of this article, "Under Paris" is the top-streamed Non-English

language movie this week, with nearly 41 million views, according to the streamer.

Here's a quick nibble on what you need to know about "Under Paris" before you sink your teeth into it!

What is 'Under Paris' about?

The story focuses on marine biologist Sophia, whose husband is killed by a shark while they're investigating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. But Lilith — as the shark is so aptly, biblically, named — isn't done with Sophia or her native land. Lilith is a mutant who grows to 21 feet long and is very into French cuisine, if you get our drift.

Three years on, Sophia and Lilith are both in Paris. Why? Because. Lilith has found a new home swimming up the Seine and undergone parthenogenesis — that is, she's given birth to a whole family on her own! Baby shark, do, do, do do ... dangerous! (This particular twist will be recognizable to fans of 1998's "Godzilla.")

But that's not all that's occupying Paris these days: a big triathlon is about to take place in the city. The mayor has taken notes from the authorities from "Jaws," and refuses to let a few mystery deaths (due to shark bites!) alter her plans.

The underwater stage is clearly set for carnage.

But wait, can sharks really swim in the Seine?

If you've come to "Under Paris" for David Attenborough-style accuracy, you're going to be sadly disappointed. Ocean sharks are used to a salt water environment, and the Seine is fresh water, which would dehydrate and eventually kill them, as the Dartmouth Undergraduate Journal of Science points out.

It's true that some sharks (like bull sharks) are "euryhaline," meaning they can survive in both environments, but Lilith is a mako shark, according to Sophia.

Then again, maybe she's evolved to be flexible about her water intake, too.

Shark biology aside, though, the Seine's water levels are regulated by numerous locks — so unless Lilith is also learning from the way salmon leap their way upstream, she's still not getting to Paris.

So, can humans swim in the Seine?

If there's water, humans can swim in it. The Seine, however, has been an inadvisable place to learn the breaststroke for about 100 years, though, thanks to pollution and bacterial contamination.

A cleanup project has been tackling the issue in the hopes that the Olympic swimming teams (who're coming this summer) can use it for their competition.

Of course, only if it's shark-free.

What are critics and fans saying about ‘Under Paris’?

IGN’s A.A. Dowd sums it up: “The bar for shark movies lies near the bottom of the ocean, so it’s no great victory that ‘Under Paris’ Gallic riff on ‘Jaws’ neatly clears it.”

Over at Rotten Tomatoes, fans are generally enthusiastic.

“Great movie. A mutant shark, because climate change or something, settles in the Seine and then destroys Paris. Blame the Mayor. Nicely done shark catastrophe hybrid thingy,” says Fyona L.

“I care more about the message that this movie tells. It is human behaviors and carelessness on things that we believe are not true, and this kind of bias, then the panic reaction leads to a total disaster. I like the story telling here, this may be a first installment for a series about sharks-related apocalyptic movies,” says Tomboy N.

But Zane S says, “I can’t tell if it’s trying to be satirical or serious? lol If serious, .5 stars. If satirical, maybe a 2. Just go into it expecting to be questioning what is happening the whole time.”

Meanwhile, the wags at Reddit/horror are also giving it a campy thumbs-up.

“The ending was delightfully bizarre but it felt a bit long and slow after the first act. All in all OK. But not really on ‘Deep Blue Sea’ level, my fav shark-comfort movie,” writes RunZombieBabe.

“This movie was a hilarious testament to government incompetence. Shark attacks in the canals? Time to host a triathlon,” writes Torkzilla.

“Once you suspend all sense of logic and physics, it was great fun! No sarcasm, it was silly but enjoyable. I’ve been stuck in bed with food poisoning for several days and it was just what the doctor ordered. Decent acting, good production values, plenty of shark action and some satisfying kills,” says MaybeNoMaybe.

Courtesy GrumpyPRGReviews: “It should have been called ‘Shark de Triomphe.’”

Take notes, Netflix!

Randee Dawn

Randee Dawn (she/her) is an entertainment journalist and author based in Brooklyn. In addition to writing for TODAY.com, Variety and The Los Angeles Times, her debut novel, *Tune in Tomorrow*, about a reality TV show run by mythic creatures, published in 2022. She's also the co-author of *The Law & Order: SVU Unofficial Companion*. When not interviewing the stars or dabbling in speculative fiction, she dreams of the next place she can travel to, or cuddles her Westie. More at [RandeeDawn.com](https://www.randeedawn.com).